Syntactic positions for DOM: the case of Brazilian Portuguese and Romanian

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Recent contributions to DOM have emphasized the observation that the licensing and interpretation of such objects require both dedicated syntactic positions (between V and vP, as in 1), as well as semantic processes like *free choice functions* (López 2012, building on Reinhart 1997, 2006, as well as Chung and Ladusaw 2003, etc.,). In this abstract we present evidence indicating *several loci* of merge for differential objects (between V and v, Spec vP, above vP); the presence of merge positions above v in turn can explain anti-reconstruction patterns of such objects, as well as obligatory marking. Our data come mainly from Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and Romanian.

(1) $[_{vP}$ EA v $[_{\alpha P}$ DO α $[_{VP}$ V DO]]] (also Travis 2010; Johnson 1991; Koizumi 1995; Baker and Collins 2006)

DOM

Brazilian Portuguese. Schwenter (2006) connects anaphoric objects in BP with Differential Object Marking (DOM), since those anaphoric objects which have [+animate, +specific] antecedents are overt, whereas those which are [-animate, -specific] are null. This is comparable, according to the author, to what happens in languages like Spanish (i.e., a similar distinction between *a*-marked objects and other objects). Hence, while in Spanish differential objects are signaled by an extra piece of morphology, in BP differential objects can only be overt tonic pronouns, while other types of non-specific objects are null. In this paper, we show that BP null objects (NO) indeed show restrictions derivable from a more general constraint in the grammar that leads to effects resembling DOM, although the picture is more refined than in Schwenter (2006). **NO vs Overt pronouns.** NOs are more common with [-animate] antecedents, as in (3a); full pronouns can only be used when the antecedents are specific ((2b) and (3c) vs. (3b)). In (2a) the antecedent is animate, but it is also generic, thus non-specific; therefore, only a NO is allowed. In (3b) the antecedent is inanimate and non-specific; therefore, a full pronoun is disallowed.

(2a) Pedro insulta presos$_i$ depois de prender $\emptyset_i$. b. Pedro leu o livro$_i$ e deixou *ele*$_i$ em casa.
    Pedro insults prisoners after of arrest   Pedro read the book and left it at home
  ‘Pedro insult prisoners after arresting (them).’   ‘Pedro read the book and left it at home.’

(3) a. O Pedro experimentou os casacos$_i$ antes de comprar $\emptyset_i$.   [BP]
    The Pedro tried the coats before of buy
    ‘Pedro tried on the coats before buying (them).’

  b. *O Pedro experimenta casacos$_i$ antes de comprar eles$_i$.   [BP]
    The Pedro tries coats before of buy them.

  c. Eu conheço *o menor infrator*$_i$ *vestido de vermelho*. Visitei *ele*$_i$ na prisão.
    I know the juvenile offender dressed in red.   Saw him in-the prison.
    ‘I know the specific juvenile offender dressed in red. I saw him in prison.’

The distribution of null objects vs. overt pronouns depending on the antecedent is illustrated in Table 2.

ANTECEDENT	ELLIPSIS	OVERT PRONOUN
Specific, inanimate	√	√
Specific, animate	*	√
Non-specific, inanimate	√	*
Non-specific animate	√	*

TABLE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF NULL OBJECTS VS. OVERT PRONOUNS IN BP

Cyrino (1994) proposes that NOs in BrP are (DP) ellipsis, and as such, besides other properties, they are only possible when there is strict parallelism of structures (see Cyrino & Lopes 2013). On the assumption that object ellipsis must be licensed by a functional head outside V (see Lobeck 1987, Cyrino & Matos 2005, Lopes 2014, a.o.), the data from BP provide clear-cut evidence that there are several positions for the licensing of objects. In (4) a [-specific, -animate] object is licensed inside VP, via V raising to [α]. This corresponds to a null object. In (5), [-animate, + specific] objects are licensed when V further raises to v.

(4) …..$[_{vP}$ EA v $[_{\alpha P}$ [V α] $[_{VP}$ <V> DO]]]

(5)…..$[_{vP}$ EA [[<V α>] v]]$[_{\alpha P}$ [<V α>] $[_{VP}$ <V> DO]]]

Crucially, [[+specific], [+animate]] objects are never null. Hence they cannot be licensed by ellipsis and must be above a functional position where V-movement is possible. Knowing that the BP verb has lost long movement (outside vP, see Cyrino 2013), the logical conclusion is that such differential objects must be licensed outside vP.

(6) ……**DO** [$_{vP}$ EA v [$_{αP}$ α [$_{VP}$ V DO]]]

Binding tests also provide further support. If in Spanish DOM cannot bind a reflexive inside an external argument (7), in BP this is possible with [+animate, + specific] objects *only*, as seen in (8).

(7) SPANISH: [Context: So, what happened yesterday?]

(7)	Ayer	no	atacó	***su*$_{*i}$**	propio	padre	***a***	***ningún*$_i$**	niño.
	Yesterday	NEG	attacked	his	own	father	DOM	no	boy.

'His own father attacked no boy yesterday.'   (ex.   \

BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE:

(8)	Ontem	o	pai	***deles*$_i$**	atacou		***(todos) os meninos*$_i$**		
	Yesterday	the	father	their own	attacked		(all)	the	children
	e	a	mãe	deles$_i$	não	ajudou	***eles*$_i$**		
	and	the	mother	their own	NEG	helped	them.		

'Yesterday their own father attacked the children and their mother didn't help them.'

Anti-reconstruction. More evidence for a DOM position above vP comes from anti-reconstruction patterns. As an illustration, consider DOM with SCs (in many Romance languages this is a context which requires obligatory DOM), as in (9)). Romanian is a very good example here, as both DOM and non-DOM indefinites are possible; as *necessary* is a modal adjective with existential force, and assuming a SC analysis, a narrow scope reading (obtained through reconstruction inside the small clause, below the matrix predicate - see Stowell 1991, May 1977, 1985, etc.)) is possible for the non-DOM object in (10). If DOM marking is used instead, the narrow scope reading is not possible anymore (9).

(9) Il   considera ***pe un   student*** necesar (pentru un proiect)   [Romanian]
    Clt.3.m.sg.acc. considers   DOM   a   student necessary (for a project)
    A student considers >> necessary; *necessary >> a student

(10) Considera   un   student   necesar.   [Romanian]
       Considers   a   student   necessary
       Considers >> a student; a student >> considers

The question is then: (i) what blocks the narrow-scope reading in (9)? The answer cannot simply be that DOM does not allow reconstruction; Alboiu and Hill (2013), a.o., provide clear evidence of raising from finite contexts where DOM permits reconstruction.

Answer: The availability of various DOM merge sites can straightforwardly explain the Romanian anti-reconstruction patterns in a similar way to the BP data. Such sites are correlated with distinct readings/sensitivity to other syntactic processes like ellipsis. This prediction is borne out in the case of BP, as can be seen from a contrast between (11) and (12). In (12), *the student* must be interpreted as [+specific], when the pronoun is spelled-out. As expected, a narrow scope reading is not possible. In (11), reconstruction is possible.

(11) a. Pedro considera um estudante necessário (para o projeto) e vai contratar **Ø.**   [BP]
         Pedro considers a student necessary (for the project) is going to hire
         *a student   >> necessary; necessary >> a   student

 (12) a. Pedro considera um estudante necessário (para o projeto) e vai contratar **ele.**   [BP]
          Pedro considers a student necessary (for the project) is going to hire   him
          a student>> necessary ; *necessary >> a student

In (12), the attachment of the differential object is above vP (the edge), as shown in (6); as vP constitutes a strong phase, after transfer, the high differential objects will be in a higher phase. This explains the absence of narrow scope readings: objects cannot A-reconstruct across a phase boundary and, therefore, narrow scope readings are not possible in Romanian DOM. Moreover, binding possibilities similar to (8) are possible in Romanian, indicating that the differential object is in a position above vP. In conclusion the data from both Romanian and BP indicate that differential objects can be licensed in a position above vP, without being subject to information structure constraints (contrary to López 2012). Thus the intermediate position [Spec, α] below v but above VP is not the only licensing site for marked objects.