

A FORMAL EXPLANATION FOR A CASE OF VARIATION BETWEEN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE AND BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE*

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ABSTRACT: A comparison between Brazilian Portuguese (BP) and European Portuguese (EP) is presented in order to show that the null object in BP – unlike the null object in EP, which is claimed to be a variable (Raposo (86)) – cannot be classified either as a pure variable or as a pure pro. Three alternative classification possibilities for the BP null object will then be assessed: an A-bar pro analysis in the line of the proposal of Cinque (1990), a null epithet analysis in the spirit of Huang (88)'s analysis of null objects in Chinese and an analysis which considers null objects in BP different from all of the previously discussed types. We will then argue in favor of the null epithet analysis as the one which can best account for null objects in BP.

KEY WORDS: syntactic variation; generative grammar; null objects.

0. INTRODUCTION

This article examines a case of variation between Brazilian Portuguese and European Portuguese (henceforth BP and EP) concerning the grammaticality of null objects and proposes an explanation to the observed variation based on the Principles and Parameters theoretical framework (Chomsky 81, 86; Chomsky & Lasnik 93). It is argued that the observed variation between the acceptability of null objects in BP and EP indicates that the underlying structure of null object constructions is different in the two dialects of Portuguese: whereas the EP null object can be analyzed as a syntactic variable (Raposo(86)), the BP null object would be a null epithet. The article is organized as fol-

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lows: section 1.1. will present the relevant facts regarding the occurrence of null objects in BP and in EP; section 1.2 will further explore the variation between BP and EP, reviewing the analysis proposed for EP by Raposo (86); in section 2, it is shown that the restrictions on null objects which hold for EP do not hold for BP; in section 3, we review the pro analysis of null objects, discussing the problems for this analysis. In section 4, we will provide evidence in order to demonstrate that the BP null object cannot be classified neither as a pure variable nor as a pure pronominal category. Finally, in section 5 we will propose that the object EC in complement clauses in BP be classified as a null epithet, a type of R-expression with a [+pronominal] feature. Section 6 summarizes the conclusions of the paper.

1. THE VARIATION: BP VS. EP

1.1. THE BP FACTS

Brazilian Portuguese is a pro-drop language with an SVO basic word order. It has a rich verbal inflection system which indicates person, number, tense and mood by means of suffixes. As other Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish, and Catalan, it allows missing subjects. Unlike Italian and like Chinese or Japanese (cf. Huang, 1984; Hasegawa, 1985), it allows missing objects, even though there is no object morphological agreement. It also has a paradigm of object pronouns or clitics which is similar to the system generally found in the Romance languages. It is a well known fact in the literature that clitics are disappearing in oral BP and even in informal written BP. Tarallo (1984) analyzed 45 hours of recorded data in which no third person clitics were observed whatsoever and the only third person pronouns in object position were the full lexical pronouns. Similarly, Duarte (1989) has also shown in her sociolinguistic study on the use of the accusative clitic, the

lexical pronoun and the null object in colloquial BP, that the null object occurs in 62.6% of the utterances in her 40 hour corpus, whereas the clitic appears in only 4.9 % of the sentences, the full nominative pronoun in 15.4 % and anaphoric NPs in 17.1% of the cases. Therefore, although BP has a system of object clitics which is still productive in certain formal registers, BP speakers will prefer to resort either to the gap or to the nominative lexical pronoun, as exemplified in (2) and (3) below:

(1) *Você viu o João-i?*

“Did you see João?”

(2) - *Vi [e]-i ontem no clube.*

saw [e]-i yesterday in the club

“I saw (him) yesterday in the club.”

(3) - *Vi ele-i ontem no clube.*

saw he-i yesterday in the club

“I saw (him) yesterday in the club.”

(4) - *Vi-o ontem no clube.*

saw him-i yesterday in the club

“I saw him yesterday in the club.”

This ability to drop objects, which approaches BP from so called “cool” languages such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean, is not shared to the same extent by any other Romance language, including European Portuguese (EP). In EP null objects are not so frequent and alternate only with the clitic. Sentences such as (3) above, as Galves (1989) points out, would be absolutely ungrammatical in EP, what suggests that the underlying structure of (2) is different in the two dialects of Portuguese.

1.2. THE NULL OBJECT IN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE: THE VARIABLE ANALYSIS

Raposo (1986) argues that the null object in EP is an empty category of the variable type, such as a wh-trace, which is bound by an element in a nonargument or A' -position, that is, an element which is in a peripheral position in the sentence, a position which does not receive thematic role or grammatical function. Such a position can typically be occupied by a topic, such as exemplified in (5):

- (5) [_{TOP} O João-i, [_S eu vi [e]-i ontem na TV]]
"João, I saw [e] yesterday on TV"

Following Huang's (1984) analysis for Chinese, Raposo proposes that the null object in EP can be characterized as what Hankamer and Sag (1976) call pragmatically controlled anaphora. In this case, the null object does not need a linguistically present antecedent and could be analyzed as a variable A' -bound by a *zero topic* made available by the previous discourse or the pragmatic context, such as in (6):

- (6) [_{TOP} [e]-i, [_S eu vi [e]-i ontem na TV]]
"[e]-i, I saw [e]-i yesterday on TV"

In Huang's (1984) analysis the null object with a specific and definite interpretation is considered to be a "variable" bound by a null topic, that is a [-anaphoric / - pronominal] element. According to this proposal, true null pronouns are not possible in the absence of morphological identification. Thus in a sentence such as (7) in BP the embedded object EC may refer only to someone whose reference is fixed outside of the entire sentence, but not to the matrix subject *João* whereas in (8) the subject EC may be bound by the matrix subject:

- (7) *João-i disse que Pedro viu [e]-i.
"João-i said that Pedro saw (him-i)"
- (8) João-i disse que [e]-i viu o Pedro.
"João-i said that (he-i) saw Pedro."

This subject/object asymmetry is explained in Huang's system in terms of the functional determination of empty categories as in Chomsky (1981). Huang argues that the object EC in (7) can be locally A'-bound by a zero topic that is coreferential with a topic introduced in the prior discourse or available in the pragmatic context. Therefore the empty object is a variable, an EC like a Wh-trace, which is bound by an element in an A'-position.

Raposo (1986) shows that the restrictions imposed on the occurrence of the null object with a specific and definite interpretation in European Portuguese are adequately explained if it is analyzed as a syntactic variable resulting from the movement of PRO to COMP. A sentence such as (9) would be assigned the S-structure representation in (10):

- (9) A Joana viu [e] na TV ontem.
"Joana saw ___ on TV yesterday."

- (10) [Top e-i] [S' Op-j [S a Joana viu t-j na TV ontem]]
Joana saw ___ on TV yesterday

Notice that this analysis assumes that the null object is locally A'-bound not by the topic position as suggested by Huang, but by a null operator which is base-generated in the object position and undergoes Move alpha in the syntax to appear in the COMP adjacent to the topic position at S-structure. Raposo considers that in order to explain the ungrammaticality of (11) in EP it is necessary to assume that the null object is a variable at S-structure, the level where Binding Theory ap-

plies. Principle C will then correctly exclude all cases in which the embedded object EC refers to the matrix subject:

- (11) *Ela-i disse que a Joana viu [e]-i na TV ontem.
"She-i said that Joana saw (her-i) on TV yesterday."

Raposo argues that (11) would not be ruled out by Principle C if the null object were A²-bound by the zero topic. Since the indexing of an A²-position occurs only at LF according to Chomsky (1982), the topic would not receive an index until LF and the null object wouldn't be a variable until LF. Principle C, which applies at S-structure, would not be able then to exclude (11). This is why Raposo argues that the null object must be a trace left by application of a movement rule. It is crucial in Raposo's proposal that the index assigned to Op and its trace is distinct from that of the empty topic, as shown in (10). The two indices are later matched by a rule of Predication (Chomsky, 1982), which operates only at the level of LF'.

Raposo then shows that the null object in EP, being a result of Move-alpha, obeys properties that involve movement in syntax, as expected. In the following section we will show that these restrictions do not hold in Brazilian Portuguese.

2. THE NULL OBJECT IN BP: NOT A PURE VARIABLE

We start our attempt to demonstrate that the null object in BP is not a variable by contrasting its distribution with the relevant cases in EP.

2.1. SUBJACENCY EFFECTS

We analyze below several BP and EP sentences that show that the null object in the latter but *not* in the former obey properties that typically involve movement in the syntax.

2.1.1. THE COMPLEX NP CONSTRAINT

- (12) Não conheço o rapaz que trouxe [e]. (*EP x√BP)
'(I) don't know the guy who brought (it).'

The ungrammaticality of (12) in EP is accounted for by Subjacency. The operator cannot be related to the variable since they are separated by two bounding nodes, NP and S', as (13) shows:

- (13) *Op-i ... [S' ... [NP ... null object-i ...]...]

In BP, the sentence is perfectly grammatical, as the empty object is not a variable and, therefore, is not a result of Move-alpha.

2.1.2. THE SENTENTIAL SUBJECT CONSTRAINT

- (14) Que a IBM venda [e] a particulares surpreende-me.
(*EP x √BP)
"That IBM sells [e] to private individuals surprises me."

Again, this is what we expect since the Sentential Subject Constraint is a type of subjacency effect. As movement to COMP is not involved in BP, the sentence is correctly predicted as good.

2.1.3. THE CONDITION ON EXTRACTION DOMAINS

- (15) O pirata fugiu para as Caraíbas depois de ter escondido [e]
no cofre.
"The pirate left for the Caribbean after he had hidden [e] in the safe."
(√BP *EP)

Adjunct clauses being islands for extraction processes, the variable null object in EP cannot occur inside an adverbial clause, whereas in BP, as expected, the CED does not hold for the null object construction.

2.2. THE DOUBLY-FILLED COMP FILTER

- (16) Para qual dos filhos foi que o Manoel ofereceu [e]. ($\sqrt{\text{BP}} \text{ *EP}$)
“For which of his children did Manoel offer [e]?”

The ungrammaticality of (16) in EP follows from the fact that COMP may not be simultaneously occupied by a wh-word and the null operator binding the null object. In BP, as there is no movement to COMP, the sentence is grammatical.

2.3. WEAK CROSSOVER

As is well-known, variables may not be coindexed with a non c-commanding overt pronominal element to their left. Given this property, an account in terms of the Bijection Principle must be adopted since it is not possible to appeal to Principle C as in the case of Strong Crossover which will be discussed in the next section. However, notice the absence of contrast between EP and BP in (17) :

- (17) Os amigos dela-i aconselharam [e]-i a estudar mais.
($\sqrt{\text{EP}} \ \& \ \sqrt{\text{BP}}$)
“Her-i friends advised (her-i) to study harder.”

In (17) the null object construction will not trigger weak crossover effects neither in EP nor in BP. This is expected in BP, since the null object is not a variable, but not in EP, where it is claimed that the null object is a variable and, therefore, should not be allowed to be coindexed with the possessive pronoun *dela* “her” to its left. Raposo (1986) ac-

counts for the grammaticality of sentences like (17) by proposing (18) as its LF representation:

- (18) [Top e-i][S' Op-j] [S os amigos dela-i viram [e]-j
ontem na TV]].
her-i friends saw (her-j) yesterday on TV.

Assuming that weak cross-over effects result from violations of the Bijection Principle and that this principle holds at LF but not at LF', Raposo shows that (17) is grammatical since Op binds only one variable, namely its trace. It is thus assumed that the index assigned to Op and its trace is different from that of the empty topic and that the two indices are later matched at the level of LF' by a rule of Predication of the type proposed in Chomsky (1982).

2.4. CONCLUSION

Therefore it can be concluded that the variable analysis of null objects does not hold for Brazilian Portuguese as several authors have pointed out (Galves, 1989; Farrell, 1990; Kato, 1991). Unlike EP, BP null objects cannot be analyzed as the result of movement to an A'-position (COMP or TOP), because in BP – unlike in EP – the object EC is not sensitive to the Subjacency Condition (Chomsky, 1977), which constrains movement. As we argued above, if the null object in BP were a variable, a sentence such as (19) should be ungrammatical as it is the case in EP. However, sentences as (19) are grammatical in BP, indicating that this empty category could not have been generated by movement:

- (19) Essa pizza-i, o rapaz que trouxe [e]-i agora mesmo da pastelaria era o seu afilhado.

“This pizza-i, the boy that brought [e]-i right now from the pastry shop was your godson.”

3. NULL OBJECTS IN BP: THE PRO ANALYSIS

Thus, given that the null object in BP can appear in islands and is not subject to weak crossover effects, Galves (1989), Farrell (1990) and Kato (1991)¹ have analyzed it as an instance of *pro*. Since *pro* is a base generated empty category, it does not have to be sensitive to Subjacency. The absence of weak crossover effects is also immediate: pronouns, unlike variables, do not exhibit such effects. Additionally, we present below another argument which seems to support the view that the null object in BP has indeed a [+pronominal] feature:

3.1 DISJOINT REFERENCE

Rizzi (1986) characterizes arbitrary null objects in Italian as instances of *pro* by showing that they fall in the scope of binding principle B, that is, arbitrary null objects can be referentially linked to another NP, provided that the latter is outside the governing category. Sentence (20) shows that disjoint reference between occurrences of arbitrary interpretation is also attested in BP:

- (20) Neste departamento, [PRO-*arb*] forçar [e]-*arb*] a
PRO trabalhar]] é difícil.
“In this department, [PRO to force ___ PRO to work]] is
difficult.”

As (21) shows, it is also possible to have an instance of disjoint reference between occurrences of null objects with arbitrary interpretation and with specific and definite interpretation. The null object with a

(1) Actually Kato (91) adopts a functional definition for the null object in BP. She distinguishes the endophoric null object from the exophoric or deitic null object. The endophoric null object is analyzed as a null clitic that can only have non-c-commanding antecedents.

specific and definite interpretation after the verb *mandou* “told” has to be disjoint in reference from the arbitrary null object of the verb *obrigar* “to force”. This is exactly what we expect for [+ pronominal] elements, not for variables:

- (21) O novo professor-*i*, o diretor mandou [*e*]-*i* PRO-*i*
obrigar arb-*j* a PROJ
“The new teacher-*i*, the principal told *e*-*i* PRO-*i* to
force arb-*j* PROJ

ficar depois da hora.
to stay overtime”

3.2. TWO PROBLEMS FOR THE PRO ANALYSIS

As we reviewed above, in the Principles and Parameters framework (henceforth PP), pronominals can be bound by arguments (A-binding), as long as they are free in their governing category (Principle B of the Binding Theory). Strong crossover effects have standardly been interpreted as violations of Binding Principle C (Chomsky, 1981). However, as we have seen the null object in BP must be A-free, therefore behaving more like a variable than as a pronominal empty category. This is further exemplified in (22) which is ungrammatical both in EP and in BP.

- (22) *A Margarida-*i*, ela-*i* disse que o Lauro não quis
desculpar [*e*]-*i*
“Margarida-*i*, she-*i* said that Lauro didn’t want to
forgive [*e*]-*i*.”

As we discussed above, the possibility of coindexation between the null object and a matrix argument is, however, a disputed matter in BP.

Teixeira (1985) considers that sentences such as (23) are perfectly grammatical either with an overt pronoun or with an empty category in the object position:

- (23) João-i disse que Pedro ajudou [e]-i/ele-i
"João-i said that Pedro helped [e]-i/him-i"

Farrell (1990) considers that a null object contained within a complement clause cannot take a matrix argument as an antecedent and proposes that only null objects in adjunct clauses can be bound by a subject (e.g. (24)). Indeed there is evidence that the adjunct/complement asymmetry seems to be relevant for the characterization of the BP null object.² However, our focus of investigation in this article is restricted to complement structures.

- (24) João-i reclamou porque Pedro ajudou [e]-i/ele-i
João-i complained because Pedro helped [e]-i/him-i

Galves (1989) suggests that there is a clear contrast in terms of acceptability between the construction with the EC and the construction with the overt pronoun, in the sense that the latter is less ambiguous than the former. She further proposes that it is not the notion of coindexation that is at stake, but the notion of binding, since sentences such as (25)

(2) In Maia (96) I report a psycholinguistic experiment in which I investigate the comprehension of BP null objects in complement clauses and in adjunct clauses, as exemplified in (i) and (ii):

- (i) João-i disse que o professor reprovou [e]-i.
"João-i said that the teacher failed [e]-i."

(ii) João-i chorou porque o professor reprovou [e]-i.
"João-i cried because the teacher failed [e]-i."

18 subjects tested in a priming experiment displayed significantly faster reaction times for the recognition of the antecedent of the empty category in the adjunct clause in (ii) than in the complement clause in (i).

seem to be better than the version of (23) with a bound null object. Notice that in (56) there is coreference, but not binding, since the second clause is not the complement of the first.

(25) *Agente colhe as maçãs-i e guarda [e]-i no porão.*

We gather the apples-i and keep [e]-i in the basement.

Kato (1991) proposes that the BP null object obeys an anti c-command requirement. Comparing (26) to (27), Kato notices that the null object in the latter can be coreferent to an NP which is inside a PP, in a non-c-commanding position:

(26) a. **Paula-i disse a Maria-j que Pedro beijou [e]-i/j.*

“Paula-i said to Maria-j that Pedro kissed [e]-i/j.”

b. *Paula-i disse a Maria-j que Pedro beijou ela.*

“Paula-i said to Maria-j that Pedro kissed her.”

(27) a. *Pedro disse sobre Maria-i que Luiz viu [e]-i na festa.*

“Pedro said about Maria-i that Luiz saw [e]-i at the party.”

Kato concludes that lexical pronouns can have antecedents in either c-commanding positions or in non-c-commanding positions, while the null object can only have non-c-commanding antecedents.

However, in a sentence such as (19), the null object is c-commanded by the topic and yet the sentence is grammatical. Additionally, even if we restrict Kato's proposal to A-binding, excluding A-bar binders as in (19), there still seems to be a contrast in (27a) between the construction with the null object and the construction with the overt pronoun. The fact that the reading of the empty object with an intrasentential antecedent may seem to be better in (27a) than in (26) can be attributed

to semantic and pragmatic considerations. It appears to be just more plausible for the null object to be construed as coreferential with the matrix antecedent in (27a) than in (26) since in (27) the PP *sobre Maria* "about Maria" is actually the topic about what Pedro is saying something, whereas in (26) the PP *a Maria* "to Maria" does not define a similarly narrow domain of reference. Notice that if we replace the preposition *sobre* "about" with a preposition with a different semantic content, such as *perante* "before" the sentence must be starred in the intended intrasentential reading, as exemplified in (27b):

(27b) *Pedro disse perante Maria-i que Luiz viu [e]-i na festa.

"Pedro said before Maria-i that Luiz saw [e]-i at the party.

We summarize below the two main problems for the classification of the BP null objects as standard pros.

3.2.1. STRONG CROSSOVER EFFECTS

Despite the dispute about the grammaticality of A-bound null objects, it has been widely proposed that the null object in BP is not a variable resulting from movement, but a base generated EC of the pro type. Notice, however, that if the object EC in BP is indeed a pro, there is no reason why it could not be bound from an element in A-position, since according to Principle B of the Binding Theory (Chomsky, 1981), pronominal elements can be A-bound as long as they are free in their governing category.

3.2.2. THE IDENTIFICATION PROBLEM

Additionally, there is the identification problem. In the PP framework, pro was first proposed in order to account for the empty category in

subject position in the “pro-drop” languages. Chomsky (1981; 1982) assumes Taraldsen’s (1978) idea that the ability to drop subject pronouns is related to the existence of a rich inflectional morphology. Jaeggli (1982) recasts the problem in terms of the “identification hypothesis” which also assumes that only when agreement is rich enough to identify the features of a null pronoun can the null pronoun in fact be allowed. Thus if pro is restricted to cooccur with “strong agreement” (see Chomsky, 1982) how can the object EC be analyzed as pro if it is not identified by any phonologically realized features?

In the following section we will assess the viability of a proposal that attempts to solve these two problems, namely, the A-binding problem and the identification problem: the extension of Cinque’s (1990) analysis of complement object deletion constructions to the BP null object. In section 1.2.6. we will consider an alternative analysis of the BP null object based on Lasnik and Stowell (1991)’s analysis of null epithets. In 1.2.7. we will additionally entertain the logical possibility that the BP null object might be of an idiosyncratic type not recognized in the literature: a pronominal-like EC which could only be identified by a topic. We will then argue in favor of the null epithet analysis as the one which can best account for the BP data. Finally in section 1.2.3. we will review the topic construction in BP.

4. THE NULL OBJECT IN BP: A-BAR-BOUND PRO?

Cinque (1990) proposes to account for the A-bar bound empty categories in parasitic gap (28a), apparent NP extraction from islands (28b) and Complement Object Deletion constructions (28c) not as pure variables (A-bar-bound [-pronominal, -anaphor] elements) but as pronominal variables (A-bar bound [+pronominal, - anaphor] elements).

- (28) a. The article that we filed without reading [e].
b. The article that we went to England without reading [e].
c. The article was too long for us to read [e].

He argues that these constructions present properties not shared by the standard wh-trace constructions such as interrogative and relative constructions, clefts and topicalizations. On the one hand a construction such as the Complement Object Deletion in (28c), for example, can be analyzed as containing a variable A-bar bound by an abstract operator at S-structure as indicated in (29):

- (29) The book-i was too long [O-i for [us to read [e]-i]].

Accordingly, the gap in the COD construction is sensitive to Strong Crossover effects as exemplified in (30):

- (30) *They-i are too stubborn for us to expect them-i to allow us to invite
[e]-i

However, the gap in the COD construction is not sensitive to weak crossover effects as exemplified in (31):

- (31) John-i is not honest enough for his-i mother to vouch for [e]-i

These facts seem to be clearly reminiscent of the null object construction in BP which as we showed above are also sensitive to strong crossover effects (cf. example (22)) but are not sensitive to weak crossover effects (cf. example (17)). Additionally, tough constructions in BP also present the same behavior as the constructions analyzed by Cinque: the object gaps trigger strong crossover violations but not weak crossover violations, as exemplified below.

Strong crossover configuration

- (32) *O João-i é teimoso demais para esperarmos que ele-i nos
permita convidar [e]-i
“João-i is too stubborn for us to expect that he-i allow us
to invite [e]-i.”

Weak crossover configuration

- (33) O João-i é desonesto demais para a mãe dele-i apoiar [e]-i
“João-i is too dishonest for his-i mother to support [e]-i.”

Cinque's solution to this problem is to propose the existence of two separate subclasses of variables. One class is represented for example by interrogative constructions which follow the properties of wh-movement constructions characterized by Chomsky (77).³ The other class is represented by the constructions in (28) which are subject to weak crossover effects, but not to strong crossover effects. Would it be the case that this distinction may also hold for the BP data under consideration? First let us show that real variables do occur in BP:

Wh-questions:

Strong crossover

- (34) * Quem-i você disse que ele-i fez você visitar t-i?
Who-i you said that he-i made you visit t-i

(3) In essence Chomsky (1977) establishes as a diagnostics for wh-construction that it is sensitive to island conditions and that it contains a gap which is free in its governing category.

Weak crossover

(35) * *Quem-i o chefe dele-i detesta t-i?*

Who-i his-i boss dislikes t-i

PP theory assumes that variables, such as the wh-traces above are treated as R-expressions with respect to Condition C. In the Strong Crossover configuration in (34), Condition C is violated if the pronoun is coindexed with the wh-trace and its trace, since the pronoun *ele* "he" in (34) A-binds the variable trace. Notice that if the pronoun has a different index, Condition C is satisfied and the sentence is grammatical.

In (35) we show that the wh-trace in object position in BP is indeed a variable since it is also ruled out by the weak crossover condition which has been widely taken as a test for variable binding. Notice that the empty category in object position is not c-commanded by the coreferential overt pronominal element to its left and yet the sentence is out. WCO has been subsumed by Koopman and Sportiche (1982) under the Bijection Principle. As in (35) the overt pronoun does not bind the object empty category, they are both locally A-bar-bound by the wh-trace of *quem* "who". Consequently that wh-trace binds two variables and the Bijection Principle is violated. Note, however, that the behavior of the object empty category in topic constructions in BP does not pattern with the wh-trace constructions analyzed above. Rather, the null object in topic constructions seems to behave as the COD construction analyzed by Cinque (1990) as an A-bar bound pro.

Strong crossover⁴

(4) Notice that according to the analysis we are proposing here (36) would not really be a case of strong crossover violation. (36) is out simply because empty pro cannot be identified by an argument.

- (36) *AMargarida-i, ela-i disse que o Lauro não quis
desculpar [e]-i
“Margarida-i, she-i said that Lauro didn’t want to
forgive [e]-i.”

Weak crossover

- (37) AMargarida-i, eu acho que o marido dela-i não quis
desculpar [e]-i
“Margarida-i, I think that her-i husband didn’t want
to forgive [e]-i.”

Apparently, extending the the basic idea developed by Cinque (1990) to account for the BP data under consideration would be straightforward: the gap in the null object construction in (37) would not be a pure variable, that is, a wh-trace created by an application of Move-alpha, but a pronominal variable, a base-generated pro that would come to be A-bar-bound at S-structure.

However, if the gap in the topic construction in BP is a [+pronominal] empty category why is it that it cannot be A-bound as we showed in (36)? The answer would be that since the object empty category is a pro, it needs to be identified. If pro is not licensed by morphological agreement (as it is the case with pro in subject position) it can be identified only via A-bar-binding, thereby becoming a pronominal variable. Therefore the apparent case of strong crossover violation in (36) is reinterpreted as a case of unidentified pro. As in (36) there is an intervening A-binder (the subject of the matrix) between the A-bar-binder in topic position and the null object, the object pro cannot be identified by its A-bar binder and the sentence is ungrammatical. This analysis would then solve in one single step the two problems for the pro analysis reviewed above: null objects in BP cannot be A-bound because they need to be

identified by an A-bar-binder. Under such an analysis WCO effects are not expected to arise, since there is no intervening A-binder between the A-bar-binder and the null object. Thus it would be clear why null object sentences in BP show SCO effects, but not WCO effects.

5. AN ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNT: BP NULL OBJECTS AS NULL EPITHETS

As pointed out to me by Zubizarreta (personal communication, 1994), there is, however, a crucial difference between the cases studied by Cinque (1990) exemplified in (28) and the corresponding BP cases: the constructions in (59) exhibit island effects within the clause containing the null operator, whereas in BP this is not the case as we have argued above and will further show in section 1.3. Additionally, the A-bar binding identification of the empty category proposed by Cinque appears to be a mere stipulation since there is no independent justification for its existence. As pointed out by Lasnik and Stowell (1991), it is also unclear why an intervening A-binder as exemplified in (36) should render the sentence ungrammatical. If the identification requirement is simply A-bar binding, an intervening A-binder should actually be irrelevant.

In view of these facts, in the present section we will then entertain an alternative analysis to the BP null object, following a proposal by Lasnik and Stowell (1991) concerning the existence of a previously unrecognized type of empty category: a null nonvariable R-expression, corresponding to a null version of an epithet.

Lasnik and Stowell (1991) propose that the empty category bound by a nonquantificational operator is not a true variable but rather a previously unrecognized type of empty category: a null name, with properties similar to those of epithets. Lasnik and Stowell (1991) notice the existence of constructions involving A-bar-binding where Weak Crossover effects do not arise. These involve, for example, tough-movement, para-

sitic gap, and topicalization constructions. Thus in a sentence such as (38) (Lasnik and Stowell's (20c)), there is an operator that locally A-bar-binds both a pronoun and a trace, in violation of the Bijection Principle:

(38) This book-i, I expect its-i author to buy [e]-i.

However, weak crossover effects do not arise here. Lasnik and Stowell (1991) refer to cases such as (38) as instances of *weakest crossover*. As we have noticed above, this is exactly the case of the null object construction in BP which is subject to strong crossover effects, but not to weak crossover effects (cf. our examples (36) and (37)). Thus, the BP equivalent of (38) is equally good:

(39) Este livro-i, eu espero que o autor dele-i compre [e]-i.

After arguing against an LF' analysis as proposed by Chomsky (1982), Lasnik and Stowell propose to relate the insensitivity of the weakest crossover constructions to weak crossover to an independent semantic property: the overt pronoun in such cases is A-bar bound by a null operator ranging over a singleton set, not by a genuine quantifier. They further propose to distinguish between two types of R-expressions: names and variables. They then suggest that gaps bound by nonquantificational operators are not true variables, but null names. Names include not only proper names but also definite descriptions such as "the guy", "the bastard", etc, which are usually referred to in the literature as epithets. Epithets are definite descriptions that function quasi-pronominally. That is why, as we reviewed above, an epithet is not subject to weak crossover effects:

(40) A Margarida-i, eu acho que o marido dela-i não
quis desculpar a boba-i.

"Margarida-i, I think that her-i husband didn't want
to forgive the silly"

However, an NP may not occur in an A-position that c-commands the epithet⁵:

- (41) *Pedro-i acha que Maria me mandou visitar o cara-i
Pedro-i thinks that Maria told me to visit the guy-i.

In this respect, epithets differ from true pronouns:

- (42) Pedro-i acha que Maria me mandou visitar ele-i.
Pedro-i thinks that Maria told me to visit him-i

This situation is clearly reminiscent of the BP contrast which we have discussed above:

- (43) *Pedro-i acha que Maria me mandou visitar [e]-i.
Pedro-i thinks that Maria told me to visit [e]-i

- (44) ✓Luiz-i, Pedro acha que Maria me mandou visitar [e]-i
Luiz-i, Pedro thinks that Maria told me to visit [e]-i

In summary, the BP null objects exemplified above cannot be A-bound and must be A-bar bound at S-structure. It is indeed tempting to account for the contrast between (43) and (44) by extending Lasnik and Stowell's analysis to the BP object gap: the empty category in (44)

(5) Notice that given that epithets behave as names, they should not be expected to behave like pronominal bound variables, since bound variables require c-commanding binders, but epithets cannot be A-bound to an NP (cf. (41), (43)). Hornstein & Weinberg (1990) show, however, that a theory that contains a level of LF predicts that quantified NPs can be exceptions to this generalization since a quantifier in an A-position that does not c-command an epithet at S-structure can move to an A-bar position that does c-command the epithet at LF. Thus in a BP sentence such as (i) both the lexical as the null epithet can have a bound variable interpretation:

(i) João n-o compra [nenhum vinho]-i antes de provar a droga-i/[e]-i
João buys no wine before tasting the damn thing-i/[e]-i.

would be a null epithet, a previously unrecognized type of empty category, which would differ from a true null variable in the sense that it is not bound by a true quantifier and does not exhibit weak crossover effects. The BP null object would then be classified as an R-expression of a nonvariable type and therefore it would not be subject to weak crossover effects, but being an R-expression it would still be sensitive to strong crossover effects. Furthermore, as an R-expression it would not be subject to identification requirements.

Huang (88) also proposes that the null object in Chinese may be classified as a null epithet, abandoning the need for the positing of a null operator as an abstract A-bar binder as he had formerly suggested (cf. Huang 84 and Huang 87). Following Lasnik (86), Huang points out that the idea that epithets should be characterized as both R-expressions and pronominals suggests a reformulation of the typology of lexical and empty categories in terms of the features [pronominal] and [referential]:

(45)

Features	Lexical categories	Empty categories
[-pronominal], [-referential]	lexical anaphors	NP-trace
[+pronominal], [-referential]	pronouns	PRO/pro
[-pronominal], [+referential]	names	variables
[+pronominal], [+referential]	epithets	null epithets

According to Huang (88), the null object in Chinese could fill the otherwise peculiar gap in the universal inventory of empty categories. The proposal that the BP null object is also a null epithet would offer additional empirical evidence to the class of [+pronominal], [+referential] empty categories.

In the two next subsections below we further show that the null epithet analysis of BP null objects solve two problems that would be created by the variable analysis and by the pro analysis, respectively: the absence of subjacency effects and the subject-object asymmetry. In subsection 5.3. we will discuss a potential problem for the null epithet analysis.

5.1. ABSENCE OF SUBJACENCY EFFECTS

Notice that the null epithet analysis solves the main difficulty for the variable analysis of null objects in BP as we pointed in section 2: the absence of subjacency effects. The assumption that the BP null object is indeed the null counterpart of an overt epithet eliminates the need that it has been created by movement as it would be the case if it were a variable. Not having to be derived by movement, the BP null object does not have to be sensitive to island conditions as it is indeed the case, as we have extensively exemplified in section 2.

5.2. SUBJECT-OBJECT ASYMMETRY

The proposal that the BP null object is a null epithet is also a step towards explaining subject-object asymmetries such as in (46) :

(77) a. João-i disse que [e]-i viu o Pedro.

“João said that (he) saw Pedro.”

b. *João-i disse que Pedro viu [e]-i.

“João said that Pedro saw (him).”

As we have already argued above, in sentences such as (46b) the empty category in object position cannot be bound by the subject of the

matrix clause. The empty subject in (46a), on the other hand, can take the matrix subject as an antecedent. Notice further that overt pronouns do not exhibit such contrast in BP, as it is clear by the grammaticality of both (47) and (48):

(47) √ João-i disse que Maria conhece ele-i
"João-i said that Maria knows him-i."

(48) √ João-i disse que ele-i conhece Maria.
"João-i said that he-i knows Maria."

If the empty categories in (46a) and in (46b) were both instances of *pro*, then it is not clear why the null object, unlike the null subject, cannot be A-bound, since both should fall under Principle B. If, on the other hand, the null object is a null epithet rather than a *pro*, as it is the case of the null subject, it should come as no surprise that (46b) is ungrammatical: null epithets are referential expressions and as such cannot be A-bound.

5.3. THE OVERT PRONOUN CONSTRAINT AND THE BP NULL EPITHET

Montalbetti (1984) points out that in several languages an overt pronoun cannot be locally bound by a variable when a null pronoun could occur instead. Montalbetti states this generalization in his Overt Pronoun Constraint (OPC):

(49) Overt pronouns cannot link to formal variables iff the alternation
overt/empty obtains.

Thus in a Spanish sentence such as (50a) the lexically realized pronoun *ellos* "they" cannot be construed as a bound pronoun, whereas the empty one (*pro*) in (50b) can:

(50) a. Muchos estudiantes creen que **ellos** son inteligentes

“Many students believe that they are intelligent”

b. Muchos estudiantes creen que **pro** son inteligentes

In Maia (94) we look at Montalbetti's generalization and its applicability in BP in much further detail. For now it suffices to show that intuitive evidence supports the basic validity of the OPC in BP. Let us consider the BP equivalents of (50a) and (50b).

(51) a. Muitos alunos acham que **eles** são inteligentes.

“Many students think that they are intelligent.”

b. Muitos alunos acham que **pro** são inteligentes.

Speakers seem to agree that the construction in 51b is the best in terms of a bound reading interpretation, since the construction with the overt pronoun seems to force either a free interpretation or a “group” interpretation in which each member of the set *muitos alunos* “many students” believe that all the members of the set are intelligent. This is entirely predicted by the OPC, given the possibility of subject *pro* drop in BP. However notice that the constraint against using an overt pronoun also occurs in object position in BP:

(52) Quem-i acha que o professor reprovou [e]-i?

“Who-i thinks the teacher failed [e]-i?”

(53) *Quem-i acha que o professor reprovou ele-i?

“Who-i thinks the teacher failed him-i?”

Crucially, if the OPC predicts that there is a constraint to the occurrence of an overt pronoun in the context where a null pronoun (pro) could occur, one should not expect any OPC effects in object position in BP if the BP null object is a null epithet rather than a pro. It could be argued, however, that null epithets – unlike variables – are empty categories with a [+pronominal] feature and therefore could be construed as a bound pronoun just as pro in subject position. Therefore we will not rule out the analysis of the BP null object as a null epithet presented above on the basis of the OPC alone.

5.4. THE BP NULL OBJECT AS A TOPIC-IDENTIFIED PRONOMINAL EC

A third hypothesis would be that the BP null object is actually different from all of the previously discussed types. Although there are certain similarities between the BP null object and the cases discussed by Cinque (1990), the BP null object, unlike the Complement Object Deletion cases, is not sensitive to strong island effects, as we have pointed out above. Nor is it like the Clitic Left Dislocation cases in Spanish and in Italian, which also obey strong islands (cf. Cinque (1990)). On the other hand, an account of the BP null object as a type of R-expression in the line of Lasnik and Stowell (1991)'s and Huang (88)'s null epithet analyses is able to avoid the subjacency problem as well as the subject/object asymmetry problem with relation to strong crossover effects. Yet it would fail the OPC test if we restrict the OPC to only hold between overt pronouns and empty categories of the pro type.

The generalization would then have to be that the BP null object is different from all of the previously discussed types, even though certain common features do exist: it would be a pronominal-like empty category but could only be identified by the topic – a non-reducible property of topic-oriented languages. However, this hypothesis is not really desirable since it neglects the more theoretically interesting alternative that the BP

null object may be accounted for in terms of the established principles and parameters of Universal Grammar.

6. CONCLUSION

In sections 1 and 2, we started by comparing the BP and the EP null objects in order to demonstrate that the variable analysis proposed for EP by Raposo (86) cannot be extended to BP. The crucial difference between BP and EP is that the BP null object is not sensitive to the Subjacency condition which constrains the EP null object. We then reviewed the two problems that face a pro account of the BP null object, namely the occurrence of Strong Crossover effects, which should not be expected for pro, and the identification problem, that is, the fact that the empty category in object position in BP is not identified by any phonologically realized features.

We then explored three alternative analyses for the BP null object: an A-bar bound pro analysis based on Cinque (1990), a null epithet analysis based on Lasnik and Stowell (1991) and Huang (88), and the logical possibility that the BP null object is an idiosyncratic pronominal-like EC which could only be identified by a topic. We conclude that the null epithet analysis is the one which can best account for the BP data since this solution provides an adequate answer to the identification problem, to the absence of subjacency effects and to the subject/object asymmetry with relation to strong crossover effects.

RESUMO: Este artigo examina um caso de variação sintática observado entre o Português brasileiro e o Português europeu, no que se refere a gramaticalidade de construções com objeto nulo. Enquanto o objeto nulo em PE é classificado como uma variável sintática (Raposo (86)), o objeto nulo em PB não pode ser classificado nem como uma variável, nem como um pro. Três alternativas de classificação são investigadas: uma análise do objeto nulo em PB como pro vinculado por posição

não-argumental, uma análise como epíteto nulo e uma análise que considera o objeto nulo em PB como completamente diferente de todos os tipos anteriores. Finalmente, argumenta-se em favor da proposta do epíteto nulo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: variação sintática, gramática gerativa, objetos nulos.

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