

On the morphosyntax of bare nominals in Brazilian Portuguese, Catalan and Spanish

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The problem. The syntax of Romance languages presents an interesting puzzle when we consider the distribution of bare count nominal (BNs). It has been pointed out in the literature that Brazilian Portuguese (BrP) allows BNs to freely occur with all kinds of verbs (Müller 2002, Müller & Oliveira 2004, Munn & Schmitt 2005, Lopes 2006, among others). However, it is necessary to look at the different argument structures of the various classes of verbs in order to fully understand in what sense BrP differs from other Romance languages.

Aim. In this paper, we account for the special distribution of BNs in BrP in comparison to other Romance languages. We postulate that BNs in this language come in two shapes. Real BNs, by which we mean bare count nouns not specified for number and definiteness, correspond to NPs that can only occur as objects of a reduced class of predicates (namely, those that express a HAVE-relation) and are interpreted as property-type expressions. Other BNs can be definite and, although not morphophonologically specified for number, they are DPs with null Determiners morphosyntactically specified for Number features and are interpreted as entity-type expressions. We base our analysis on the distribution and meaning of BNs, by comparing BrP with other Romance languages, mainly (Old and Modern) French on the one hand, and Spanish and Catalan on the other.

Core facts and challenges. BrP is especially interesting to study in relation to the topic of BNs because it poses several challenges, both at an empirical and at a theoretical level: the apparent optionality of the determiner, the variation in number realization within the nominal domain (and, by extension, the variation in subject-verb number agreement), the occurrence of BNs in all argument positions, and the meaning that is to be associated with these BNs depending on the type of predicate they combine with. See (1) and the BrP / Spanish contrast in (2).

- (1) a. Os brasileiros são trabalhadores. (Müller 2002:280, ex.(2))
the.PL Brazilian.PL are hardworking.PL
'Brazilians are hardworking.'
b. Brasileiros são trabalhadores. (Müller 2002:280, ex.(5))
Brazilian.PL are hardworking.PL
c. Os brasileiro é trabalhador.
the.PL Brazilian is hardworking.SG
d. Os brasileiro são trabalhadores.
the.PL Brazilian are hardworking.PL
e. *O brasileiros é trabalhadores.
the Brazilian.PL is hardworking.PL
- (2) a. Maria teve carro. a'. María tenía coche.
Maria had car
'Maria had a car.'
b. João cantava madrigal. b'. *Juan cantaba madrigal.
João sang madrigal.
'João sang madrigals'.
c. Vai cair livro no chão. c'. *Va a caer libro en el piso.
go fall book on.the floor
'The book is going to fall on the floor.'
d. João limpava banheiro. d'. *Juan limpiaba baño.
João cleaned bathroom
'João cleaned the bathroom.'
e. Brasileiro é trabalhador. e'. *Brasileño es trabajador.

Brazilian is hardworking
'Brazilians are hardworking.'

Theoretical framework. We assume the syntactic theory of argument structure developed by Hale & Keyser (2002) and Mateu (2002). We follow Dobrovie-Sorin *et al.* (2006) and Espinal & McNally's (2007, 2011) findings according to which BNs in Catalan, Romanian, and Spanish can only occur in object position of a restricted class of predicates that denotes a HAVE-relation, which excludes DO unergatives, unaccusatives and transitives. Following Delfitto & Shroten (1991), Bouchard (2002), Déprez (2005) and Dobrovie-Sorin (2012), among others, we assume a distinction between a Number projection, (interpretable and uninterpretable) morphosyntactic Num features, and morphophonological number.

Analysis. We examine the structure (and meaning) of BNs and we discuss how they correlate with different argument structures of various classes of verbs. We claim that BNs correspond to NPs or full DPs depending on the argument structure of the verb. HAVE-predicates are the only ones that may combine with NPs in syntactic object position. We compare the distribution of BNs in Spanish and BrP. We also show a parallel between BrP null objects and Catalan clitic *en* (they both have nominal status, similar to common nouns), a behaviour that must be distinguished from the BrP pronoun *ele* and the Catalan accusative third person clitic *el/la*.

Our arguments in support of an analysis of BNs not occurring with HAVE-predicates in BrP rely on a full DP structure with a null D specified for an [iNum] feature. Together with Munn and Schmitt (2005), we propose that BrP allows null Ds, but, differently from them, we propose that Number is morphosyntactically specified on Ds in the language. We examine the internal structure of the DP in minimalist terms and propose a DP-internal Inverse Agree relation that consists on a checking operation of uninterpretable Num features and operates top-down (cf. Biberauer & Roberts 2011, Biberauer & Zeijlstra 2012). We relate the loss of number marking on nouns with the presence of uninterpretable Number features that need to be checked. The proposed structure is in (3) and the derivation in (4) for the DPs is in (1a-d).

(3) [DP D_[iNUM] [NumP Num_[iNUM] [_{NP} n_[uNUM] [_{NP} N]]]]

(4) a. [DP OS/∅_[iNUM] [NumP Num_[iNUM] [_{NP} n_[uNUM] [_{NP} brasileiro]]]]

b. [DP OS/∅_[iNUM] [NumP Num_[iNUM] [_{NP} brasileiro_[iNUM] [_{NP} brasileiro]]]]

The Num head is specified by a [iNUM] feature shared between D and Num. That is, the feature [iNUM] is an inherent syntactic feature of D and Num, no matter whether D is overt or covert. In (4b), the root *brasileiro* is moved to *n* to value a Gender feature (not represented here), and the [uNUM] feature of *n* is checked by a matching [iNum] feature. This analysis supports our proposal that variation on morphophonological number realization on the noun (*brasileiros*, *brasileiro*) is postsyntactic, and that, in spite of the superficial variation, the syntactic structure from which (4b) can be derived is (4a). Our syntactic analysis predicts the ungrammaticality of (1e) (Cyrino & Espinal 2013).

Selected references

Biberauer, T. & I. Roberts. 2011. Negative words and related expressions: a new perspective on some familiar puzzles. In *The Evolution of Negation: Beyond the Jespersen Cycle*, eds. Pierre Larrivée and Richard Ingham, 23-59. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. **Biberauer, T. & H. Zeijlstra. 2012.** Negative concord in Afrikaans: filling a typological gap. *Journal of Semantics* 29: 345-371. **Cyrino, S. & M.T. Espinal. 2013.** Bare Nominals in Brazilian Portuguese: more on the DP/NP analysis Accepted for publication in *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*. **Espinal, M. T. & L. McNally. 2011.** Bare nominals and incorporating verbs in Catalan and Spanish. *Journal of Linguistics* 47: 87-128. **Müller, A. 2002.** The semantics of generic quantification in Brazilian Portuguese. *Probus* 14: 279-298. **Munn, A. & C. Schmitt. 2005.** Number and indefinites. *Lingua* 115: 821-855.