Generalized phasal defectivity in Brazilian Portuguese

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Abstract

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1. Introduction

It is a well-known fact that Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP) displays a much more limited distribution and restrictive interpretation for its null subjects than other null subject languages within Romance. A very influential analysis of BP null subjects was developed by Ferreira (2000, 2009), who ultimately attributes their restrictive nature to $\phi$-deficiency in T. More specifically, Ferreira proposes that finite T in BP may be $\phi$-complete or $\phi$-incomplete. When T is $\phi$-incomplete, it cannot value the Case feature of its subject, which is then forced to undergo A-movement out of its clause to have its Case licensed, yielding many of the properties of BP null subjects. Assuming that this analysis is on the right track, one wonders if the relevant $\phi$-deficiency is an idiosyncratic property of T in BP or whether this is a reflex of a more general property of BP grammar. In this paper, I argue that a cluster of properties that set BP aside within Romance (including those involving its null subjects) can be accounted for, if its phases may be $\phi$-defective.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I review Ferreira’s (2000, 2009) proposal and its reinterpretation by Nunes (2008, 2019b) in terms of $\phi$-deficiency at the CP phase. In sections 3 and 4, I show that DP and vP phases in BP may also be $\phi$-defective and that an argument DP within these defective phases has to undergo A-movement or be assigned inherent Case in order to be Case-licensed. In this paper, I argue that a cluster of properties that set BP aside within Romance (including those involving its null subjects) can be accounted for, if its phases may be $\phi$-defective.

2. $\phi$-defectivity at the CP Level

A consensus in the literature on BP is that it is not a prototypical null subject language (see footnote 1). As shown in (1) below, null subjects in matrix clauses may give rise to different degrees of acceptability, depending on the pronoun that is null.

(1) a. Quem $\emptyset$ devíamos contratar? $\emptyset = nós \rightarrow \sqrt{\text{we}}$
   ‘Who should we hire?’

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2 The paradigm in (1) has wh-constituents in the beginning of the sentences in order to exclude potential cases of topic drop, which is independently allowed in BP (cf. Ferreira 2000, Modesto 2000, Rodrigues 2004, and Nunes 2008 for relevant discussion).
b. ??O que θ tenh-o a ver com isso? θ = eu → ??
   ‘What do I have to do with this?’

   c. ??Quando θ viajara-m?
    θ = vocês/elas → ??
    ‘When did you(PL)/they travel?’

   d. *Quando θ deve viajar?
    θ = você/ele/ela/a gente → *
    ‘When are you(SG)/he/she/we(a gente) supposed to travel?’

   A sentence is acceptable when the null subject corresponds to the first person plural pronoun (cf. (1a)); marginal in the case of the first person singular, the second person plural, or the third person plural pronouns (cf. (1b)-(1c)); and completely unacceptable in the case of the second person singular and the third person singular pronouns, or the pronoun a gente, which is semantically first person plural (cf. (1d)).

   Martins and Nunes (2021) (cf. also Kato, Martins and Nunes forthcoming) propose that this pattern of acceptability can be accounted for if the null subjects in (1) result from pronominal ellipsis, which is licensed when the most prominent feature of Infl is valued. Crucially, they propose that Infl has its person feature valued in (1a), its number feature valued in (1b) and (1c), and no feature valued in (1d), as indicated by the glosses for the verbs (cf. Table 1 and (7) below).

   Relevant to the current discussion are embedded null subjects that cannot be derived via ellipsis. Consider the data in (2) below, for example. The pragmatic bias induced by the predicate grávida ‘pregnant’ should identify the embedded null subject as being a Maria in all the sentences of (2). However, only in (2a), where the antecedent is the next higher subject, is the null subject properly licensed.

   (2) a. O João disse que [a Maria] acha [que θi está grávida].
      the João said that the Maria thinks that is pregnant
      ‘João said that Maria thinks she is pregnant.’

   b. *[O pai da Maria] acha [que θi está grávida].
      the father of the Maria thinks that is pregnant
      ‘Maria’s father thinks that she is pregnant.’

   c. *[A Maria] disse que o João acha [que θi está grávida].
      the Maria said that the João thinks that is pregnant
      ‘Maria said that João thinks she is pregnant.’

   Data such as (2) have led Ferreira (2000, 2009) to propose that finite T in BP may be associated with a complete or an incomplete ϕ-set. If associated with a complete ϕ-set, as represented in (3a) below, T values the Case of its subject, rendering it unavailable for further A movimiento. On the other hand, if T is ϕ-incomplete, as represented in (3b), it is unable to value the Case of its subject, which must then undergo further A movimiento to be Case-licensed. Crucially, Ferreira observed, a C head that selects for a ϕ-incomplete T does not define a strong phase in the sense of
Chomsky (2001); thus, A-movement from within it may take place without violating Chomsky’s (2001) Phase Impenetrability Condition. In other words, embedded null subjects that cannot be derived via ellipsis in BP are actually traces of A-movement. From this view, the ungrammaticality of (2b) and (2c) follows from restrictions on A-movement: in (2b) the embedded subject has moved to a non-c-commanding position, as sketched in (4a), and in (2c) it has moved to a nonlocal c-commanding position, crossing the intermediate subject, as sketched in (4b).

(3)  
   a. O João disse que [ele T_{\phi}\text{-complete} comprou um carro].  
       the João said that he bought a car  
       ‘João said that he bought a car.’
   b. [O João], disse que [t_1 T_{\phi}\text{-incomplete} comprou um carro].  
       the João said that bought a car  
       ‘João said that he bought a car.’

(4)  
   a. *[O pai d[a Maria],] acha [que t_1 está grávida].  
   b. *[A Maria], disse que o João acha [que t_1 está grávida].  

Independent evidence for this proposal is provided by the pair of sentences in (5) below. (5a) and (5b) involve standard impersonal constructions, where the matrix subject position is arguably occupied by a null expletive and the embedded subject is licensed with nominative Case by the embedded finite T or the inflected infinitival. By contrast, (5a’) and (5b’) involve hyper-raising constructions (see Ferreira 2000, 2009, Martins and Nunes 2005, 2010, Nunes 2008, 2016, 2019b, 2020b), where the embedded subject undergoes A-movement to the matrix subject position, triggering agreement with both the matrix and the embedded verb. From the perspective of Ferreira’s proposal, these parallel possibilities arise depending on whether the embedded T is \(\phi\)-complete, yielding (5a) and (5b), or \(\phi\)-incomplete, yielding (5a’) and (5b’). To put in more general terms, once the embedded T is \(\phi\)-incomplete, the embedded subject may undergo A-movement targeting either a thematic position, yielding finite control constructions such as (2a) and (3b), or a nonthematic position, yielding hyper-raising constructions such as (5a’) and (5b’).

(5)  
       seems that the boys are liking a lot of the new school  
       ‘It seems that the boys are enjoying their new school a lot.’
   a’. [Os meninos], parece-\text{PL} que t_1 estão gostando bastante da nova escola.  
       the boys seem-\text{PL} that are liking a lot of the new school  
       ‘The boys seem to be enjoying their new school a lot.’
   b. É difícil de[ses professores] elogiarem alguém.  
       is difficult of these teachers to praise someone  
       ‘It is unusual for these teachers to praise someone.’

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3 See below for a reinterpretation of this proposal in terms of Chomsky (2008).
4 Cf. Ferreira 2000, 2009 and Rodrigues 2004 for additional arguments for a movement analysis of embedded null subjects in BP.

These teachers are difficult of praise. INF-PL someone
‘These teachers rarely praise someone.’

Ferreira’s proposal that verbal agreement in BP may be somehow defective also seems to correlate with the fact that in Nonstandard BP, one may find dialects/idiolects with just two distinctive agreement forms in two tenses (the indicative present and perfective past) and no distinction at all in the other tenses (cf. Lemle and Naro 1977 and Galves 1993), as illustrated in (6), where -a in (6a’) and (6c), -e in (6b), and -o in (6b’) are not agreement morphemes, but allomorphs of the thematic vowel (TV) indicating the conjugation of the verb.

(6) Nonstandard BP:

a. Eu danç-o bem.
I dance-INDIC.PRES.1SG well.
‘I dance well.’

a’. {Você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/elas} danç-a bem.
you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV well
‘{You/he/we/they} dance well.’

b. Eu danç-e-i bem.
I dance-TV-INDIC.PERF.PAST.1SG well.
‘I danced well.’

b’. {Você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/elas} danç-o-u bem.
you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV-INDIC.PERF.PAST well
‘{You/he/we/they} danced well.’

c. {Eu/você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/elas} danç-a-va bem.
I/you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV-INDIC.IMPERF.PAST well
‘{I/you/he/we/they} used to dance well.’

Although suggestive, the paradigm in (6) raises the question of how exactly, under Ferreira’s proposal, the same verbal form can be associated with a complete or incomplete $\phi$-set in Standard BP. In (3), for example, the verbal form comprou is taken to be associated with a complete $\phi$-set in (3a), but an incomplete $\phi$-set in (3b). Nunes (2008, 2019b) shows that the potentially problematic ambiguity seen in (3) is actually an opacity effect induced by the application of an elsewhere condition in the correspondence rules for verbal agreement inflection in BP. Reinterpreting Ferreira’s proposal, Nunes (2008, 2019b) takes a $\phi$-complete set to involve the features person and number and a $\phi$-incomplete set to involve only number. Assuming that nominative pronouns in BP have become morphosyntactically underspecified (cf. Nunes 2019b), as shown in the second column of Table 1 below, T only has features valued when agreeing with the pronouns eu, nós, vocês, eles, and elas (the period between P and N in Table 1 indicates that these attributes are fused). And if T’s person or number feature remain unvalued (u), it does not receive a morphological exponent, in accordance with the correspondence rule in (7d).^5

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5 When the pronoun does not have a morphological value for person and number (i.e. você, a gente, ele, and ela), Case valuation as nominative takes place under matching between
Table 1. Ambiguity of finite T in BP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominative pronouns</th>
<th>Morphosyntactic specification for person and number</th>
<th>$\phi$-complete T: $[P:u; N:u]$</th>
<th>$\phi$-incomplete T: $[N:u]$</th>
<th>Output: dançar ‘dance’ indicative present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>você ‘you.SG’</td>
<td>$[P; N]$</td>
<td>$[P.u; N:u]$</td>
<td>$[N:u]$</td>
<td>dança</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a gente ‘we’</td>
<td>$[P.N]$</td>
<td>$[P:u; N:u]$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nós ‘we’</td>
<td>$[P.N:1]$</td>
<td>$[P.N:1]$</td>
<td>$*$</td>
<td>dançamos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vocês ‘you-PL’</td>
<td>$[P; N:PL]$</td>
<td>$[P.u; N:PL]$</td>
<td>$[N:PL]$</td>
<td>dançam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eles/elas ‘they’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Nunes (2019b: 38.)

(7) Correspondence rules for verbal agreement inflection in BP (adapted from Nunes 2019b):
   a. $[P.N:1] \leftrightarrow \{-mos\}$
   b. $[P.N:SG] \rightarrow \{-o\} / INDIC.PRES \quad \rightarrow \{-i\} / INDIC.PERF.PAST$
   c. $[N:PL] \leftrightarrow \{-m\}$
   d. $\emptyset$ elsewhere.

The shaded cells in Table 1 show that regardless of whether the relevant pronouns agree with a T head with person and number or a T head with just number, the surface form of the verb is the same, due to the elsewhere condition in (7d). Going back to (3), this amounts to saying that in (3a), both the person and the number features of the embedded T are unvalued and in (3b), the sole number feature is also unvalued; hence, the verbal form in both (3a) and (3b) surfaces with no agreement morphology (comprou), in consonance with (7d).

Table 1 also shows that given that the pronoun nós has its person and number fused and valued as 1 (a value for person), it can only be associated with the morpheme -mos when it is the subject of a T head specified for both person and number (cf. (7a)). Finally, the behavior of the pronoun eu is less uniform across speakers (which is also observed in the case of null subject sentences such as (1b)). Descriptively speaking, it’s as if some speakers do not allow T with just number to agree with a pronoun with its number feature fused with its person feature (eu is morphosyntactically specified as [P.N:SG]), whereas other speakers tolerate this agreement because the feature amalgam associated with eu is valued as SG – a possible value for the sole number feature of T. These fine-grained distinctions can be clearly seen in hyper-raising constructions (cf. Nunes 2019b), as illustrated in (8) below, for a pronominal ellipsis analysis for the embedded subjects is arguably unavailable (otherwise, the matrix subject would violate the \(\emptyset\)-Criterion).

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As discussed above, in order for an embedded subject to undergo further A-movement, the embedded clause must be associated with a T head specified only for number. This can perfectly happen in the case of (8a) and (8b), for the superficial form of the embedded verb is the same, regardless of whether the embedded T has person and number or just number (cf. the shaded cells of Table 1). The embedded subject can then move to the matrix clause and have its Case feature licensed by a $\phi$-complete T. In the case of (8c), things completely change. If the embedded T is only associated with number, it cannot give rise to the agreement morpheme -mos on the embedded verb, given the correspondence rule in (7a); hence, (8c) is literally underivable if the embedded T only has number. If it has both person and number instead, the verbal form with -mos is correctly derived in consonance with (7a), but once T is $\phi$-complete, it values the Case of its subject, freezing it for purposes of additional A-movement; again, the derivation of (8c) leads to an ungrammatical result. Finally, speakers split with respect to (8d). Some speakers do not allow T with just number to be valued by a pronoun whose number feature is fused with person. So, for these speakers the sentence in (8d) is underivable, for the correspondence rule in (7b) is not activated and accordingly, the embedded verb cannot surface with the morpheme -o. Other speakers are more sensitive to the value of the fused cluster, namely, SG, and allow agreement between the pronoun eu and a T head with just number; the embedded verb then surfaces with the agreement morpheme -o and the embedded subject moves to the matrix clause, where it has its Case valued by a $\phi$-complete T.

Nunes (2008, 2019b) also reinterprets Ferreira’s proposal in terms of Chomsky’s (2008), according to which the clausal $\phi$-features associated with T are actually lexically hosted by C, the head of the CP phase. This theoretical revision does not change the essence of Ferreira’s analysis of null subjects in BP, but brings new questions to light. In particular, if $\phi$-defectivity in BP is not an idiosyncratic property of T, but a property of its CP phase, one wonders whether other phases in BP may also be $\phi$-defective. This is the route I explore in the next sections.6

A reviewer asks why English is not like BP in not allowing hyper-raising, for instance, despite the fact that it has a defective verbal agreement system, with am arguably being the only unambiguous verbal form that encodes person.

It should be first pointed out that the analysis reviewed here does not take ambiguity of verbal forms to be a necessary condition for a language to allow hyper-raising; rather, the proposal attempted to account for why some verbal forms in BP may be interpreted as being

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3. $\phi$-defectivity at the DP Level

There are several phenomena in BP that indicate that its DP phases have also become $\phi$-defective. The most suggestive piece of evidence in this regard is that in Nonstandard BP, the plural morpheme may be realized on the determiner only (cf. Scherre 1988), as exemplified in (9):

(9)  
\begin{align*}
a. \text{aquele-s carro-s amarelo-s} & \quad \text{(Standard BP)} \\
\text{that-PL car-PL yellow-PL} & \\
b. \text{aquele-s carro amarelo} & \quad \text{(Nonstandard BP)} \\
\text{that-PL car yellow} & \quad \text{‘those yellow cars.’}
\end{align*}

BP also allows bare singulars with count nouns (cf. Saraiva 1997, Schmitt and Munn 2002, Müller and Oliveira 2004, Pires de Oliveira and Rothstein 2011, and Cyrino and Espinal 2015), as illustrated in (10) below. The fact that such bare singulars are compatible with both singular and plural readings, as respectively shown in (11), suggests again that number may be underspecified within DPs in BP.

(10)  
O João nunca compra livro usado.  
the João never buys book used  
‘João never buys second-hand books.’

(11)  
\begin{align*}
a. \text{O João comprou livro usado ontem, mas ele não era barato.} & \\
\text{the João bought book used yesterday but it not was cheap} & \\
\text{‘João bought a second-hand book yesterday, but it was not cheap.’} \\
b. \text{O João comprou livro usado ontem, mas eles não eram baratos.} & \\
\text{the João bought book used yesterday but they not were cheap} & \\
\text{‘João bought second-hand books yesterday, but they were not cheap.’}
\end{align*}

Finally, BP has also undergone changes regarding the syntactic encoding of possession. It has lost external possession constructions (in the sense of Vergnaud and Zubizarreta 1992) such as (12) below (cf. Barros 2006 and Torres Morais and Salles 2016), as well as its third person possessive pronouns (cf. Oliveira and Silva 1984, Perini 1985, Cerqueira 1996, and Müller 1996). The possessive pronoun seu and its feminine associated with a $\phi$-complete or a $\phi$-incomplete agreement inflection. That aside, the reviewer’s point is well taken. There must be a property that leads the learner to interpret opacity in verbal agreement in terms of ambiguity between $\phi$-completeness and $\phi$-incompleteness in BP, but not in English. Nunes (2019b) has argued that the defectivity in DP phases in BP (see section 3 below) has led to a drastic morphosyntactic underspecification in its pronominal system (cf. second column of Table 1). Extending this argument, my conjecture is that the diachronic change that has yielded defective DP phases in BP set in motion a reorganization in the whole grammar, allowing all of its phases to be optionally defective. English, on the other hand, has no indication that its DPs phases are defective that could lead the learner to interpret its ambiguous verbal agreement morphology in terms of defectivity at the CP phase. These speculations make specific predictions regarding the order of the diachronic emergence of some of the properties of BP discussed here, which I hope to explore in future work.
and plural counterparts, which were ambiguous between second and third person in previous stages of the language, have become generally restricted to second person interpretation, as illustrated in (13).

(12) *O Pedro consertou o carro a-o João.
the Pedro fixed the car to-the João
‘Pedro fixed João’s car.’

(13) a. O João lavou o {meu/nosso} carro.
the João washed the my/our car
‘João washed {my/our} car.’

b. O João lavou o seu carro.
the João washed the your car
‘João washed {your/your} car.’

Based on facts like (9)-(13), I would like to propose that the analysis of CP phases in BP discussed in section 2 should be extended to DP phases, as well. Concretely, I would like to propose that DP phases in BP may also be φ-complete or φ-incomplete. That being so, let us consider how DP₁ in a configuration such as (14) can have its Case licensed.

(14) \([\text{DP}_2 \text{D}_2 \ldots [\text{NP N \text{DP}_1}]]\)

If D₂ (or a head of its extended projection, cf. footnote 7) is φ-complete, it should be able to license DP₁ with structural genitive Case. This is exemplified by the possessive pronouns in (13), for instance. The more interesting situation is when DP₂ is φ-incomplete. In this scenario, DP₁ cannot be assigned structural genitive Case within DP₂ and has to look for alternative ways to have its Case licensed. Like what we saw in section 2 with respect to defective CP phases in BP, DP₂ in (14) should count as a defective phase when φ-incomplete and allow A-movement of DP₁ from within it. We thus predict that null possessors in BP should pattern like its embedded null subjects. The data in (15) and (16) show that this prediction is borne out (cf. Floripi 2003 and Rodrigues 2004).

(15) a. \([\text{DP}_1 \text{O Pedro}], \text{ligou para [DP}_2 \text{ o irmão } \emptyset].\]
the Pedro called to the brother
‘Pedro called his brother.’

b. *[A médica d[\text{DP}_1 \text{ o Pedro}],] ligou para [\text{DP}_2 \text{ o irmão } \emptyset].]
the doctor of the Pedro called to the brother
‘[[Pedro’s doctor], called her/your/your brother.’

c. \([\text{DP}_1 \text{O suspeito}], \text{disse que o detetive interrogou [DP}_2 \text{ os amigos } \emptyset].\]
the suspect said that the detective interrogated the friends

I will leave to another opportunity a more detailed discussion of the features that constitute a complete or incomplete φ-set at the DP level, as well as the specific head or heads within the extended projection of D that carry these features.

\( \emptyset = o \; \text{suspeito} \) ‘the suspect’ \( \rightarrow * \)
\( \emptyset = o \; \text{detetive} \) ‘the detective’ \( \rightarrow \checkmark \)

‘[The suspect] said that [the detective] interrogated his friends.’

(16) a. [O João], ‘tá achando [que \( t \), vai ganhar a corrida] the João is thinking that goes win the race
e a Maria também ‘tá.

and the Maria also is

‘João is thinking that he’s going to win the race and Maria is thinking that she’s going to win the race, too.’

b. [Só o João], disse que \( t \) fez a tarefa.

only the João said that did the homework

‘Only João is an \( x \) such that \( x \) said that \( x \) did the homework.’

b’. [DP, Só o Pedro], ligou para [DP2 a irmão \( \emptyset \)].

only the Pedro called to the brother

‘Only Pedro called his own brother.’

(15a) shows that BP allows a null possessor if it finds an antecedent in its sentence. However, if the antecedent is not in a c-commanding position, as in (15b), or is not the closest potential antecedent, as in (15c), the sentence is unacceptable under the relevant interpretation. Notice that the data in (15b) and (15c) are pragmatically biased. In an out-of-the-blue context, one would expect the doctor to call a family member of the patient’s to talk about the patient’s health and the detective to interrogate the suspect’s friends. However, (15b) and (15c) actually have the least expected interpretations in an out-of-the-blue context: the doctor called her own brother and the detective interrogated his own friends. This paradigm replicates the type of restrictions on the interpretation of the null subjects in (2), which suggests that null possessors in BP may also be derived via A-movement. If so, (15b) is excluded under the relevant interpretation, because \( o \; \text{Pedro} \) is moving from within the defective DP2 to a non-c-commanding position and (15c) is ruled out under the relevant reading because \( o \; \text{suspeito} \) violates minimality as it crosses \( o \; \text{detetive} \) on its way to the matrix clause.

Let us now examine (16). (16a) shows that null subjects in BP trigger sloppy identity under ellipsis and (16b), that they receive a bound variable interpretation when anteceded by an only-DP (cf. Negrão 1986). (16a’) and (16b’) show that we find the same restrictions when null possessors are involved. In sum, we may conclude, based on the parallelism between null possessors and embedded null subjects in BP, that the symbol \( \emptyset \) in (15) and (16a’) and (16b’) is a trace left by the movement of DP1.

In addition to A-movement, there is still another possibility for DP1 in (14) to have its Case licensed if DP2 is \( \emptyset \)-defective, namely, if it receives inherent Case from N. Bearing this in mind, let us consider the data in (17) below, which show that the inalienable possession relation associated with the noun \( \text{mão} \) ‘hand’ may be realized...
by means of dative Case if the possessor is first or second person (cf. (17a)), but via the preposition de ‘of’ if it is third person (17b’). Crucially, de cannot introduce a first or second person inalienable possessor (cf. (17a’)).

(17) a. A Maria {me/te}i segurou [DP₂ a [mão t₁]]
the Maria me.DAT/you.DAT held the hand
a’. *A Maria segurou a mão {de mim/de você}.
the Maria held the hand of me/of you
‘Maria held {my/your(SG)} hand.’
b. *A Maria lhe segurou [a [mão t₁]]
the Maria him/her.DAT held the hand
b’. A Maria segurou a mão {de ele/de ela}.
the Maria held the hand of-he/of-she
‘Maria held {his/her} hand.’

The fact that BP has lost external possession constructions (cf. (12)) coupled with the contrasts between (17a) and (17a’), on the one hand, and between (17a’) and (17b’), on the other, suggests that the noun within DP₂ in (17) assigns inherent Case to DP₁, which is realized as a dative clitic if DP₁ is a first or second person pronoun, but as the preposition de if DP₁ is a third person pronoun. Crucially, de is used as a last resort strategy for the realization of the inherent Case assigned to third person pronouns (cf. (17b’)), for BP has also independently lost third person dative clitics, as we will see in section 4; hence the unacceptability of (17a’) in contrast with (17b’).

We will return to this usage of de as a marker of inherent Case within DP in section 5 below, as it proves especially important for the emergence of the novel ‘topic subject’ constructions in BP.

4. \(\phi\)-defectivity at the \(v\)P Level

Thus far, sections 2 and 3 have shown that BP resorts to A-movement to license a Caseless DP within a defective CP phase, but to A-movement or inherent Case when defective DP phases are at stake. It should be observed, though, that the additional inherent Case solution for the problem of licensing a DP within a defective DP phase is not available at the CP level, for principled reasons. Given that inherent Case is associated with thematic assignment (cf. Chomsky 1986), the DP subject in a configuration such as (18) below is not in a position where it can be assigned a \(\theta\)-role. Thus, if the CP phase in (18) is defective, the subject DP cannot be assigned inherent Case and only A-movement to the subordinating clause may allow it to have its Case licensed. That being so, one wonders whether we also find \(\phi\)-defectivity at the \(v\)P phase in BP and if so, whether \(v\)P also resorts to the two solutions for Case-licensing seen above (A-movement and inherent Case).

(18) \([CP C_\phi [TP DP \[T\ T \ldots \]]]\)

There is compelling evidence that transitive \(v\)P phases in BP have also become defective. First, BP can no longer license third person accusative clitics, as shown in (19) below (cf. Omena 1978, Tarallo 1983, Duarte 1986, Galves 1989, 2001, Corrêa,
Third person accusative clitics are acquired via schooling and are thus associated with written language and formal registers (cf. Duarte 1986, Corrêa, 1991, and Kato, Cyrino, and Corrêa 2009). Interestingly, in these formal registers they also display a distinct placement pattern, as will be discussed in section 7 below.

(19)  
* A Maria {me/te/*a/*os/*as} viu ontem.  
the Maria me/you/him/her/them(MASC/FEM) saw yesterday  
‘Maria saw {me/you/him/her/them} yesterday.’

BP has also undergone changes in the licensing of indirect objects (cf. Berlinck 1996, Salles 1997, Torres Morais 2007, Torres Morais and Salles 2010, and Calindro 2020). The preposition a ‘to’, which was arguably a realization of dative case, was replaced by the preposition para ‘for’, as illustrated in (20) below. In addition, third person dative clitics were also lost, as shown in (21).

(20)  
A Maria deu um livro para o João.  
the Maria gave a book for the João  
‘Maria gave a book to João.’

(21)  
A Maria {me/te/*lhe/*lhes} deu um livro.  
the Maria me/you/{him/her}/them gave a book  
‘Maria gave {me/you/him/her/them} a book.’

BP is also losing reflexive clitics that do not bear a regular θ-role, as illustrated in (22) below (cf. d’Albuquerque 1984, Galves 1987, Nunes 1995, and Carvalho 2021). Dialects may vary regarding the classes of verbs that allow this process, though. The Mineiro dialect, for instance, admits deletion for all the verbs of (22), whereas the majority of the other dialects resist deletion in the case of (22c) and (22d).

(22)  
a. Eu (me) lembrei que amanhã é feriado.  
I REF.L.1SG remembered that tomorrow is holiday  
‘I remembered that tomorrow is a holiday.’

b. O João (se) machucou.  
the João REF.L.3SG hurt  
‘João got hurt.’

c. Você % (se) arrependeu do que você fez?  
you REF.L.3SG repented of what you did  
‘Did you repent from what you did?’

d. Eu % (me) magoei com o que você disse.  
I REF.L.1SG hurt with what you said  
‘I got hurt with what you said.’

BP has also lost passive se constructions, as shown in (23) below (cf. Galves 1986, Nunes 1991, and Martins and Nunes 2016), and its middle constructions need not involve middle se (Galves 1987, Rodrigues 1998, Pacheco 2008, and Carvalho
2016, 2019), as illustrated in (24), with the version without middle *se* being much more frequent.

(23)   a. *Comeram-* **se** os bolos.  
       ate-*SE** the cakes  
       b. *Os bolos comeram-* **se**.  
       the cakes ate-*SE**  
       ‘The cakes were eaten.’

(24)   Esse material (**se**) lava fácil.  
       this material **SE** wash easy  
       ‘This material washes easily.’

The data illustrated in (19)-(24) indicate that vP phases in BP have also become defective. Putting aside the issue of how exactly such defectivity is to be expressed in terms of features or which heads of the extended projection of v carry such features,9 I would like to extend the approach discussed in sections 2 and 3 and propose that v in BP may be ϕ-complete or ϕ-incomplete. That being so, the relevant question is how DP1 can be Case-licensed within a defective vP in the configuration such as (25), with a ϕ-incomplete vP.

(25)   [\[vP DP2 [vP ϕ-incomplete [vP V DP1]]]]

A-movement is not a possibility for DP1 to be Case-licensed outside the defective vP phase in (25), as the presence of DP2 should block such a movement. Interestingly, BP seems to have found a way to circumvent this restriction by dropping DP2! The literature has systematically called attention to unaccusative structures found in BP that are crosslinguistically rare, as illustrated in (26) below (cf. Galves 1987, Ciríaco and Cançado 2009, Negrão and Viotti 2010, Amaral and Cançado 2017, and Carvalho 2019). Although speakers may vary with respect to the classes of transitive verbs or individual lexical items that may allow this frame, it seems to be a plain fact that BP has gained an optional process of ‘unaccusativization’ of certain classes of transitive verbs. From the perspective of our proposal, this has arisen as a solution for the tension in (25) involving vP phases being optionally ϕ-complete and the minimality problem induced by an external argument.

(26)   a. A revista tá xerocando.  
       the magazine is xeroxing  
       ‘The magazine is being xeroxed.’
   b. A casa ainda não alugou.  
       the house still not rented  
       ‘The house has not been rented yet.’
   c. Essa ponte construíu rápido.  
       this bridge built quickly  
       ‘This bridge was built quickly.’

---

9 Cf. Carvalho and Calindro 2018 for a concrete proposal and relevant discussion.
d. O caminhão já carregou.
   the truck already loaded
   ‘The truck has already been loaded.’

e. Esse brinquedo já não fabrica mais.
   this toy already not make more
   ‘This toy is no longer made.’

Let us now consider the other possibility available for DP₁ to be licensed in (25), namely, by inherent Case. Tarallo (1983) has shown that BP allows a pervasive use of prepositionless relatives, as illustrated in (27) below. Kato and Nunes (2009) have argued that rather than involving preposition deletion, relative clauses like the ones in (27) involve a pro in the object position, marked with inherent Case. In other words, the prepositions in (27) have been reanalyzed as realizations of inherent Case, which is phonetically expressed just in case the internal argument is phonetically realized.

(27)  a. Eu conversei/competi *(com) aquele estudante.
   I talked/competed with that student
   ‘I talked/competed with that student.’
   a’. O estudante [que eu conversei/competi Ø ontem] viajou.
   the student that I talked/competed yesterday travelled
   ‘The student who I talked/competed with yesterday travelled.’

b. Eu dei um presente *(para) um amigo.
   I gave a present to a friend
   ‘I gave a present to a friend.’
   b’. O amigo [que eu dei um presente Ø] tinha me ajudado no trabalho.
   the friend that I gave a present had me helped in the job
   ‘The friend that I gave a present to had helped me at work.’

c. Eu confio *(n-)aquele candidato.
   I trust that candidate
   ‘I trust that candidate.’
   c’. O candidato [que eu mais confiava Ø] me decepcionou.
   the candidate that I more trusted me disappointed
   ‘The candidate that I trusted more disappointed me.’

The preposition em ‘in’ in (27c) is especially interesting for two reasons. First, we have independent evidence that it is used as a marker of inherent Case in other environments. Consider the data in (28) below, for example (cf. Scher 2004). The verb classificar ‘classify’ takes a DP for its complement in (28a), but a small clause in (28b). Observe that a nominalization alternative is allowed in (28a’), with em licensing the DP os papeis ‘the papers’, but not in (28b’). The contrast between (28a’) and (28b’) can be accounted for if em in (28) is a realization of inherent Case.

(28)  a. O João classificou os papeis.
   the João classified the papers
   a’. O João deu uma classifica-da n-os papeis.
   the João gave a classify-NMLZ in-the papers
Generalized phasal defectivity in Brazilian Portuguese

5. Defective Phases, Inherent Case, and Minimality

In sections 3 and 4, we have seen that inherent Case has played a key role in the licensing of DPs within defective DP and vP phases. In this section we will see that the generalized resort to inherent Case in BP has additional implications within its grammar. Before we get to them, let us first consider a well-known puzzle in English, illustrated in (30) below. The Principle C effect in (30a) induced by the pronoun indicates him c-commands into the embedded clause, despite the fact that it does not block movement of the embedded subject to the matrix clause, as shown in (30b).

(30)  a. *[Mary$_i$ seems to him$_k$ [t$_i$ to like John$_k$]]
    b. [Mary$_i$ seems to him$_k$ [t$_i$ to be nice]]

Chomsky (1995) suggests that the experiencer in (30) is assigned inherent Case and that to is not a true preposition, but just the realization of the inherent Case the pronoun receives (hence the Principle C effect in (30a)). Exploring this suggestion, Nunes (2008) (cf. also Nunes 2016, 2017 and Nunes and Kato forthcoming) argues

\[\text{João has classified the papers.'}\]
\[b. \ O \ \text{João classificou} \ [\text{os papeis como interessantes}].\]
\[\text{the João classified the papers as interesting} \]

\[b'. \ *\text{O João deu uma classifica}-\text{da} \ [\text{n-os papeis como interessantes}].\]
\[\text{the João gave a classify-NMLZ in the papers as interesting} \]

The second related reason is that BP has undergone a wholesale change affecting its directional verbs, which came to select the preposition em ‘in’ instead of a ‘to’ (cf. Wiedemer 2013), as illustrated in (29) below. Given that the lexical meaning of the preposition em encodes location and that em can be independently used as a marker of inherent Case in BP (cf. (27c,c’) and (28a’,b’)), the change that has affected its directional verbs may be seen as another by-product of the resort to inherent Case due to the general possibility for Φ-defectivity at the vP phase.

(29)  a. O João foi n-o mercado.
    the João went in-the market
    ‘João went to the market.’
    b. A Maria já chegou em casa.
    the Maria already arrived in house
    ‘Maria has already arrived home.’
    c. O Pedro veio n-a festa.
    the Pedro came in-the party
    ‘Pedro came to the party.’
    d. A Maria levou o filho n-o cinema hoje.
    the Maria took the son in-the movies today
    ‘Maria took her son to the movies today.’
that inherent Case renders a given element inert for purposes of A-movement in Relativized Minimality computations, which amounts to saying that elements marked with inherent Case do not count as interveners for A-movement.

This discussion proves to be extremely relevant for the analysis of the so-called ‘topic subject’ constructions in BP (cf. Pontes 1987, Galves 1987, 1998, Kato 1989, Munhoz and Naves 2012, Andrade and Galves 2014, Nunes 2017, Kato and Ordóñez 2019, and Nunes and Kato forthcoming), as illustrated in (31a') and (31b') below. The impersonal constructions in (31a) and (31b) suggest that the prepositionless possessee in (31a') and the prepositionless locative in (31b') raise from within vP to the subject position, triggering verbal agreement. The question is how these putative movements are allowed, given that in (31a') the moved DP crosses the DP that dominates it (an A-over-A violation) and in (31b'), the locative crosses the theme.

(31) a. Quebrou o ponteiro dos relógios.
   broke the arm of the watches
b. Cabe muita coisa nessas gavetas.
   fit many thing in these drawers

a'. Os relógios quebraram o ponteiro.
   the watches broke-PL the arm.
   ‘The arms of the watches broke.’
b'. Essas gavetas cabem muita coisa.
   these drawers fit-PL many thing
   ‘Many things can fit in these drawers.’

From the perspective of our proposal, the derivation of the sentences in (31a) and (31a') proceeds along the lines of (32) below. In (32a), the unaccusative verb quebrar ‘break’ assigns inherent Case to DP2 and the noun ponteiro ‘arm’ assigns inherent Case to DP1. DP1 then surfaces with the preposition de (cf. (31a)) and a null expletive fills the subject position. In (32b), on the other hand, the noun does not assign Case to DP1. If DP2 were -complete and DP1 were a first or second person pronoun, DP1 could be licensed with genitive case. This is not the state of affairs in (32b), though. Thus, DP1 can only be Case-licensed under A-movement, which would require a derivation in which DP2 is -incomplete. However, this is not a problem, for this possibility is generally available in BP, as we saw in section 3. Crucially, in (32b) DP2 does not induce a minimality violation (of the A-over-A type) for movement of DP1 because DP2 has been assigned inherent Case by the verb. DP1 then moves to the subject position, triggers verbal agreement, and is licensed with nominative Case.

(32) a. [TP expl T [vP v [VP quebrou [DP2 o [NP ponteiro [DP1 os relógios]]]]]]
   ______↑inherent Case
b. [TP [DP1 os relógios], T [vP v [VP quebraram [DP2 o [NP ponteiro]]]]]
   ______↑inherent Case

Similar considerations apply to the derivation of (31b) and (31b’), as sketched in (33) below. In (33a), the verb caber ‘fit’ assigns inherent Case to both its specifier and its complement. The inherent Case assigned to the complement is realized as the preposition em (cf. (31b)), which we saw in section 4 can be independently employed as a realization for inherent Case. If, on the other hand, caber only assigns Case to its
specifier, as represented in (33b), DP₁ must undergo A-movement to be Case licensed. The sentence in (31b’) is then derived after DP₁ moves to the subject position and has its Case valued as nominative under agreement with φ-features of C, after it enters the derivation (see section 2). Crucially, DP₂ does not count as a proper intervener as it has been assigned inherent Case.

\[
\text{(33) } \begin{align*}
\text{a. } & \left[ \text{TP expl T [}_v \text{P} \left[ \text{VP \ [}_v \text{P} \text{DP}_2 \text{muita coisa} \right] \text{[cabe \ [}_v \text{P} \text{DP}_1 \text{essas gavetas]} \right] \right] \\
& \text{b. } \left[ \text{TP} \left[ \text{DP}_1 \text{essas gavetas} \right] \text{[}_v \text{P} \left[ \text{VP \ [}_v \text{P} \text{DP}_2 \text{muita coisa} \text{cabem tê} \right] \right] \right]
\end{align*}
\]

In the derivation of the ‘topic subject’ constructions in (31a’) and (31b’), the moving DP only crosses one intervener on its way to the subject position. However, this analysis predicts that the relevant A-movement could cross more than one potential intervener as long as they have been assigned inherent Case. Nunes (2017) shows that this prediction is correct. BP also allows ‘extralong’ A-movement, as illustrated in (34).

\[
\text{(34) } \begin{align*}
\text{a. Diminuíu o tamanho da hélice do motor desses barcos.} & \quad \text{diminished the size of the fan of the engine of these boats} \\
& \text{a’. Esses barcos diminuíram o tamanho da hélice do motor.} \quad \text{these boats diminished the size of the fan of the engine} \\
& \quad \text{‘These boats had the size of the fans of their engine reduced.’} \\
\text{b. Cabe muita coisa na parte interna da lateral desses porta-malas.} & \quad \text{fit many thing in the part internal of the lateral of these car-trunks} \\
& \text{b’. Esses porta-malas cabem muita coisa na parte interna da lateral.} \quad \text{these car-trunks fit many thing in the part internal of the lateral} \\
& \quad \text{‘Many things can fit in the internal part of the side of the trunks of these cars.’}
\end{align*}
\]

In the impersonal constructions in (34a) and (34b), the verb and all the nouns assign inherent Case to their arguments. The nominal arguments then surface with de, the complement of caber surfaces with em, and a null expletive occupies the subject position. Let us now examine the ‘topic subject’ constructions in (34a’) and (34b’). The only relevant difference with the impersonal counterparts is that the nouns motor ‘engine’ in (34a’) and parte ‘part’ in (34b’) exercise their option of not assigning inherent Case, as respectively illustrated in (35a) and (35b) below. Their nominal arguments esses barcos ‘these boats’ in (35a) and esses porta-malas ‘these car-trunks’ in (35b) then move all the way to the subject position, triggering verbal agreement and getting nominative Case. Crucially, all the DPs that are crossed in both movements have been assigned inherent Case and do not induce minimality violations.¹⁰

¹⁰ Here I have only discussed ‘simple’ instances of inherent Case. Instances of quirky Case, which arguably involve the combination of structural and inherent Case, present more complex scenarios with respect to minimality. Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004), for example, show that in Icelandic raising constructions, an unmoved experiencer or a wh-trace of the experiencer blocks agreement between the matrix T and an embedded subject, but an A-trace of the experiencer does not. The authors propose an insightful analysis of this pattern in terms of the derivational timing when agreement takes place, coupled with the proviso that
(35)  a. \([VP \text{ diminuíram} \ [DP \ o \ [NP \ \text{tamanho} \ [DP \ o \ [NP \ \text{hélice} \ [DP \ o \ [NP \ \text{motor} \ [DP \ \text{esses} \ [\text{barcos}]])]])]]\]

a’. \([TP [DP \text{Esses barcos}] \ T \ [VP \text{ diminuíram} \ [DP \ o \ [NP \ \text{tamanho} \ [DP \ a \ [NP \ \text{hélice} \ [DP \ o \ [NP \ \text{motor} \ \text{esses}]])]])]])\]

b. \([VP \ [\text{muita coisa}] \ [V' \text{ cabem} \ [DP \ a \ \text{parte interna} \ [DP \ a \ \text{lateral} \ [DP \ \text{esses} \ [\text{porta-malas}]])]])\]

b’. \([TP [DP \text{Esses porta-malas}] \ T \ [DP \text{ cabem-}V \ [VP \ [\text{muita coisa}] \ [V' \text{ cabem} \ [DP \ a \ \text{parte interna} \ [DP \ a \ \text{lateral} \ \text{t})]])]])\]

The ‘extralong’ A-movements in (35a’) and (35b’) in BP are made possible thanks to its pervasive resort to inherent Case, which in turn is motivated by the optional defectivity of its phases. Given the discussion in sections 2-4, we should also expect cases of long distance A-movement to be possible by other combinations of defective phases. This is the topic of the next section.

6. Combining Defective Phases

Nunes (2016) has shown that ‘topic subject’ constructions can be combined with hyper-raising, yielding sentences like (36a) and (37a) below. The DPs os carros ‘the cars’ in (36) and essas gavetas ‘these drawers’ in (37) are not assigned inherent Case and move to the embedded [Spec,TP] with no violation of minimality, for the crossed DPs have been assigned inherent Case. In [Spec,TP], the moved DPs trigger verbal agreement, but the embedded CPs are \(\phi\)-incomplete (see section 2), as represented in (36b) and (37b), and are therefore unable to value Case. The moved DPs must then undergo further A-movement to the matrix subject position, where they again trigger verbal agreement and can get nominative Case if the matrix CP is \(\phi\)-complete (see section 2).

(36)  a. Os carros parecem-\text{m que furara-\text{m o pneu}.}

the cars seem-PL that punctured-PL the tire
‘The cars seem to have a flat tire.’

b. \([TP [Os carros] \parecem \ [CP \ \text{que\text{-}incomplete} \ [TP \ \text{furaram o pneu t})]])\]

(37)  a. Essas gavetas parecem-\text{m que cabe-\text{m muita coisa}.}

these drawers seem-PL that fit-PL many thing
‘It seems that many things can fit in these drawers.’

b. \([TP [Essas gavetas] \parecem \ [CP \ \text{que\text{-}incomplete} \ [TP \ \text{cabem muita coisa t})]])\]

Given the general discussion of phasal defectivity in sections 2-5, other possibilities also arise. For instance, given the process of ‘unaccusativization’ of transitive verbs in BP discussed in section 4, one would expect the relevant

A-traces are not copies of the moved element. Space limitations prevent me from making a comparison between Icelandic and BP regarding minimality. For an approach to the transparency or opacity of traces that still maintains that all traces are copies, see Nunes 2022.
constructions to interact with hyper-raising if an embedded CP containing a \( \phi \)-defective vP is also \( \phi \)-defective. The sentences in (38) show that this prediction is borne out.

(38)  

a. Os apartamentos acabaram-\textit{m} que não alugaram-\textit{m}.
   
   the apartments finished-\textit{PL} that not rented-\textit{PL}
   
   ‘The apartments ended up not being rented.’

   a’. [[Os apartamentos] acabaram [CP que\( \phi \)-incomplete [TP \text{t} [T \text{T} não [vP v \( \phi \)-incomplete [vP alugaram \text{t}]]]]])

b. Os caminhões parece-\textit{m} que já carregaram-\textit{m}.
   
   the trucks seem-\textit{PL} that already loaded-\textit{PL}
   
   ‘It seems that the trucks have already been loaded.’

   b’. [[Os caminhões] parecem [CP que\( \phi \)-incomplete [TP \text{t} [T \text{T} já [vP v \( \phi \)-incomplete [vP carregaram \text{t}]]]]])

Another possibility is for a \( \phi \)-defective DP to be embedded in a \( \phi \)-defective vP, yielding a ‘topic subject’ construction with verbs that have undergone ‘un accusativization’, as illustrated in (39).

(39)  

a. Os caminhões carregaram-\textit{m} a carroceria pela metade.
   
   the trucks loaded-\textit{PL} the bed by the half
   
   ‘The truck beds were half loaded.’

   a’. [[Os caminhões] carregaram [DP \( \phi \)-defective à carroceria \text{t}] pela metade]

b. Esses carros não fabrica-\textit{m} mais a embreagem.
   
   these cars not make-\textit{PL} more the clutch
   
   ‘The clutch of these cars is no longer made.’

   b’. [[Esses carros] fabricam mais [DP \( \phi \)-defective à embreagem \text{t}]]

c. As teses xerocado só a folha de rosto.
   
   the theses xeroxed only the sheet of face
   
   ‘Only the front page of the theses had been xeroxed.’

   c’. [[As teses] xerocado só a folha de rosto \text{t}]]

d. Os prédios ainda não alugaram-\textit{m} o andar térreo.
   
   the buildings still not rented-\textit{PL} the floor ground
   
   ‘The ground floor of the buildings has not been rented yet.’

   d’. [[Os prédios] ainda não [vP alugaram [DP \( \phi \)-defective O andar térreo \text{t}]]]

The constructions in (36)-(39) are not meant to exhaust the possible combinations, but just illustrate how apparently complex and unusual constructions in BP may receive a straightforward analysis if we assume that phases in BP generally have the option of being \( \phi \)-defective.

7. Dealing with Phasal Defectivity at School

In section 4, I mentioned that one of the indications that vP phases in BP have become defective is that it has lost third person accusative clitics, which have been replaced by the third person pronouns \textit{ele(s)} and \textit{ela(s)} or a null object, as illustrated in (40) (cf.

(40) a. Eu os comprei ontem. (written BP, formal register)
   I bought them yesterday
b. Eu comprei eles ontem.
   I bought them yesterday
c. Eu comprei Ø ontem.
   ‘I bought them yesterday.’

Third person accusative clitics are acquired at school and are thus associated with formal registers and written language (cf. Duarte 1986, Corrêa, 1991, and Kato, Cyrino, and Corrêa 2009). Interestingly, it is not the case that this process of acquisition via schooling simply adds one more clitic to the inventory of clitics available in BP. Nunes (2015, 2019a) has shown that third person accusative clitics may differ from first and second person clitics with respect to their placement, as illustrated in (41).

(41) Formal registers of BP:
   a. Te vi ontem na universidade.
      you saw yesterday in.the university
      ‘I saw you yesterday at the university.’
   a’. *A vi ontem na universidade.
      her saw yesterday in.the university
      ‘I saw her yesterday at the university.’
   b. O João tinha [te visto].
      the João had me seen
      ‘João had seen me.’
   b’. *O João tinha [os visto].
      the João had them seen
   b’’. *O João tinha-os visto.
      the João had-them seen
   b’’’. O João os tinha visto.
      the João them had seen
      ‘João had seen them.’
      the João goes hire-you
      ‘João is going to hire you.’
   c’. O João vai contratar-las.
      the João goes hire-them
   c’’. *O João as vai contratar.
      the João them goes hire
      ‘João is going to hire them.’

As discussed by Nunes (2019a), the intricate pattern of placement exhibited by third person accusative clitics in (41) constitutes a fine example of Plato’s Problem (cf. Chomsky 1986), for children are not told at school that these clitics may not
occupy the same position as first and second person clitics. The emphasis in Portuguese classes in Brazil in this regard is to show that one should use third person accusative clitics in addition to or in place of the third person pronouns ele(s) and elas(s) ‘he/she/they’ in object position (cf. (40b)). The question is then how children acquire the pattern in (41).

Nunes (2015, 2019a) argues that the position of third person accusative clitics in formal registers of BP is determined by the interaction of four conditions: (i) they cannot surface clause-initially (cf. (41a’)); (ii) their host must be potential agreement bearers, as illustrated by the contrast between infinitives, which can be inflected, and past participles, which cannot (cf. (41c’ vs. (41b’)); (iii) they compete with subject agreement for a morphological slot and subject agreement takes precedence (cf. (41b”’ vs. (41b”’)); and (iv) climbing only takes place as a saving strategy (cf. (41b”’’ vs. (41c’’)). Relevant to our current discussion are the conditions in (ii) and (iii), which led Nunes (2015, 2019a) to propose that ‘third person accusative clitics’ in formal registers of BP are acquired as (object) agreement markers.

Suppose that this is correct and let us consider another highlighted point in Portuguese classes in Brazil, namely, verbal agreement and agreement within DP. We have seen in sections 2 and 3 that Nonstandard BP may allow only two distinctions for verbal agreement and plural may be encoded just on D, as illustrated in (6) and (9), repeated below in (42) and (43), for convenience.

(42) Nonstandard BP:
   a. Eu danç-o bem.
      I dance-INDIC.PRES.1SG well.
      ‘I dance well.’
   a’. {Você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/eles} danç-a bem.
       you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV well
      ‘{You/he/we/they} dance well.’
   b. Eu danc-e-i bem.
      I dance-TV-INDIC.PERF.PAST.1SG well.
      ‘I danced well.’
   b’. {Você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/eles} danç-o-u bem.
       you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV-INDIC.PERF.PAST well
      ‘{You/he/we/they} danced well.’
   c. {Eu/você/ele/nós/a gente/vocês/eles} danç-a-va bem.
      I/you.sg/he/we/we/you.pl/they dance-TV-INDIC.IMPERF.PAST well
      ‘{I/you/he/we/they} used to dance well.’

(43) a. aquele-s carro-s amarelo-s (Standard BP)
    that-PL car-PL yellow-PL
   b. aquele-s carro amarelo (Nonstandard BP)
    that-PL car yellow
    ‘those yellow cars.’

It is worth observing that the pedagogical chastising of (42a’), (42b’), and (43b) is generally taken to involve a single topic or two connected topics in Portuguese classes in Brazil, unrelated to the pedagogical chastising of (40b) in favor of (40a). However, from the perspective of the current paper, the loss of third person accusative clitics (cf.
(19)) and the patterns in (42) and (43b) are all indicative of BP’s general phasal defectivity. One may then conjecture that what Brazilian students do is interpret the school’s prescriptions as telling them to use more agreement to overcome BP phasal defectivity, which in turn may have led to a reanalysis of third person accusative clitics as agreement markers. Although admittedly speculative, these notes raise interesting hypotheses regarding the effects of schooling on the different signs of phasal defectivity in BP, something that I will leave for another occasion.

8. Concluding remarks

In this paper I have discussed several apparently unrelated properties of BP grammar that may be subject to a unified account if BP phases generally have the option of being ϕ-defective. For instance, ϕ-defectivity at the CP level has given rise to restrictions on the distribution and interpretation of null subjects in BP, as well as the appearance of hyper-raising constructions in the grammar; ϕ-defectivity at the vP level has paved the way for a process of ‘unaccusativization’ of certain classes of transitive verbs; and ϕ-defectivity at the DP level has restricted the interpretation of null possessors and given rise to ‘topic subject’ constructions. Defective phases of different types may also interact, yielding constructions that seem very complex and unusual at first sight but can reduce to simple computations once the role of inherent Case in bleeding A-minimality is taken into account. Many details remain to be spelled out such as feature composition of defective DP and vP phases, as well as the relevant heads involved. However, I hope to have convinced the reader that the fact that BP displays all the properties discussed here is by no means accidental.

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