

## Syntactic Microvariation in VP ellipsis in European and Brazilian Portuguese

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In contrast with other Romance languages, European Portuguese (= EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (=BP) present VP ellipsis (cf. (1) vs. (2)):

- (1) a. A Ana já tinha lido esse livro à irmã mas a Paula não tinha [-].

The Ana already had read that book to-the sister but the Paula not had [-]

'Ana had already read that book to her sister but Paula had not.'

- b. Ela só vai visitar os amigos se a Ana for [-].

She just will. Indicative visit the friends if the Ana will. Subjunctive [-]

'She will just visit her friends if Ana will.'

- c. O João é simpático para todas as pessoas e a Ana também é [-].

The João is nice for all the people and the Ana too is [-]

'João is nice to everybody and Ana is, too'

- (2) a. \*Susana había leído Guerra y Paz pero María no había [-]. (Silva 1999:265)

- b. \*On a demandé si ils ont déjà mangé et ils ont [-]. (Lobeck 1999:101)

- c. \*Claudine est une bonne étudiante, et Marie est [-] aussi.

In addition to the canonical cases in (1), where the elliptical category is locally identified by an auxiliary (cf. (1a), (1b)) or a copulative verb (cf. (1c)), both varieties show VP ellipsis with main verbs, as in (3):

- (3) A Ana não leva o computador para as aulas porque os amigos também não levam [-]

the Ana not brings the computer to the classes because the friends too not bring [-]

'Ana does not bring her computer to the classes because her friends do not either.'

[-] = [VP [V t ] the computer to the classes ]

Besides, European and Brazilian Portuguese exhibit a parallelism requirement on the verb which licenses the elliptical constituent: this verb, be it an auxiliary or a main one, must also occur in the VP antecedent, as illustrated by the contrasts in (4) and (5):

- (4) a. Ontem ele não tinha ainda lido esse artigo, mas hoje, quando telefonei, já tinha [-]

Yesterday he had not read that paper, but today, when (I) phoned, (he) already had [-].

- b. \*Ontem ele não tinha ainda lido esse artigo, mas hoje vai [-].

Yesterday he not had already read that paper, but today (he) will [-]

- (5) a. A Ana pôs os óculos na mesa cuidadosamente e a Maria também pôs [-].

The Ana put the glasses on the table carefully and the Maria too put

'Ana put her glasses on the table carefully and Maria did too.'

- b. \*A Ana colocou os óculos na mesa cuidadosamente e a Maria também pôs [-].

The Ana placed the glasses on the table carefully and the Maria too put

This behaviour shows that, with respect to VP ellipsis, European and Brazilian Portuguese are parametrically similar, presenting properties that distinguish them from other languages, such as English (Sag 1980, Zagana 1988, Lobeck 1995, 1999) or Hebrew (Doron 1999):

(i) Thus, the availability of VP ellipsis with main verbs is a consequence of the generalized verb raising to Inflection in EP and BP.

(ii) The parallelism requirement on the verbs is due to the fact that the elliptical VP must be identical to, or non distinct from its antecedent, in order to be recovered/deleted. In effect, assuming the copy theory (instead of traces), in a language where all the verbs in I° raise from the VP, VP ellipsis may only be licensed by a verb which also occurs in its antecedent.

(iii) Finally, the ungrammaticality of (4b) and (5b) shows that in both varieties of Portuguese VP ellipsis involves an elliptical constituent with internal structure, a property also corroborated by the availability of VP ellipsis with unaccusative verbs, considering that the final subject originates as the internal argument of the verb:

- (6) Os jornais já tinham chegado, mas as revistas ainda não tinham [-].

The newspapers already had arrived, but the magazines yet not had [-]

'The newspapers had already arrived, but the magazines had not yet.'

Yet, whenever sequences of verbs including the main verb occur, standard EP and BP exhibit some differences concerning the licensing of the elliptical constituent. While in BP, both (7a) and (7c) are interpreted as cases of VP ellipsis, in EP (7b) is preferably interpreted as a sentence with a null indefinite object (i.e., *he is not reading anything*) and no indirect object.

(7) a. Ela está a ler(PE) /lendo (PB) livros às crianças mas ele não está [-]. (PE/PB)

She is to read (PE) / reading (PB) books to-the children but he not is [-]

'She is reading books to the children but he is not.'

b. #Ela está a ler livros às crianças mas ele não está a ler [-]. (PE)

She is to read books to-the children but he not is to read [-]

'She is reading books to the children but he is not reading.'

c. Ela está lendo livros às crianças mas ele não está lendo [-]. (PB)

She is reading books to the children but he is not reading [-]

[-]= [v t ] books to the children

This contrast correlates with another one: the distribution of *também* 'too' within these verb sequences is less restricted in BP than in EP. In BP this adverb may asymmetrically c-command the whole sequence of verbs, as in (8a), or just the main verb, as in (8b), and still keep the VP ellipsis interpretation. In EP (8b) is slightly marginal and favours an (indefinite) null object reading.

(8) Ela tem lido livros às crianças a. e ele também tem lido [-]

She has read books to-the children and he too has read

PE: ?,# vs. PB:OK

b. e ele tem também lido [-]

and he has too read

We take the data in (7) and (8) as an evidence that the licensing of VP ellipsis in EP and BP involves different functional projections. In (7a) the auxiliary *estar* in T° selects an aspectual projection: the prepositional infinitival complement in PE or the gerund phrase in PB:

(9) [TP está ...[AspP a ler / lendo ...]]

However, in EP, the prepositional infinitival complement is compatible with two distinct configurations, as attested by clitic placement in (10): it may restructure with the verb *estar* in T° forming a verbal complex (cf. (10a)), or occur as an independent projection (cf. (10b)). On the contrary, the formation of this verbal complex does not arise in PB, as evidenced by the systematic absence of clitic climbing in verbal sequences in this variety (cf (11)).

(10) a. Ela não os está a ler b. Ela não está a lê-los (PE)

She not them.CL is to read

She not is to read-themCL

'She is not reading them.'

'She is not reading them'

(11) Ela não está [te vendo] (PB)

She not is you.CL seeing

'She is not seeing you.'

The contrast between (7a) and (7b) shows that the licenser of VP ellipsis in EP is the the verbal complex headed by T°. In effect, in (7b) this complex has not been formed and the spelling out of the main verb is interpreted as an instruction to take this verb as the local licenser of the elliptical constituent; thus the VP ellipsis reading is lost, due to the break of parallelism with the antecedent verbal sequence. In opposition, in PB the main verb heading Asp° is able to license the elliptical VP, since the parallelism with the antecedent is observed. The examples in (8) corroborate these claims: though in EP the auxiliary *ter* 'have' and the main verb in the active past participle may form a verbal complex headed by the verb in T° (cf. (8a)), the interposition of the adverb *também* 'too' breaks this complex (cf. (8b)), and the VP ellipsis interpretation is lost. In contrast, the grammaticality of this sentence in PB, with the intended VP ellipsis reading, shows that in this variety of Portuguese the licenser of elliptical VP is the functional projection below TP, i.e., Asp°.

The data analysed show that functional categories, conceived as bundles of morphosyntactic features, play a crucial role in microvariation: when interacting with parallelism requirements they behave differently across language varieties with respect to its ability to license ellipsis.