

# CONFRONTING FACT AND THEORY IN THE DISCOVERY OF BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE GRAMMAR<sup>1</sup>

## CONFRONTANDO FATO E TEORIA NA DESCOBERTA DA GRAMÁTICA DO PORTUGUÊS DO BRASIL

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### ABSTRACT

This paper shows interesting questions and results that one can obtain when we combine the variationist methodology with the generative theories in the analysis of data. We believe that, while the Principles and Parameters theory could provide us with predictions as to what kinds of correlation to find in real data, a well conducted empirical analysis could reveal new facts unaccounted for and correlated phenomena. Methodologically, formal grammars help the researcher to constrain the universe of formal factors to be considered and to formulate more explicit questions. The variationist methodology, in its turn, allows us to use not only syntactic variables, but also constraints of other modules of the language faculty. It can also distinguish results due to either innate principles or environmentally conditioned factors. This paper presents some of the interesting findings on Brazilian Portuguese regarding the Null Subject Parameter (NSP), a topic that has been dealt with from both diachronic and synchronic perspectives.

**KEYWORDS:** Brazilian Portuguese; Principles and Parameters; variation methodology; diachrony; spoken language; written language

### RESUMO

Este trabalho mostra as interessantes questões e resultados que se obtém quando combinamos uma metodologia variacionista com a teoria gerativa na análise de dados linguísticos. Nossa convicção é de que, enquanto a teoria dos Princípios e Parâmetros podia nos fornecer teorias sobre que tipos de correlações encontrar nos dados, uma análise empírica bem conduzida poderia nos revelar fatos novos e correlações não previstas. Do ponto de vista metodológico, enquanto os formalistas ajudam o pesquisador a restringir o universo de fatores a considerar, e a formular questões de pesquisa mais explícitas, a metodologia variacionista nos permite usar, não apenas fatores morfossintáticos, mas também fatores de outra natureza, Esta combinação também permite distinguir resultados devidos a princípios inatos, mas também a fatores socioambientais. Este trabalho nos apresenta alguns dos resultados de um tópico de investigação, o Parâmetro do Sujeito Nulo, que perpassa tanto o projeto diacrônico, quanto os sincrônicos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Português Brasileiro; Português Europeu; Princípios e Parâmetros; metodologia variacionista: diacronia; língua falada; língua escrita

<sup>1</sup> The content of a shorter version of this paper was presented at the Conference: *Linguistic Data Structures: on the relation between data and theory in Linguistics*, Tübingen, 2002. The present paper updates the previous one with more recent projects and results developed in the same spirit. I thank Marcello Marcelino for his usual help with content and form.

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## 1. Introduction

Traditionally, most generative work dispenses with empirical data from E-language and most empiricist researchers, in turn, ignore formal theories of grammar, which have I-language as their object. The Brazilian linguistics developed at the University of Campinas has a unique tradition in combining the two approaches in several projects. The late Fernando Tarallo and myself have set in motion this line of research in Brazil, developing two projects: a diachronic study of Brazilian grammar and a description of spoken Brazilian Portuguese (SBP). After his premature death, I continued with this tradition with several colleagues and students.

I will first touch on the history of each project and then I will go on to discuss some of the important results obtained.

## 2. The projects

When Fernando Tarallo came to Brazil to collect data, during his Ph-D in Pennsylvania, he read an article of mine on the individual variation on relative clauses in BP, in which I posed an implicational hypothesis between the variation in the relative clauses and in the overall pronominal system. Tarallo decided to test this hypothesis empirically and diachronically and he found a statistical confirmation of its main points, namely, that a) BP lost the case-marked relative pronouns and developed the chopping relative along with the resumptive relative clause and b) that chopping relatives correlated with the increase of null objects. When he finished his doctorate, he was hired by my university (at the time, the Catholic University in São Paulo). Excited by our first endeavor, the first question he asked me was whether I had some new hypotheses to test. It so happened that I did have one question to do with the loss of the indefinite *se* construction in BP. We wrote a paper together, which was also an original enterprise combining formal hypothesis and empirical data<sup>3</sup>. However, when we first presented the paper to a Brazilian audience, we were attacked by both generativists and variationists, who claimed that we were heretic linguists. But the article ended up being published in the States in a volume edited by a generativist and a sociolinguist (cf. Jaeggli and Silva-Corvalán, 1986).

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<sup>3</sup> Cf Tarallo and Kato (1993).

A diachronic project was then planned<sup>4</sup>. UPenn was a good example to follow, since Anthony Kroch and collaborators were doing exactly what we intended to do, namely, the study of old *corpora* using generative hypotheses<sup>5</sup>. Generativists could not criticize us since we could not use the intuition of deceased people. Positive data were the only source to test grammaticality. No negative evidence could be used. We used theater plays, preferentially comedies, a genre closer to spoken language. According to Chomsky and other generative psycholinguists, use of positive data is also what happens when a child acquires his/her grammar (cf. more recently Yang 2002). If a child can discover his/her grammar being exposed just to positive data, why couldn't a linguist discover a grammar without drawing on negative evidence? Moreover, what was interesting to observe was that immersion in old *corpus* often made the researchers become as competent as native speakers of the language of the past periods. One starts having intuitions about the grammar of the period in question, and the *corpus* often showed that the researcher was right in his/her intuitions. We tried to base our study on genres that closely mirrored the vernacular use of the language: personal letters and plays.

The partial results of the diachronic project can be seen in a volume edited by Ian Roberts and myself (cf Roberts and Kato 1993; re-edited as Roberts and Kato 2018), a *Festschrift* for Fernando Tarallo, who we unfortunately lost at an incredibly early age<sup>6</sup>. The book is quite exhaustive in topics as it covers the realization of arguments, position of clitics, wh-constructions, agreement, possessive pronouns, and periphrastic verbal forms, besides two classical diachronic articles by Fernando Tarallo, in which he discusses the possible causes for the changes that gave birth to a new grammar: Brazilian Portuguese (BP)<sup>7</sup>.

While planning the ongoing diachronic project, Fernando and I also started a project on the grammar of synchronic oral *corpora* (the NURC<sup>8</sup>)<sup>9</sup>. The first problem we faced was: what to do with the discursive elements. Should we sanitize the *corpus* the way Fries, the structuralist, did in the establishment of the English sentence patterns? We decided not to, as most studies

<sup>4</sup> We planned the Project during a graduate course I gave with Tarallo, and the same students worked in the Project during another diachronic course I taught with Ian Roberts. Several Ph/D. Dissertations were developed during these courses.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Kroch (1994).

<sup>6</sup> All the authors mentioned here were part of the Projects mentioned above and below, but, for lack of space, we did not mention all the authors and their works in the project. Two examples are: a) de Oliveira (year?), who wrote a dissertation comparing Italian and BP, on their similarities and differences concerning the NS parameter, and b) Nicolau ((1996) who worked with the relation between NSs and VS order in BP.

<sup>7</sup> A second diachronic volume is soon going to be published, organized again by myself and Ian Roberts, this time, with the collaboration of Charlotte Galves (also as an editor).

<sup>8</sup> NURC= Norma Urbana Culta (*educated urban norm*)

<sup>9</sup> The project was part of a larger Project on Spoken Brazilian Portuguese, coordinated by Ataliba de Castilho (UNICAMP).

on Brazilian Portuguese (BP) are methodologically limited in that they provide a partial and idealized transcription of the data, being based only on portions of the *corpus* that are relevant for a specific syntactic or discursive phenomenon. The project had, therefore, the daring aim of studying how the syntax of predication and complementation integrated syntactic adjuncts and how these elements interacted with discursive ones. Thus, while in the diachronic project, the emphasis was basically on the expression and position of arguments, or the syntax of the main constituents of the sentence, the first object of our spoken BP project was adjunction. The NURC Project, coordinated by Ataliba de Castilho, was split into several subgroups, which produced a collection of eight volumes containing the proceedings of each meeting, but each project also produced specialized volumes. Our group published a volume called *A Construção da Sentença* (cf. Kato and Nascimento 2009)<sup>10</sup>, containing from predication to adjunction, and *wh*-constructions, all chapters developed within the Principles and Parameters framework and using the NURC *corpus*<sup>11</sup>.

The third project, which I coordinated with João Peres (University of Lisbon), a formal semanticist, was a bi-national comparative study of European (EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP)<sup>12</sup>. We used a computerized corpus of written language, but trying to cover different “genres,” like newspaper editorials, letters from readers, interviews, plays and novels<sup>13</sup>. We have revealed not only the differences in the writers’ E-language, better revealed in informal texts, but also the written norms prevalent in each country, which are better captured in formal texts. But through the writers E-language we were able to reveal their I-language. In this project, besides formal syntacticians, we also had formal semanticists. Many of the topics have been analyzed in co-authorship by both Portuguese and Brazilian linguists. The results of the project were published, not only in the *Proceedings* of the meetings, but also as two special issues of *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics*, edited by João Peres and myself<sup>14</sup>.

The project that I am presently coordinating is called *Romania Nova*, whose aim is not only to study BP, a Romance variety spoken in America, as opposed to EP, but also Latin-American Spanish, which has also shown interesting changes when compared to European

<sup>10</sup> Several authors were sponsored by a CNPq research grant.

<sup>11</sup> A critical survey of the spoken BP can be read in Kato (2002a).

<sup>12</sup> The Project was named *Português Europeu e Português Brasileiro: unidade e diversidade*, which had the sponsorship of CNPQ and ICCTI.

<sup>13</sup> This computerized data-base of Portuguese is available on the internet ([www.cgi.portuguese.mct.pt](http://www.cgi.portuguese.mct.pt)), and it is invaluable for the data analysis since it contains data from both the Portuguese and Brazilian varieties.

<sup>14</sup> See *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics*, vols (3,1) and (4,1).

Spanish. The first book with its results has been published in 2018 by Oxford U. Press, edited by myself and Francisco Ordoñez, who has coordinated the Project with me for eight years<sup>15</sup>.

In addition to my projects, Charlotte Galves, from UNICAMP, also conducted a diachronic project, whose major aim was to construct a syntactically annotated corpus<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. Some of the topics studied in the Projects

All the Projects that I have coordinated approached well-known parameters: a) the null subject parameter (NSP) b) the *wh*-movement parameter (WH-P), and c) the null object parameter (NOP)<sup>17</sup>. The three topics were a constant through all the projects, but we have also covered many more topics during all these years. In the present article, however, I will limit the discussion of the results to the NSP only.<sup>18</sup>

#### 3.1. The Null Subject Parameter

The Diachronic project started investigating the well-defined Null Subject Parameter, in its macro-parametric view as a cluster of properties<sup>19</sup>, including:

- [a] the possibility of null subjects;
- [b] free inversion / postposed subjects / Romance inversion
- [c] clitic climbing (Kayne, 1989)

The correlation between NS and inversion has been challenged by Safir (1982), who found out that Northern Italian dialects, while disallowing the former, license the latter. In our first diachronic project, we found out that BP has been exhibiting a change in progress in both properties ([a] (Duarte 1993, 1995) and in [b] (Andrade Berlinck 1995; Torres-Moraes 1993), a fact that can be used in favor of properties of a single parameter (cf. Roberts 1993). Duarte

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Kato and Ordoñez (eds) 2018. The Project Romania Nova is now being coordinated by three members: Francisco Ordoñez (UStonybrooke, NY) Andrés Saab (Universidade de Buenos Ayres), and Mary A. Kato (UNICAMP).

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.tycho.iel.unicamp.br/~tycho>

<sup>17</sup> Also called the Hot-Cool Parameter.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the NOP, the first comparative work between EP and BP can be read in Kato & Raposo (2001), and a thorough review can be read in Cyrino (2018). Regarding the WH-P, the diachronic analysis can be read in Lopes Rossi (1993), and the most recent results can be read in Kato (2017; 2018)

<sup>19</sup> We do not have here the classic cluster in Chomsky (1981) and Rizzi (1982), but we added a third one included by Kayne (1989). (que tal: We're not referring to the classic cluster in Chomsky...?)

(1995/2000) shows that from a preference of null subjects in 80% of cases in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the situation is found reversed at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, namely a little more than 20% of null subjects, a clear indication of a change in progress. As for VS order, Torres Moraes (1993) finds that from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present date, the XVS form in declaratives decreases from 20% to 0%, while the VSX, which was already rare in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (6%), becomes totally absent in modern plays. Andrade Berlinck (2000) shows that the residual VS that was possible in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was only with unaccusative verbs. But Kato (2000) shows that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, BP reanalyzed unaccusative verbs as existential, with VS no longer exhibiting agreement.

The theory of parameters provides us with another correlation which has not been much explored, namely the fact that NS languages have clitic climbing (Kayne 1989). In our diachronic project, Pagotto (1993) and Cyrino (1993) studying the position of clitics in the history of BP, find that, like present day EP, the clitic in classic BP used to be enclitic to the verb, while in Modern BP it is proclitic to the main verb. Nunes (1993) attributes this difference to different directions of cliticization: while EP cliticizes to the left, BP cliticizes to the right (cf. (1)).

- (1) a. Maria pode *me* encontrar hoje.  
       Maria can-clitic find       today  
               [            ]                   (enclisis to the Modal) (EP) (Classic BP)  
                   [            ]                   (proclisis to the main verb) (Modern PB)
- b1. Maria não *me* pode encontrar hoje.  
       [        ]                   (enclisis to negation) EP (Classic BP)  
               [            ]                   (proclisis to the main verb) (Modern BP)  
       (Lit.: Maria cannot find me today)

In other words, BP corroborates Kayne's theory, which defends that clitic climbing is a property of the NS property, since the loss of enclisis in BP (and clitic climbing) also involved the loss of NS properties.

Though the empirical results corroborate the progressive loss of the three properties (null subjects, VS order and clitic climbing), the facts regarding Brazilian Portuguese also present challenging problems for the theory of parameters. Thus, though Duarte (1995 and 2000) draws on corpus to show a significant decrease in the use of referential null subjects (ex. (2)), she also shows that the change affected mainly the first and second persons, leaving a still

reasonably stable use of null subjects in the third person (exs (3), especially the non-referential ones.

- (2) a. *Eu/ Ø já te contei sobre a foto que eu vi uma vez?*  
I \_\_already you told about the photo that I saw once  
“Have I told you about the photo that I saw once?”
- b. *Você/ Ø podia estudar com o Nilson,...*  
you \_\_could study with the Nilson  
“You could study with Nilson”
- c. *Ele/ \*Ø fala bem inglês.*<sup>20</sup>  
he \_\_speak well English “He speaks English well.”
- (3) a. *Ø Está chovendo.*  
\_\_ is raining “It is raining”
- b. *Antigamente Ø punha a mesa pra tomar lanche.*  
formerly \_\_laid the table to have snack  
“Formerly, one laid the table to have a snack”
- c. *Ninguém<sub>i</sub> sabe o que Ø<sub>i</sub> quer.*  
nobody knows what \_\_ wants  
“Nobody knows what he wants”

Challenged by this problem, Brazilian researchers start to work on it. At the time there were two theoretical lines to interpret the problem; a) the one that treated the present state as an intermediate diachronic stage, with the prediction that non-referential subjects would also end up filled by a pronoun, like in French (Cyrino, Duarte and Kato 2000)<sup>21</sup>, and b) the one that treats some of the existing null subject as a variable (ex.(4a) (Negrão & Muller 1996; Figueiredo e Silva 2000, Modesto 2000) or a trace (Ferreira 2000, Nunes 2008; Martins & Nunes, 2009) (exs. (4ab b)).<sup>22</sup>

<sup>20</sup> This sentence is possible with a Null Subject as a short elliptical answer for the question “Que língua ele fala bem?” (What language does he speak?)

<sup>21</sup> Cyrino, Duarte and Kato (2000) propose a referential hierarchy, which predicts the route of the change from more referential categories to less referential ones, a hierarchy that also predicts types and sub-types of NSs.

<sup>22</sup> Most lines of research can be found in the articles in Kato & Negrão (eds) (2000).

- (4) a. Ninguém<sub>i</sub> acha que Ø<sub>i</sub> é burro.  
 nobdy thinks that \_\_ is stupid “Nobody thinks that he is stupid”
- b. Eles<sub>i</sub> parecem que t<sub>i</sub> estão cansados.  
 they seem -3pPl that<sub>tare</sub> tired “They seem to be tired”

The first line claims that parameters are morphologically dependent, and that the non-uniform behavior of null subjects derives from the fact that morphology is not regular, or that speakers may present variation across generations (Duarte 1995). The second line presupposes a more radical explanation: Brazilian Portuguese has completely lost the null **pronouns**<sup>23</sup>. Their argument is mainly based on the fact that null subjects in BP cannot occur in islands. A third line was due to acquisition studies (Magalhães 2000; Kato 2005; Martins and Nunes 2009<sup>24</sup>). Based on Magalhães’ (2000) acquisition findings, Kato (2005, 2011) claims that as null referential subjects are not found before schooling, they are not in BP core grammars, and are learned through instruction and not selection, constituting a second grammar. A child in pre-school years would produce the following contrasting sentences:

- (5) a. Ninguém<sub>i</sub> acha que **ele**<sub>i</sub> é burro.  
 b. Eles<sub>i</sub> parecem que **eles**<sub>i</sub> estão cansados.

The Project in which we compared BP and EP supported the last hypothesis. According to Barbosa, Duarte and Kato (2005), BP prescriptive grammar tries to preserve old forms through stylistic rules learned during schooling.

The starting point of the EP vs BP was Kato’s (1999), a theory of the NS parameter in the Minimalist framework. She proposes that the grammatical subject of the NS languages, like EP, is the agreement affix itself and the apparent lexical subject is in a dislocated position in a Clitic Doubling construction (6a. and b). BP is like French (7a), as agreement is no longer pronominal, and the weak pronoun is the subject, which can be doubled by the strong one:

- (6) a. Ele comeu a pizza.  
 he ate the pizza (=“Him, he ate the pizza”)
- b. [ ELE<sub>i</sub> [ TP come-ui [VP t<sub>i</sub> a pizza ]]] EP

<sup>23</sup> See Kato (2009) for a thorough critical review of these authors.

<sup>24</sup> For Martins and Nunes, in their core grammar children have pronouns, but not NSs. Later they discover that T can have incomplete phi-features, which makes the complement subject move to get case in the upper clause.



- (7) a. Lui , il a mangé la pizza. FR  
 b. [ELE [ ele comeu a pizza.]] BP

BP created a paradigm of weak pronouns quasi-homophonous with the strong ones, and doubling today sounds like repetition:

- (8) a. Eu, eu não como pizza. (=Me, I don't eat pizza")  
 b. Você, cê gosta de pizza. (=You, you like pizza)

Kato's theory predicted that:

- a) EP rules out such doublings; in BP doubling is extremely common;  
 b) when the third person pronoun is expressed in EP, it is [+human] because it is a strong pronoun; when the third person is expressed in BP it does not have to be [+human] because it can be either a strong pronoun or a weak one.

One case of third person null subject studied in the EP vs BP Project were the constructions like (9c), first noticed by Galves (1989). In our Project we show that, while in EP the arbitrary subjects are generally coded through the clitic *se* with agreement as in (6a), in BP, with the on-going loss of third person clitics, such a construction is replaced by several other possibilities: *se* without agreement; null clitic and personal pronouns *cê* and *a gente*.

- (9) a. Não **se** usam mais chapéus. EP BP  
 not *se* wear-3PPI any-longer hats  
 "You don't wear hats any-longer."  
 b. Não **se** usa mais chapéu(s) %EP BP  
 not *se* wear-3PSG any-longer hat(s)  
 c. Não  $\emptyset_i$  usa mais chapéu. \*EP BP  
 not \_\_\_ wear any-longer hat  
 d. **Cê** não usa mais chapéu. "You don't wear hat(s) any longer  
 you not wear any-longer hat %EP BP  
 e. **A gente** não usa mais chapéu" "We don't wear hat(s) any longer.  
 we-folks not wear any-longer hats ?EP BP

BP makes use of bare nouns to avoid agreement with *se*.

- (10) a. Admite-(*se*) **estrangeiro**.  
admitted *se* foreigners “Foreigners admitted”  
b. Vende-(*se*) **livro usado**. “Used books for sale  
sell *se* book used

This shows again that constructions with *se*+ agreement (or passive *se*) are preserved in written language and formal genres in BP as opposed to vernacular EP, which retains this construction uniformly and productively (Nunes 1990). Sometimes one can find variation of these forms even in the discourse of single individuals (cf. Kato, Duarte & Barbosa 2003)

- (11) Parte-**se** um ovo ; ( ) põe a gema ; ( ) espa/ ah ah ; ( ) derrama em cima e ( ) põe  
breaks-**se** an egg; ( ) put the yolk ; ( ) spre/ah ah; ( ) spill on top and ( ) put  
[.....] ( ) retira os dois e serve-**se**.  
[.....] ( ) take-away the two and serv-**se** (NURC-D2 POA)

Notice the variation between *se* and null [ ], and also the overt *se*, always enclitic, in the beginning and end of the discourse, where speakers are more sensitive to the written style.

The conclusions in KDB’ (2003) study are the following:

- a) the loss of the passive *se* in BP was caused by the change in the NSP, since only Romance languages with NSs exhibit such an agreement;  
b) the possibility of indefinite NSs without *se* can be attributed to the loss of 3<sup>rd</sup> person clitics in BP (Tarallo 1983, Nunes 1990, and Cyrino 1994); The empty clitic *se* is present, however, in LF, and erased at PF (Kato 1993). This variant is favored when it co-occurs with bare nouns;  
c) BP has only two types of NSs: a) the null expletive (example (4c), b) the null 3<sup>rd</sup> person argument, which is subsumed under the empty clitic *se*, considered an anaphor in the sense of (Reinhardt and Reuland 1993)<sup>25</sup>.

During the EP vs BP bi-national Project, Romance inversion also deserved attention (cf. Britto (2000)). Since in EP word order was used to distinguish types of predication, the author asks herself how such a distinction is codified after BP lost the order VXS. Inspired by Kato (1988) and Martins (1994), she makes use of Kuroda’s (1972) distinction between *thetic* and

<sup>25</sup> See Kato (2009) for a detailed discussion of their conception.

*categorical* types of judgments in natural languages. Working with Romance, Kato and Martins had proposed that VXS and SVX in Romance were used to codifythetic and categorical judgements, respectively. Britto discovers that, except with unaccusative verbs, which retain the contrast VS and SV, BP starts to have the latter forthetic sentences, while Left Dislocation (LD) was the preference structure for categorical judgments <sup>26</sup>.

- (12) a. Telefonou **a Maria**. EP (VS) (Thetic)  
 b. **A Maria** telefonou. EP (SV)(Categorical)
- (13) a. **A Helena** telefonou. BP (SV)(Thetic)  
 b. **A Helena**, ela telefonou. BP (LD-SV)(Categorical)

Formally, if we consider that the preverbal subject, in EP SV sentences, occupies not Spec, TP but a higher  $\Sigma$ P projection, as proposed in Martins (1994), the difference between the *categorical* sentences in EP and in BP can be claimed to be the result of the null or pronominal element in Spec, TP. In both cases the subject would be higher, or dislocated (Kato 1999, 2000).

- (14) a. [ $\Sigma$ P A Maria<sub>i</sub> [TP  $\emptyset_i$  [<sub>T-u</sub> telefon-v [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> tv]]] (Categorical) EP  
 b. [ $\Sigma$ P A Maria<sub>i</sub> [TP **ela**<sub>i</sub> [<sub>T-u</sub> telefon-v [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> telefon- ]]] (Categorical) BP

We could propose, as a consequence, that if we derive VXS from SVX in BP what we get as the result is not the VXS construction but the right dislocation one:

- (15) a. [ [TP  $\emptyset_i$  [<sub>T-u</sub> telefon-v [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> tv]]] [ $\Sigma$ P A Maria<sub>i</sub> ]]  
 a' Telefonou a Maria.  
 b. [TP **ela**<sub>i</sub> [<sub>T-u</sub> telefon-v [<sub>vP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> tv]]] [ $\Sigma$ P A Maria<sub>i</sub> ]]  
 b' Ela telefonou a Maria.

Here I am proposing that the Romance inversion construction can be derived if we move the whole TP to a sentence initial position. Notice that what we get in BP is not the Romance inversion construction, but a right dislocation construction. This would explain why BP lost the Romance inversion.

While in the EP vs BP Project, we were attracted by the left dislocation construction codifying categorical sentences in BP, another construction that called our attention in BP were the so-called *topic-subjects*, in which subjects are definite, topic-like elements, which appear through raising of some sentential element to the position of subjects triggering agreement

<sup>26</sup> See also Kato & Martins (2009) for a BP&EP comparative work onthetic and categorical patterns.

(Duarte 2004; Kato & Duarte 2005). For many linguists, the constructions are attributed to languages of the Topic Prominent type, which do not dispose of expletives<sup>27</sup>.

- (16) a. Chove muito nestas cidades. BP EP  
rain3PSG a lot in-these cities
- b. Estas cidades chovem muito. BP \*EP  
these cities rain3PPL a lot
- (17) a. Furou o pneu do carro. BP EP  
went-flat the tyre of my car
- b. O carro furou o pneu. BP \*EP  
the car went-flat the tyre
- (18) a. Faltou sorte aos meus times. BP EP  
lacked-3PSG luck to-the my teams
- b. Os meus times faltaram sorte. BP \*EP  
the my teams lacked-3PP luck

According to Duarte (2004), the tendency in BP was not only to fill referential null subjects with pronouns, but also to replace null expletives with raised elements, since Topic Prominent languages do not dispose of expletives. The Portuguese linguist Costa ((2010) finds out that the data he collected, mostly from the Portuguese internet, can be considered the same phenomenon, namely instances of topic-subjects. Kato & Duarte (2017) show, however, that raising in EP is to an A'-position, triggering no agreement, while in BP raising is to an A-position, with agreement. In the singular, Dislocation and Topic-subjects look the same:

- (19) a. Estas florestas # **chove** muito no verão. EP ?BP  
these forests rainPSG a lot in-the summer
- b. Estas florestas **chovem** muito no verão. \*EP BP  
these forests rain3pPl a lot in-the summer
- c. Esta floresta **chove** muito no verão. EP BP  
this forest rains a lot in the summer

It seems, however, that EP has also adopted the existential verb *ter* (besides *haver*), a verb that accepts personalization not only in BP, but also in EP (cf. Costa, 2010).

<sup>27</sup> The idea was first inspired by Pontes (1987), a functionalist, and Duarte, a sociolinguist, but formal syntacticians like Galves (1998), Negrão & Viotti (2000), and Modesto (2008), among many others, also adhered to this idea.

- (20) a. Tem muita corrupção no país.  
 has much corruption in-the country  
 “There is much corruption in this country
- b. **Nós temos** muita corrupção no país.  
 we have much corruption in-this country  
 “We have much corruption in this country.”

More recently this sort of construction with topic subjects deserved the attention from linguists working with language contact, which is the case of Avelar and Galves (2011 and 2014), who propose that these topic-subject constructions were due to the contact with Bantu languages.

As Caribbean Spanish also lost the null subject, Kato & Ordoñez (forth.) went looking for such constructions in the *Romania Nova* Project, with the hypothesis that similar constructions might be found in the variety that maintained the null expletive, like in Dominican Spanish (DS)<sup>28</sup>. No topic-subject constructions were found. What we found instead were Clitic Left Dislocation (CLLD) constructions. The conclusion was that in the context where BP has topic-subjects, Dominican Spanish has CLLD.

- (21) a. Les faltó suerte a los equipos. DS  
 3PCI lacked luck to the teams
- b. A los equipos les faltó suerte. CLLD DS
- c. \* Los equipos faltaram suerte. Topic-subjects DS

Kato and Ordoñez raised the following hypothesis concerning the appearance of topic-subjects in BP. As was shown by Cyrino (1993, 2018) and Pagotto (1993, 2018) the clitic paradigm in BP underwent the loss of third person clitics, but preserved the first and second person ones, a fact that was shown in the diachronic Project. With the loss of third person clitics, BP developed the topic-subject constructions for the third person to replace the *categorical* function of CLLD. Independent evidence is presented in Kato and Ordoñez for first and second persons: topic-subject constructions are not possible, and what appears instead are CLLD constructions. The logic of this is that first and second persons did not lose clitics in BP, and, therefore, continue to exhibit CLLD, dispensing the creation of topic-subjects.

- (22) a. Pra mim me faltou sorte. CLLD BP

<sup>28</sup> A corpus was not used, as in other projects, but questionnaires with informants.

- |         |           |                  |               |      |               |     |
|---------|-----------|------------------|---------------|------|---------------|-----|
|         | to me     | CL-1p            | lacked-3ps    | luck |               |     |
| b.      | *Eu       | faltei           | sorte.        |      | Topic subject | *BP |
|         | I         | lacked-1psg      | luck          |      |               |     |
| (23) a. | Para você | te <sup>29</sup> | faltou sorte. |      | CLLD          | BP  |
|         | for you   | Cl-2nd           | lacked luck   |      |               |     |
| b.      | *Você     | faltou sorte.    |               |      | Topic subject | *BP |
|         | you       | lacked luck      |               |      |               |     |

Considering the change from a functional view, we realize that both dative CLLD construction in Spanish and the Topic Subject construction in BP are *categorical* sentences, while the impersonal constructions with null or lexical expletives are *thetic* sentences in Kuroda's (1972) sense. Thus, DS maintained the categorical CLLD construction while acquiring lexical expletives for *thetic* impersonal sentences, BP changed the CLLD constructions to Topic-Subject sentences, while also maintaining the null expletive for *thetic* sentences.

We formalize the typological phenomenon of *topic*-prominence vs *subject*-prominence using Miyagawa's (2010) proposal, known as the "feature inheritance approach." The author follows Chomsky (2005), according to which  $\phi$ -features are not merged in T, but are merged in C and percolate to T during the derivation. With this formulation, he proposes to formally translate Li and Thompson's functional typology of Topic prominent languages vs Subject-prominent languages. According to him, both agreement features and discursive features can be inherited by T from C. He also raises the possibility of the existence of mixed languages that inherit both types of features, like Bantu, and we would add BP.

- (24) a.  $C, \phi \rightarrow T\phi \dots$  (agreement-prominent language - e.g. English)  
 b.  $C, \delta \rightarrow T\delta \dots$  (discourse-prominent language - e.g. Japanese)  
 c.  $C, \delta, \phi \rightarrow T \delta, \phi$  (mixed type of language - e.g. Bantu, BP)

In agreement Prominent language, like English, what takes a constituent to Spec, T is what agrees with the verb. The discursive role of the subject does not matter:

- (25) a. Hamilton won- $\phi$  the race. (Thetic or Categorical)  
 b. Hamilton had his tyre flat. (Categorical)  
 b. *A German won-  $\phi$  the race.* (Thetic)

<sup>29</sup> Brazilian Portuguese uses the original second person clitic *te* with *você* (*Você acha que eu te amo?*)

In a Discourse Prominent language, like Japanese, it is an argument with a discursive role, marked morphologically, that determines what obeys the EPP. If the sentence is categorical the subject is marked *-wa* (=Topic) while if the sentence isthetic, the subject is marked *-ga*, in the nominative case.

- (26) a. Hamilton-wa kiosso-o kata (Categorical)  
           Hamilton-top race-accus won  
       b. Hamilton-wa tiya-ga pankushita. (Categorical)  
           Hamilton-top tyre bursted  
       c. Aru doitsugin-ga kiosso-o kata. (Thetic)  
           a German-nom race-accus won

Topic and subject prominent languages, on the other side, can percolate both discursive and  $\phi$ -features to T.

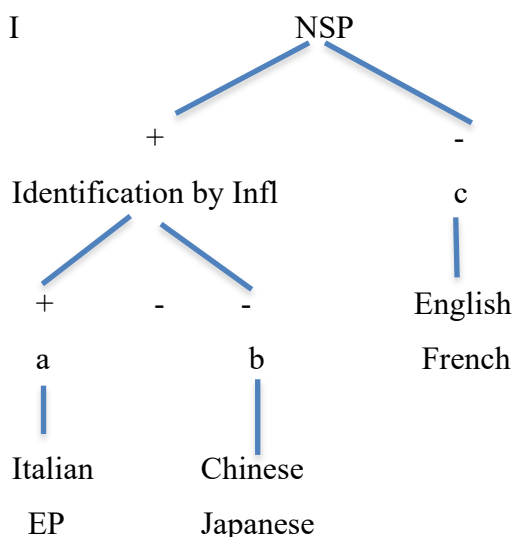
- (27) a. Hamilton ganhou a corrida. (Categorical or Thetic)  
           Hamilton won the race  
       b. O Hamilton furou o pneu. (Categorical)  
           the Hamilton burst the tyre “H. had his tyre flat.”  
       c. Furou o pneu do Hamilton. (Thetic)  
           burst the tyre of-the Hamilton “H.’s tyre went flat.”  
       c. Um alemão ganhou a corrida. (Thetic)  
           a German won the race “A German won the race.”

The Bantu languages, especially Kinande, have the same type of topic-subject sentences of BP. What is important to register is that these topic-subject constructions are described in Miyagawa’s theory without resorting to the NS parameter.

### 3.2. *The recent discussion on the typology of NS languages*

In Kato and Negrão (2000) we represented the division found for the NSP in the literature until then. The Figure below represents the state of art until then:

Figure I



But in 2005, Holmberg launches the concept of “partial NS language”, and later Holmberg and Sheehan (2010) propose to include BP in this group, with other languages like Finnish. The list of properties of such “partial” NS languages would be: a) the null subject is non-thematic (28a): b) the NS is a generic subject of the *one* type in English (cf. ex.(28b)) and c) the referential NS is necessarily controlled by an argument in a higher sentence (cf. (28c)). If the main clause contains *dicendi* or similar verbs, we can designate such subjects as logophoric<sup>30</sup>.

Our first problem is that Japanese, normally classified with languages without inflection, in Fig I above, has exactly a parallel behavior with regard to the sentences below.

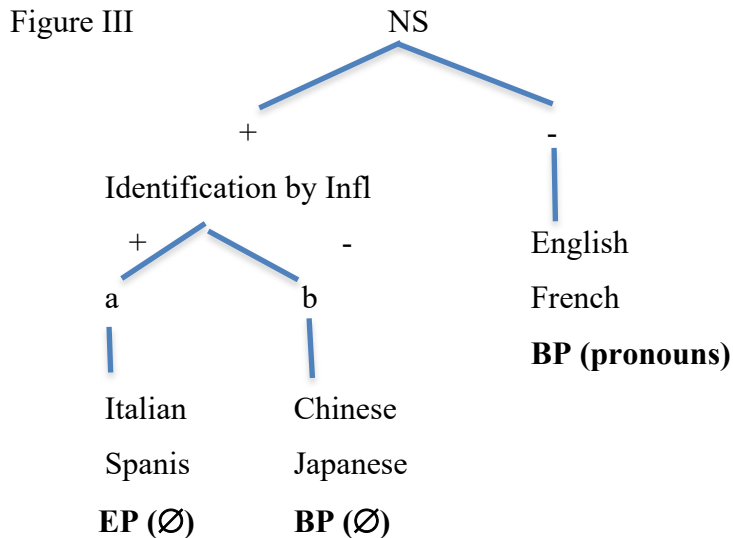
- (28) a.  $\emptyset$  Está chovendo. BP  
 $\emptyset$  is raining  
 “It is raining”
- b.  $\emptyset_{gen}$  Não usa mais chapéu. BP  
 $\emptyset_{gen}$  not wear any-longer hat  
 “You don’t wear hats any longer.”
- c. João<sub>i</sub> disse que  $\emptyset_i$  fala bem espanhol. BP  
 John<sub>i</sub> said that  $\emptyset_i$  speaks well Spanish  
 “John<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i</sub> speaks Spanish well.”

<sup>30</sup> “Logophoric subject” in Kuno’s (1972) sense is the subject of a direct discourse. (i) *John said “I like Mary”*. -> *John said that he liked Mary*.





But notice that the **c** type does not tell English, a -NS language, from Italian, a prototypical +NS language. This shows that the NSP is independent from the Topic Prominence ([ C,  $\delta \rightarrow T\delta$ ]) parameter. But Kato and Duarte (2017) modifies Fig I to show the partial nature of BP regarding the NSP:



Empirically the NS in both Japanese and BP can be a: a) an expletive; b) a generic subject and c) a logophoric subject.

But what the last two Figures show is that BP is similar to Japanese and Chinese, regarding the inheritance parameter, but differ regarding the NS parameter:

- a) Japanese and BP are positive with regard to  $\delta$ -feature inheritance;
- b) BP is also positive with regard to  $\phi$ -feature inheritance, but Japanese is not.

## Conclusions

The four projects, whose descriptions I briefly presented here, made it possible for us to learn a lot about BP, but many questions and problems still remain unanswered. The topic I selected for discussion, the NSP, is still under scrutiny in the linguistic literature, especially after the introduction of the concept “partial NS.” Our Projects developed at UNICAMP may have contributed to understanding the concept, or may have added more fuel to the fire.

I would like to finish this article quoting Chomsky in the cover of Yang’s (2002) book:

“Yang’s carefully crafted and impressively argued study is a significant contribution to the exciting field of language acquisition, and cognitive growth more generally. He has shown how conceptions of “universal grammar” can be integrated with precise ideas about learning/growth mechanisms within a variationist model of language acquisition that yields sharp and well-confirmed predictions over quite an interesting range, with implications for **language change** as well. It is a substantial achievement, sure to become the basis for much fruitful inquiry and research.

We were thought to be heretic generativists, or variationists back in the day, but our master tells us that we are on the right track in embracing such perspective in studies of language change.

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