

### Syntactic change without a syntactic trigger: (apparent) hyper-raising in Brazilian Portuguese

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Brazilian Portuguese (BP) displays hyper-raising (in the sense of Ura 1994) as illustrated by sentence (1) and apparent hyper-raising (with resumptive pronouns) as illustrated in (2).

- (1) *As crianças parecem que gostam da babá.*  
the children seem-3PL that like-3PL of-the baby-sitter  
'The children seem to like the baby-sitter.'
- (2) *As crianças parecem que elas gostam da babá.*  
the children seem-3PL that they like-3PL of-the baby-sitter  
'The children seem to like the baby-sitter.'

Sentences (1) and (2) are both ungrammatical in contemporary European Portuguese (EP) and are not attested at any stage of the history of EP. This shows that they are the outcome of (presumably recent) syntactic change in BP. Ferreira (2004) proposes that the weakening of verbal morphology in BP led finite T to become an optional Case assigner. If the Case-assigner version of T is selected, it will assign nominative to the DP in its Spec, freezing it for further A-movement. If the non-Case-assigner version of T is selected instead, the DP in its Spec will have to undergo further movement in order to have its Case checked. Ferreira presents two types of evidence to show that constructions such as (1) involve moved subjects, rather than topics. First, the DP in question triggers agreement with the matrix predicate, as shown in (1) above, and second, elements that cannot be topicalized in BP such as weak pronouns or the quantifier *alguém* 'someone' can appear in hyper-raising constructions, as shown in (3) below. Another diagnostic of the second type can be added to Ferreira's diagnostics: idiom chunks cannot be topicalized, but can be hyper-raised, as shown in (4).

- (3)a. *\*Alguém, a babá me disse que chorou.*  
someone the baby-sitter me told that cried  
'The baby-sitter told me that someone cried.'
- b. *Alguém parece que chorou.*  
someone seems that cried – 'Someone seems to have cried'.
- (4)a. *O pau vai comer feio.*  
the stick goes eat ugly – 'There's going to be a big discussion/fight'
- b. *\*O pau, o João disse que vai comer feio.*  
the stick the João said that goes eat ugly – 'João said that is going to be a big fight.'
- c. *O pau parece que vai comer feio.*  
the stick seems that goes eat ugly – 'It seems that there's going to be a big fight'

Sentences like (2) above, displaying apparent hyper-raising, differ from real hyper-raising constructions in that their matrix DP behaves like a topic in certain respects, although not systematically so. On the one hand, apparent hyper-raising structures are incompatible with quantified expressions and idiom chunks, in contrast to true hyper-raising structures but like topic constructions (see (5) & (6) below); also like topic constructions, they are incompatible with clefting (see (7) below). On the other hand, unlike topic constructions, apparent hyper-raising structures manifest Principle C effects with respect to epithets (see (8) below).

- (5) *\*Alguém parece que ele chorou.* – COMPARE (3) ABOVE  
someone seems that he cried – 'Someone seems to have cried.'
- (6) *\*O pau parece que ele vai comer feio.* – COMPARE (4) ABOVE  
the stick seems that he goes eat ugly – 'It seems that there's going to be a big fight'
- (7)a. *Eram as crianças mais novas que pareciam que iam passear.*  
were-3PL the children more young that seemed-3PL that went-3PL go-out
- b. *\*Eram as crianças mais novas que elas pareciam que iam passear.*  
were-3PL the children more young that they seemed-3PL that went-3PL go-out  
'It was the younger children who seemed to be going for a walk.'

- We will assume with Ferreira (2004) that hyper-raising arises when a finite T fails to assign Case to its subject. We will then show that once we find such defective finite Ts, nothing prevents agreement between a matrix T and the embedded subject of a defective finite clause, if something can independently check the EPP feature of the matrix T. Specifically, we will propose that apparent instances of hyper-raising (with resumptive pronouns) are to be analyzed like existential constructions in an Agree-based system (see Chomsky 2000, 2001). A sentence such as (2), for instance, should be analyzed along the lines of (8).

In (8), the embedded subject moves from its  $\theta$ -position to the embedded [Spec, TP] to check the EPP. Given that the selected embedded T in (8) is not of the Case-assigning type (its  $\phi$ -set is defective), the pronoun still has to check its Case-feature. In hyper-raising constructions this is achieved after the embedded subject overtly moves to check the EPP of the higher clause. In (8), however, a DP marked with “topic” Case merges with the matrix TP, checking the EPP, before moving to the position where it can have its “topic” Case checked, say, [Spec, TopP] (meant as a low (unmarked) topic position). Since the “topic” DP has only checked the EPP feature of the matrix T, leaving its  $\phi$ -features unvalued, the matrix T can then probe the structure, agree with the embedded subject, and value its Case-feature as nominative. The type of Case licensing displayed by the matrix DP is available in languages like BP which exhibits a pervasive use of base-generated topics (as extensively discussed on the literature on BP). This analysis of the BP data under discussion straightforwardly accounts for the mixed topic/non-topic properties of the matrix DP in apparent hyper-raising structures (with resumptive pronouns). The fact that the matrix DP is generated in [Spec,TP] derives its A-properties; hence the Principle C effects; the fact that the matrix DP moves to a topic position derives its incompatibility with quantified expressions, clefting and idiom chunks.

It will be discussed in the paper what the trigger for the change above described could have been and shown that before the emergence of non-Case-assigning-finite-T in BP grammars, children could not have been exposed to a (syntactic) *cue* (in the technical sense set by Lightfoot 1999) leading to the acquisition of the new structures. The correlation between the emergence of hyper-raising and the loss of null subjects in BP, which Ferreira (1994) suggests, does not seem tenable in view of the fact that Romanian allows hyper-raising while being a pro-drop language (Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Ura 1994). Having in mind that the acquisition of ‘T with certain properties’ is at stake here, it might be tempting to think of morphology as the locus of the change. We will however restrain ourselves from suggesting some kind of “legalistic” isomorphism between morphology and syntax which could serve our case (see Anderson 2005). It seems to us that identifying particular cases of syntactic change not driven by syntactic “causes” might be by itself a contribution (though modest) to a better understanding of syntactic change. The interplay between syntax and other components of grammar in most such cases is probably to be set at a more abstract level than our current knowledge of the language faculty allows us. Notice that we are not assuming that syntax cannot be a source of primitive changes (pace Longobardi 2001). We will instead make the specific proposal that structural ambiguity is *the* potential source for syntactically triggered syntactic innovations. Crucially syntactic ambiguity is absent with respect to the BP innovations above discussed.