

Grammatical and idiosyncratic variation in the use of differential object marking in European and Brazilian Portuguese

Variation and Idiosyncrasy in Germanic and Romance

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Experimental Morphosyntax of Romance Languages (2019 - 2023, UZH)

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Structure of the talk

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2. Hypotheses: differences between BP and EP**
3. Elicitation I: coordination and disambiguation
4. Elicitation II: dislocation
5. Elicitation III: quantifiers
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7. Idiosyncratic variation
8. Conclusions

* DOM – differential object marking

** BP – Brazilian Portuguese, EP: European Portuguese

1. DOM in Portuguese

DOM (Bossong 1982, 1991) is a marking split of direct objects (DOs): typically, only some objects (the more prominent ones) receive a marker

Spanish:

(1) Veo (*a) la guitarra.

(2) Veo *(a) la guitarrista.

- phenomenon often displays intrinsic (and idiosyncratic?) variation
- Present in various Romance languages (Gerards 2023) and other language families (Bossong 1991)
- Cover term for different phenomena; in Portuguese, for instance: variation between null and overt pronominal objects (Schwenter 2014)

1. DOM in Portuguese

- Lesser studied case: presence and absence of the object marker *a*

Some few more recent studies: Döhla (2014), Cyrino (2017), Caro Reina (2020), Cyrino & Irimia (2019, 2023)

Döhla (2014: 279): “Field work in Brasil (sic!) and Portugal, however, has demonstrated unmistakably that DOM does not exist anymore in modern spoken Portuguese. [...] This result is based on a questionnaire with 92 minimal sentence pairs differing only in the use or non-use of the object marker *a*. Out of 12 informants there was not a single positive reaction to any of the sentences where the direct object is overtly marked. In addition to that, we used a picture story composed of 40 images for semi-guided elicitation. Within this story, called “The three hunters”, a lot of human beings and animals appear as direct objects. None of them was marked during the telling of the story. Finally, recorded free and spontaneous speech does not exhibit one single case of direct object marking.”

1. DOM in Portuguese

However, there are documented cases of *a*-marking of DOs

(3) “Quando Jesus viu a sua mãe e também tinha visto a João, disse para sua mãe:...” (Bíblia Freestyle)

(4) Amazon staff post on the right
(provided by David Paul Gerards)



Isaac H. (Amazon Staff)

2. Setembro 2020 às 00:37

Olá de novo @Miriã 😊!

Espero que você esteja bem e tenha uma boa noite! 🇧🇷

Poderia acontecer um problema com o pagamento, porém geralmente se processa bem.

Para mais informações lhe recomendo contatar ao seu banco.

Espero que estas informações sejam úteis!

Estamos aqui para ajudá-la! Se você tiver alguma dúvida, entre em contato conosco!

Aproveite o restante do seu dia e obrigado por usar nosso Fórum digital e de dispositivos da Amazon! 😊

Útil? 👍 👎 · Responder

1. DOM in Portuguese

Cyrino (2017: 90f): optional marking in cases of ambiguity, left dislocation and with some quantifiers

(5) Eu vi o menino e *(a)o professor também. (O professor também viu o menino.)

(6) Eu vi o menino e (a)o professor também. (Eu vi os dois.)

(7) A homem pobre não se rouba.

(8) Não se rouba homem pobre.

(9) Ele visitou (a) alguns homens.

(10) *Eu vi a algumas escolas.

Contradiction with Döhla (2014)?

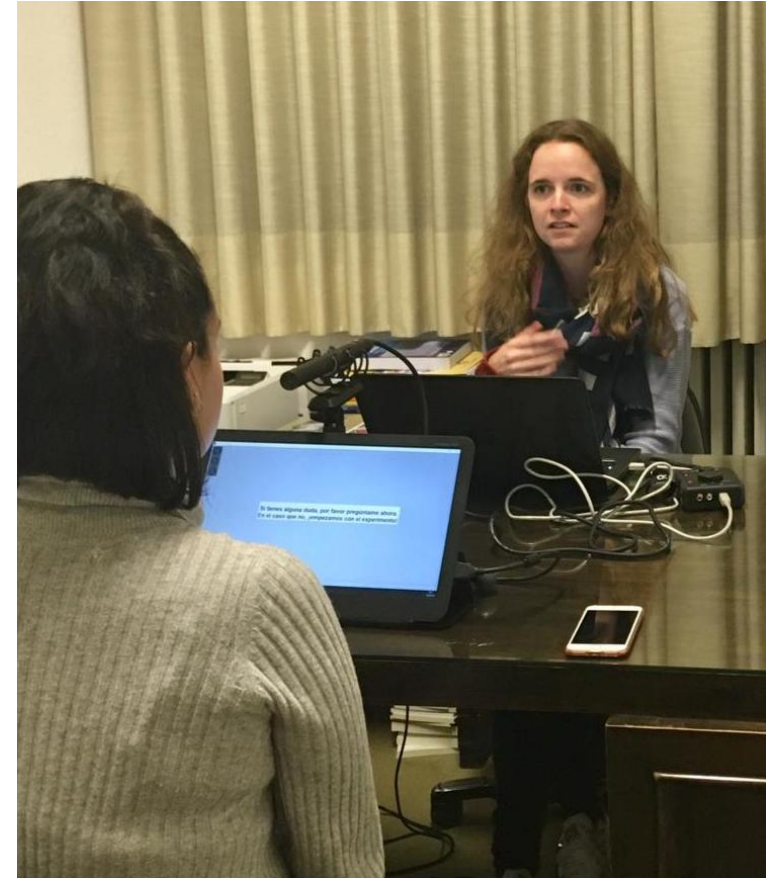
→ Lack of a more robust empirical investigation.

2. Hypotheses: differences between BP and EP

- Döhla (2014): there are no differences, the marker is out of (productive) use
- Cyrino (2017): in both varieties DOs are generally not marked, but there are some cases in BP where the marker is optional; no comments on these cases in EP
- H1: marked DOs will not appear in BP and EP
- H2: In BP the marker will occur (optionally) with coordinated human DO-NPs in order to disambiguate these from elliptical structures in which they are subjects
- H3: In BP the marker will occur in left dislocations of DOs in order to make clear that they are not subjects
- H4: In BP the marker will occur with (some) quantifiers heading human-referring DO-NPs

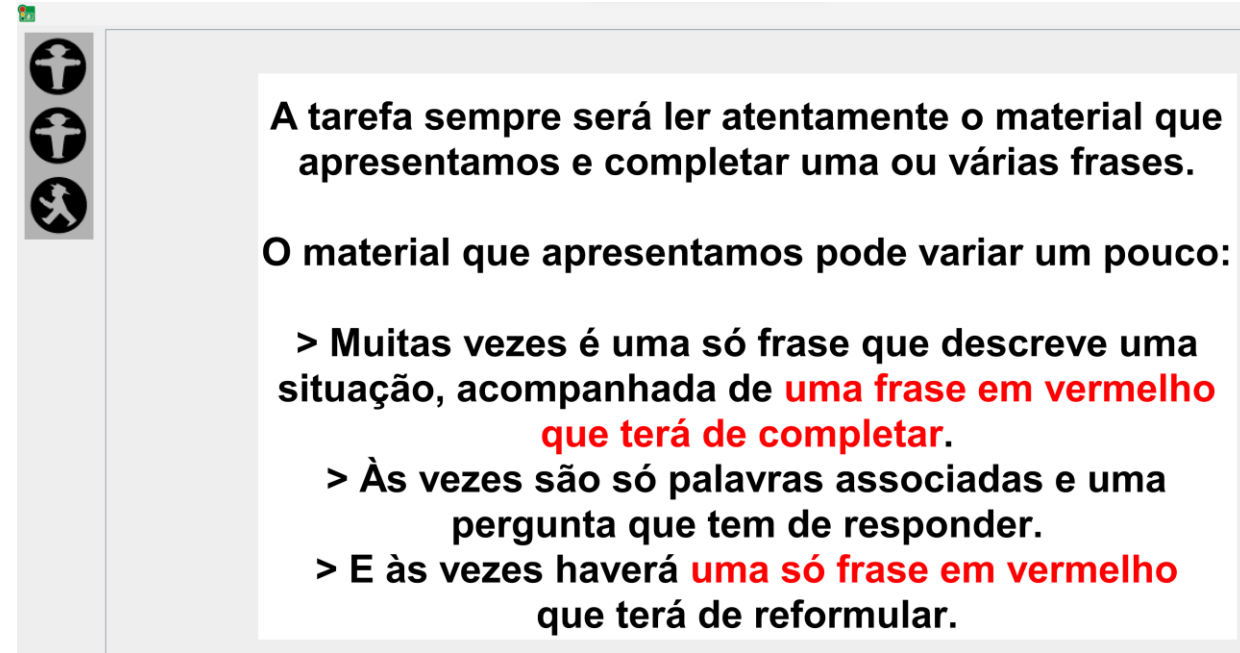
3. Elicitation I: the setup

- participants: university students (not from *letras* etc.)
- elicitation study (and other experiments and interviews) conducted at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (44 participants) and Universidade de Lisboa (48 participants)
- age range 18 – 37
- most 20 – 25 years old
- Instructions and stimuli appear on the participant screen, experimenter navigates through the experiment



3. Elicitation I: the setup

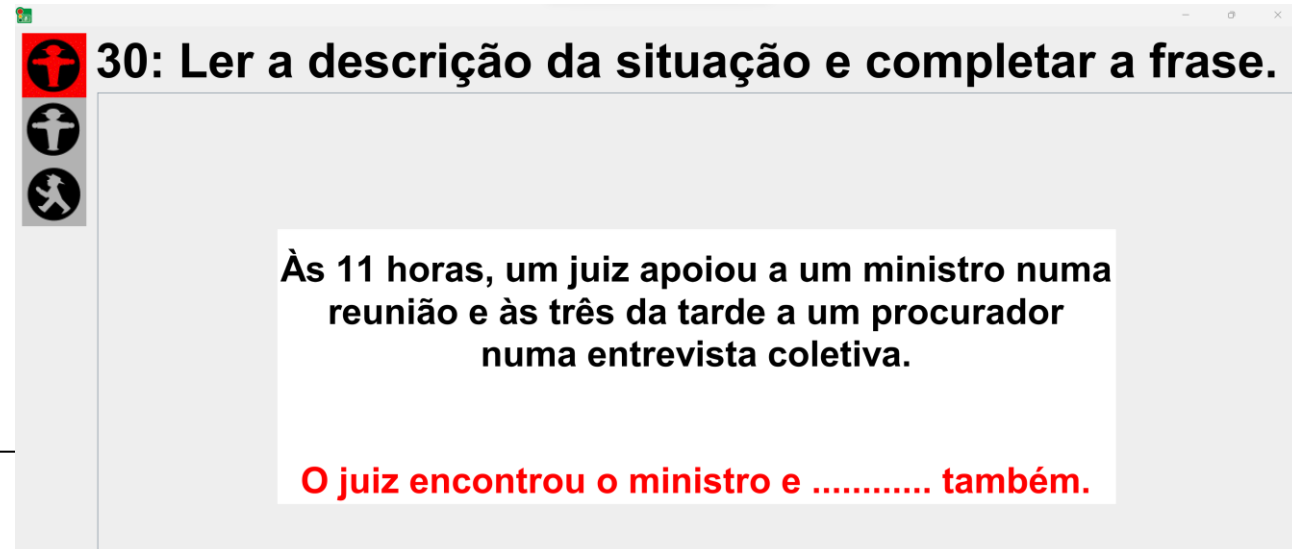
- Experimental protocol implemented with the SpeechRecorder (Draxler & Jänsch 2004)
- 3 slightly different types of tasks
- experimental items of a given list were randomized for each session by the SpeechRecorder
- only the elicited sentence is recorded



A tarefa sempre será ler atentamente o material que apresentamos e completar uma ou várias frases.

O material que apresentamos pode variar um pouco:

- > Muitas vezes é uma só frase que descreve uma situação, acompanhada de **uma frase em vermelho que terá de completar.**
- > Às vezes são só palavras associadas e uma pergunta que tem de responder.
- > E às vezes haverá **uma só frase em vermelho** que terá de reformular.



30: Ler a descrição da situação e completar a frase.

Às 11 horas, um juiz apoiou a um ministro numa reunião e às três da tarde a um procurador numa entrevista coletiva.

O juiz encontrou o ministro e também.

3. Elicitation I: the experimental design

- 5 blocks of 8 items = 40 stimuli/sentences per participant
- Blocks 1-4: 2 conditions within participants X 2 conditions between participants
- 2 sets of stimuli (between participants): one making as much use of fem. def. article and preposition *a* as possible (“priming”), and one without them whenever possible
- within each block, one manipulation based on hypotheses (within participants)

	Coordination		Left-dislocation		Univ. quantifier		(Comparative)		(Other)	
	coord.	ellipsis	OV	VO	animate	inanimate				
Control	8	8	...	...						
“Priming”	8	8	...	...						

3. Elicitation I: coordination

Context 1: coordination

Às 11 horas, um juiz apoiou a um ministro numa reunião e às três da tarde a um procurador numa entrevista coletiva.

Context 2: ellipsis

Um ministro foi falar primeiro com um juiz e depois com um procurador.

Sentence to be completed:

O juiz encontrou o ministro e também.

- 8 different items per list

3. Elicitation I: coordination

Results BP (44 participants):

“valid” responses: 337

“invalid” responses: 14

Unanalyzable responses: 1

Coordination with DOM: 44 (25%, 28 “priming”)

Coordination without DOM: 129

Ellipsis with DOM: 16 (10%)

Ellipsis without DOM: 147

Results PE (48 participants):

“valid” responses: 357

“invalid” responses: 26

Unanalyzable responses: 1

Coordination with DOM: 0

Coordination without DOM: 184

Ellipsis with DOM: 0

Ellipsis without DOM: 173

4. Elicitation II: dislocation

Context:

O Roberto explica ao seu filho que quando se fala com um médico, não se deve iludir. Ele diz:

Stimulus in canonical word order:

"Não se deve iludir"

Stimulus for left dislocation:

"..... não se deve iludir."

- 8 different items per list

4. Elicitation II: dislocation

Results BP (44 participants):

“valid” responses: 273

“invalid” responses: 75

Unanalyzable responses: 4

Canonical word order with DOM: 21

Canonical word order without DOM: 116

Left dislocation with DOM: **80** (50 “priming”)

Left dislocation without DOM: 53

Results PE (48 participants):

“valid” responses: 294

“invalid” responses: 90

Unanalyzable responses: 0

Canonical word order with DOM: 0

Canonical word order without DOM: 159

Left dislocation with DOM: 17 (10%)

Left dislocation without DOM: 118

4. Elicitation III: quantification

Given information: André - todos; Simão - metade; Vinicius – poucos

Question: Quantos primos visitou cada um? / Quantos museus visitou cada um?

Stimulus: O André visitou

- 8 different items per list

4. Elicitation III: quantification

Results BP (44 participants):

“valid” responses: 345

“invalid” responses: 4

Unanalyzable responses: 3

	with DOM	without DOM
Q-hum	22 (21%)	80 (79%)
Q-inan	15 (16%)	80 (84%)
QNP-hum	8 (11%)	63 (89%)
QNP-inan	5 (6%)	72 (94%)

Results EP (48 participants):

“valid” responses: 371

“invalid” responses: 13

Unanalyzable responses: 0

	with DOM	without DOM
Q-hum	8 (14%)	48 (86%)
Q-inan	9 (17%)	43 (93%)
QSN-hum	17 (13%)	114 (87%)
QSN-inan	12 (9%)	120 (91%)

5. Discussion

- H1: marked DOs will not appear in BP and EP
 - falsified (although in only one context *a*-marking is more frequent than non-marking: left-dislocation in BP)
- In BP the marker will occur (optionally) with coordinated human DO-NPs in order to disambiguate these from elliptical structures in which they are subjects
 - Elicitation I BP: 25% marked with coordination, 12% with ellipsis; PE: no marking whatsoever
 - confirmation of H2 for BP, clear contrast to EP

5. Discussion

- H3: In BP the marker will occur in left dislocations of DOs in order to make clear that they are not subjects
 - Elicitation II BP: clear confirmation, also some cases of DOM with canonical word order
 - Elicitation II EP: only some cases of DOM with left dislocation (10%), none with canonical order
 - clear contrast between BP and EP

5. Discussion

- H4: In BP the marker will occur with (some) quantifiers heading human-referring DO-NPs
 - Elicitation III (universal quantifier): DOM between 6% and 21% in BP and between 9% and 17% in EP
 - however: surprisingly, there are systematic occurrences of DOM with inanimate NPs and with the use of pronouns referring to inanimate referents
 - universal quantifier seems to allow for DOM with both animate and inanimate referents in EP and BP

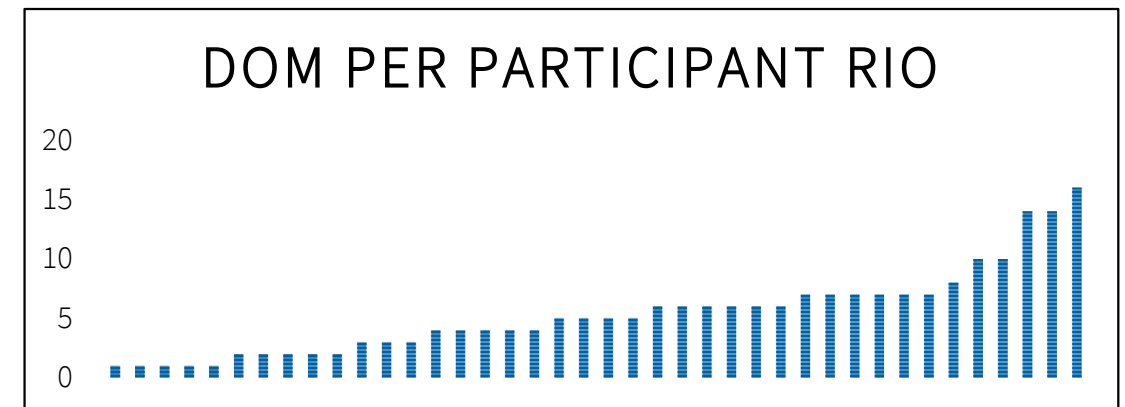
6. Idiosyncratic variation

BP (excluding comparatives)

- ~50% or more use DOM in each context
 - left-dislocation: most that do it, do it a lot!
 - 4 individuals never used DOM
- not an effect of a few individuals

EP

- 6 individuals account for ~50% of cases
- 24 speakers out of 48 never used DOM



Participants	BP	EP
Univ. quantifier	20/44	18/48
Coordination	28/44	0/48
Left-dislocation	29/44	9/48

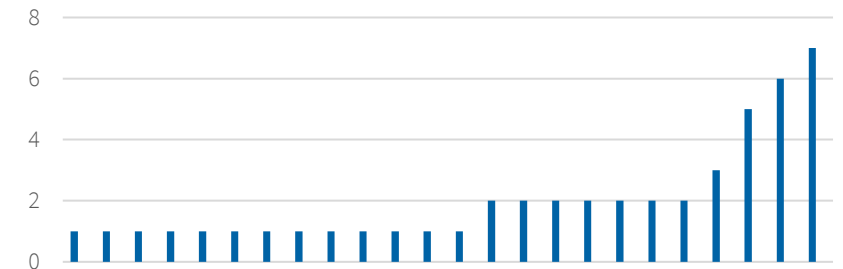
6. Idiosyncratic variation

Lisbon: total of 48 cases of DOM in 1536 elicited sentences

- 50% of speakers used DOM at least once (14f, 10m)
- 1 individual out of 48 accounts for ~14%, 3 for ~38%
- Gender speakers with highest rates of DOM: F, M, M
- **6 individuals out of 48 account for ~50% of cases**
- 24 speakers out of 48 never used DOM (14f, 10m)

➤ perhaps minor priming effect for participants who start to use DOM more than once or twice

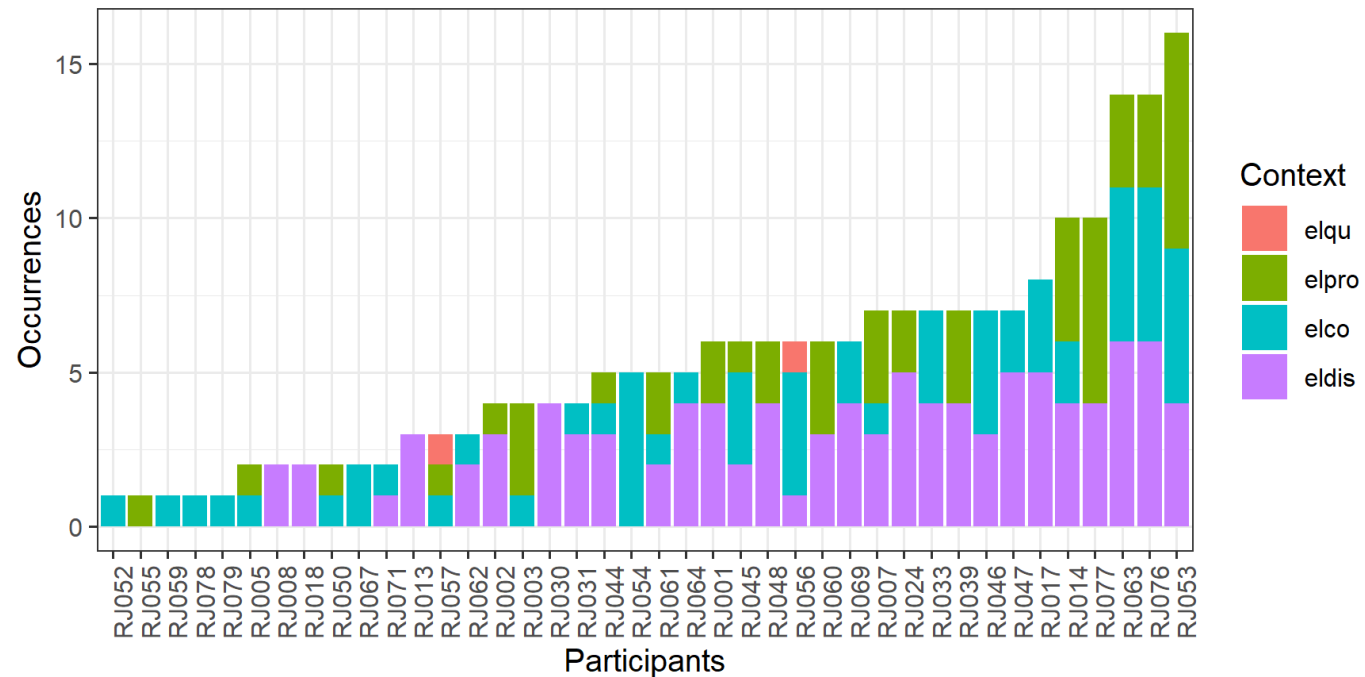
DOM per participant Lisbon



6. Idiosyncratic variation

Rio: total of 212 cases of DOM in 1408 elicited sentences

- only 4 participants never use DOM
- DOM per participant and context
 - similar number of participants use DOM in dislocation and coordination contexts ~30
 - only 16 used DOM in both
 - only 7 used DOM in all three contexts
- no clear connection between contexts



7. Conclusions

Summing up...

- according to the results, DOM (still) seems to exist in Portuguese
- DOM is more productive in BP than in EP
- In EP the domains of DOM are
 - universal quantifier
 - (left-dislocation)
- In BP DOM is used as a disambiguation strategy
 - coordination (25%)
 - left dislocation (60%)

7. Conclusions

- Cyrino & Irimia (2023) provide a unified syntactic account for the PB contexts
 - might help to explain the differences between EP and BP
- Idiosyncratic variation
 - EP: no gender difference found, few individuals account for most of the data
 - BP: most speakers used DOM in a subset of the three contexts (mostly two out of three), only 7 in all of them
- Being a “marginal” phenomenon, *a*-marking DOM seems to be subject to considerable idiosyncratic variation in Portuguese

Thank you!

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