

First person anaphora and agreement in Brazilian Portuguese

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Introduction: The variation between the first-person plural pronominal forms *nós* and *a gente* in Portuguese has been studied by a large number of researchers, including Lopes (1999, 2003) and Omena (1998). *A gente* is classified as a grammaticalized personal pronoun which can alternate with the 1 person plural pronoun *nós* ‘we’ (i.e., Costa & Pereira 2005). Competition between these forms has resulted in verbal variation and may or may not produce morphological manifestations of number on the verb when these pronouns are in the subject position. In addition, when the forms *nós* and *a gente* are resumed by an item with which they have a co-reference relationship, competition dynamics between the forms may be found, and *nos* and *se* are the co-referring object pronouns for *nós* and *a gente*, and there are some additional locality constraints (Menuzzi, 2004). Examples (1) and (2) illustrate the type of data analyzed in this study:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) | (2) |
| a. A gente se viu no espelho | a. Nós se viu no espelho |
| A gente SE.cl saw.3sg on.the mirror | We SE.cl saw.3sg on.the mirror |
| b. A gente se vimos no espelho | b. Nós se vimos no espelho |
| A gente SE.cl saw.1pl on.the mirror | We SE.cl saw.1pl on.the mirror |
| c. ??A gente nos viu no espelho | c. ??Nós nos viu no espelho |
| A gente 1pl.cl saw.3sg on.the mirror | We 1pl.cl saw.3sg on.the mirror |
| d. A gente nos vimos no espelho | d. Nós nos vimos no espelho |
| A gente 1pl.cl saw.1pl on.the mirror | We 1pl.cl saw.1sg on.the mirror |

Aim: The central point of this study is to discuss why in sentences (1c) and (2c) the grammaticality of the data seems degraded, while the combinations in the other sentences sound perfectly possible. The judgements are previously based on our intuition as native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese (BP), but on-line and off-line experiments are being carried out in order to compare the obtained results with the theoretical reasoning presented so far. **Theoretical Background:** According to Costa and Silva (2006), BP offers two possibilities for number morphology: BP1 stands for the varieties with number morphology realized on the verb and represents the more conservative varieties of the use of the language (typically written), while BP2 stands for the varieties without number morphology on the verb and represents the more colloquial varieties of the language (typically spoken). As seen in (1c) and (2c), some restrictions seem to act on the clitic *nos*, which, according to our judgements, seems to be conditioned to the realization of number morphology (plural) on the verb, as is shown in (1d) and (2d). Reinterpretations of the homogeneity principle (Collins; Postal, 2012: 215; see (3)), as proposed by Das (2011) and by Carvalho and Brito (2017), provide evidence that the possibilities of pronominal co-referencing are restricted by the verbal agreement system as per the verbal agreement hypothesis (see (4)). This hypothesis would explain the degradation of the data in which *nos* appears as an anaphora, along with the utterances in which verbs do not show inflection morphology for the first-person plural.

(3) Homogeneity principle (**HP**): If pronouns A and B are members of the same [...] chain, then for every ϕ -feature F, A and B both agree in F either with its immediate antecedent or with the same source as the other.

(4) Verbal agreement hypothesis (**VAH**): Cross-linguistic variation of availability of pronominal agreement with a secondary source is constrained by the variation on the verbal morphological system. Specifically, pronominal agreement with a secondary source is allowed only in languages with impoverished verbal morphology.

In line with the VAH, Nunes and Martins (2017:3) propose ϕ -Minimality:

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A given set of ϕ -features ϕ_1 cannot agree with a set of ϕ -features ϕ_3 if there is an intervening ϕ -set ϕ_2 such that ϕ_1 is a proper subset of ϕ_2 :

$\phi_1 \dots \phi_2 \dots \phi_3$ if $\phi_1 \subsetneq \phi_2$
 | _____ * _____ |

Proposal: ϕ -minimality may be interpreted as a purely syntactic version (in terms of Starke 2009) of the VAH, which would be its morphophonological counterpart. We propose that the two hypotheses are complementary, since a purely syntactic approach to address the data in (1-2) would not be sufficient, as *nós* and *a gente* both have, a priori, the same set of phi-features. We assume, then, that both *nos* and the salient morphological agreement pattern found in some varieties of BP, obey the VAH because *nós* is a more specific pronominal form than both the anaphoric non-realization (empty pronoun) and the *se* form (cf. Brito, 2009). Evidence of this assumption is seen in the degradation of the reading of the formulated data set by Nunes and Martins (2017), in (5), though the ungrammaticality of the first person plural inflection in (5c) is not borne out in all varieties of BP:

- (5) a. Nós saímos sem **encontrar/encontrarmos** com o João.
 we left without meet-INF/meet-**1PL** with the João
 b. Nós saímos sem nos %**encontrar/encontrarmos** com o João
 we left without usCL meet-INF/meet-**1PL** with the João
 c. Nós saímos sem se encontrar/***encontrarmos** com o João
 we left without SECL meet-INF/meet-**1PL** with the João
 ‘We left without meeting with João

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