

## BOOK REVIEW

**Simone Guesser, Ani Carla Marchesan and Paulo Medeiros Junior** (eds.), *Wh-exclamatives, imperatives and wh-questions: Issues on Brazilian Portuguese*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2024. Pp. 463.

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The book offers a varied collection of papers discussing aspects of structure, interpretation, and pronunciation in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). The volume begins with an introduction by the editors, presenting BP as an ideal language to investigate phenomena involving the left periphery of the sentence and the periphery of vP (verbal phrase), since the language displays an abundant variety of relevant constructions (cf. the multitude of WH-, focus, and topic constructions). Though research on WH-questions is ‘extensive’ (7) in the literature on BP, the editors point out a gap in the study of exclamatives and imperatives in the language and offer the present book with the aim of filling ‘gaps on the phenomena of the left periphery and vP’ (9).

The volume is appropriately divided into three parts, each of which begins with an overview chapter written by a renowned expert, aimed at presenting to the reader the current state-of-the-art of each research topic, which is followed by chapters presenting original research by contributing authors.

Part I is opened by Xavier Villalba’s Chapter 1, ‘Exclamatives: An overview’, which begins with the outstanding issue of defining exclamative sentences, a far from trivial problem. By teasing exclamatives (as a sentence type) apart from exclamations, Villalba’s accessible text gives the reader a good initial understanding of what the defining (structural and interpretive) properties of prototypical exclamatives are. By presenting the intricate interface nature of exclamative sentences, this chapter attracts the interest of researchers of different areas to the content of the following chapters.

Chapter 2, ‘On the role of IP-related functional categories in the derivation of *wh*-exclamatives’, by Bruno de Lima and Aquiles Tescari Neto, proposes a cartographic decomposition of WH-exclamative sentences with *como* ‘how’ (e.g. *Como é interessante aquela aula!*, ‘How interesting that lesson is!’). Each composing feature of WH-exclamatives is associated with a separate projection in the clausal spine, and a derivation is proposed which checks all these features, most of which are assumed to be in the IP (inflectional phrase) domain. The derivation proposed is plausible and an intriguing one if correct; however, it is tailored to involve movement operations that check the postulated features – the movement operations themselves are not justified by independent evidence, raising the question of how the proposal of the chapter could be compared to alternative analyses and eventually falsified.

In Chapter 3, “‘What a great paper!’: A semantic analysis of *wh*-exclamatives with predicates of personal taste’, Marina Marques, Bruno de Lima, and Renato Basso analyze the behavior of *wh*-exclamatives with predicates of personal taste (e.g. *Que bolo gostoso!*, ‘What a tasty cake!’). By arguing that predicates such as TASTY are subjective at the truth-conditional level and that exclamatives are expressive at the use-conditional level, the authors point out the two dimensions of meaning of *wh*-exclamatives with predicates of personal taste, one semantic and one pragmatic. This chapter presents itself as a very accessible case study, putting together theoretical tools and nicely applying them to a given empirical domain. It almost works as a textbook chapter and is thus a recommendable read to those interested in beginning research on exclamatives in BP.

Chapter 4, ‘Copular exclamatives and gender agreement’, by Bruna Pereira, analyzes copular *wh*-exclamatives with gender agreement mismatch between the predicate and the subject (e.g. *Que bom essa chuvinha!*, ‘How good is this little rain!’). The author proposes that a silent noun with masculine singular features is part of the *wh*-expression and agrees with the adjective. Though it correctly captures the agreement observed, the proposal of a silent noun is not justified by independent evidence; moreover, the analysis is mostly based on data from declarative sentences and is simply extended to *wh*-exclamatives at the end of the text. The chapter brings an important empirical contribution regarding the existence of copular constructions predicted not to exist by previous literature, but its contribution to the actual topic of *wh*-exclamatives is modest, restricted to the claim that the predicate-subject order is derived by movement of the *wh*-expression to CP (complementizer phrase).

Concluding the first part, Karina da Cunha and Izabel Seara present and discuss, in Chapter 5, ‘The perception of *wh*-exclamatives, free small clauses, and *wh*-questions in Brazilian Portuguese’, the results of two speech perception experiments comparing the intonational contours of exclamatives and interrogative sentences, revealing that speakers can tease them apart and more easily identify interrogatives than exclamatives. The text presents a rich discussion of the intonational contours of the different types of sentences, convincingly showing that only one intonational contour is associated with *wh*-questions and more than one is associated with exclamatives, explaining the results. That said, the text could certainly benefit from a deeper theoretical discussion, which is offered only sparsely. The main conclusion of the paper (i.e. that adult speakers can identify intonations of their own language) is a trivial one and does not do enough justice to the complex and cautiously designed experiments reported.

Magdalena Kaufmann opens Part II in Chapter 6, ‘Imperative clauses’, where she offers a comprehensive literature review on the theory of how imperatives are interpreted and structurally encoded as a sentence type and how imperatives relate to other grammatical categories. The chapter presents itself as a systematic state-of-the-art on the topic, pointing out the main (open) questions researchers currently debate.

In Chapter 7, ‘The verbal imperative in Brazilian capitals: An analysis of data from the Linguistic Atlas of Brazil Project’, Josane de Oliveira presents the results

of a sociolinguistic analysis of the variation between indicative- and subjunctive-based imperatives by speakers of 25 Brazilian state capitals, which included social and linguistic variables. The results of this large-scale experiment mainly confirm previous (smaller) studies in showing that Northeastern capitals favor subjunctive imperatives, whereas indicative imperatives are preferred elsewhere in the country. While some of the chosen social and linguistic variables turned out to be significant in favoring subjunctive imperatives, others did not. There is no discussion at all (let alone backed up by theory) about why this is so, which would certainly improve the contribution of the text beyond descriptive results.

Rerisson Cavalcante and Higor Paiva argue, in Chapter 8, 'Past imperatives', for the existence of past imperatives in BP, structurally realized as past subjunctives (*Fizesse o almoço!* 'You should have made lunch'). After a literature review backing up the (probable) existence of past imperatives in other languages, the authors convincingly argue that the structures analyzed in BP have matrix imperative force. The interpretation of matrix past subjunctives as a speech act of reprimand is not fully worked out technically and does not obviously follow from the combination of the features [imperative] and [past], as the authors suggest. On the other hand, the text does a great job refuting alternative analyses, a much needed (and often neglected) part of any formal analysis.

Chapter 9, 'Imperative sentences and their subjects', by Yan Masetto and Dirceu Conde, is a somewhat cumbersome discussion on the realization of subjects in imperative sentences. Pointing out that subjects of imperatives are restricted to second person in BP, the authors (following the literature) stipulate the presence of a jussive phrase in the clausal spine licensing the addressee's features. Due to the abundance of loose jargon and the insufficiency of empirical testing, I found it hard to evaluate the authors' proposal.

Part III of the volume is opened by Caterina Bonan's Chapter 10, 'A framework for the study of Romance *wh*-questions, with special reference to Italo-Romance', which differs from Villalba's and Kaufmann's overview chapters in that the author not only debates the state-of-the-art of the topic but also advances proposals of her own. Bonan defends that Q-particles (*À LA Cable*) are universal and should be incorporated into the theory of questions in Romance, as well as that the traditional cartographic left-peripheral and vP-peripheral focus positions should be split into 'focus fields' (340), with distinct focus projections. With these theoretical tools, the author offers an interesting new way to look into the problem of *WH*-questions, offering valuable insights to those interested in researching this topic.

In Chapter 11, 'Using semantic inferences to distinguish between free relative and embedded questions: An analysis of ambiguous embedded clauses', Ani Marchesan and Morgana Cambruzzi analyze a set of 'ambiguous embedded clauses' (359) in BP (e.g. *Layla viu quem roubou o carro do vizinho*, 'Layla saw who stole the neighbor's car') and propose a test based on semantic inferences to disambiguate such sentences between free relatives and embedded questions. To the reader's surprise, the authors conclude that the analyzed sentences may be neither free relatives nor embedded questions and that the results of the inference

tests may be due to a confounding factor (factivity of the verbs). In a sense, the chapter ends where it starts, with a loosely defined problem and no conclusions. It seems to me that this problem is due to the fact that the set of sentences analyzed is a mixed bag rather than a natural class, which the authors (for unclear reasons) attempt to fit into a single category; the tests thus expectedly do not work equally for all sentences. Though the sentences are said to be ‘ambiguous’ (359), there is no discussion at all of the possible readings of each sentence and the chapter concludes without telling the reader what ‘ambiguous embedded clauses’ (359) even means.

Brian Gravely and Timothy Gupton discuss, in Chapter 12, ‘The left-peripheral syntax of Brazilian Portuguese *cadê*’, the status of the non-canonical locative *wh*-word *cadê* in BP, which occurs in sentences without a copula (e.g. *Cadê a mãe?*, ‘Where is mom?’). The authors argue that *cadê* is itself a verbal element that must move all the way up to  $C^0$ , whereas a phonologically null  $T^0$  obligatorily specified for present tense derives the (alleged) obligatory present tense interpretation of sentences with *cadê*. The overall argumentation of the chapter is very clear and reasonable, although the claim that *cadê* sentences are obligatorily interpreted as present tense is questionable. Past and future interpretations of *cadê* may not be easy to get out of the blue, but it is indeed possible when the reference time is dislocated from the present, as in *Cheguei atrasado na festa ontem, e cadê o bolo?* ‘I arrived late at the party yesterday, and where is the cake?’ or *Ao chegar na festa amanhã, a Maria vai perguntar cadê o bolo* ‘Upon arriving at the party tomorrow, Mary will ask where the cake is’. It seems thus that the interpretation of *cadê* is not necessarily in the utterance’s present (i.e. speech act time) but, in fact, concomitant with some reference time. If correct, that would require a revision of the claims made about tense in the analysis.

Chapter 13, ‘Aspects of the development of *wh*-questions in child Brazilian Portuguese’, by Elaine Grolla, is a comprehensive state-of-the-art on the acquisition of *wh*-questions in BP. The author reviews and debates several previous studies, offering a ‘general picture’ (411) of child language regarding several aspects of *wh*-question formation, in particular, the distinction between moved and *in situ* *wh*-questions. Among other things, it is pointed out that the moved strategy emerges before the *in situ* strategy in the Southeastern dialects, whereas the *in situ* strategy emerges first in the Bahia dialect. This is a point that is certainly in need of further exploration by future research, given that the study with children from Bahia drew data from only two subjects (only one of which actually produced *wh-in situ* first). If the alleged dialectal variation is confirmed by more robust data, it might have the potential to illuminate the theory of *wh-in situ* in BP, as it can be tied to other points of variation between the two dialects.

Concluding the volume in Chapter 14, ‘*Wh*-questions, intervention effects and beyond: An assessment of Brazilian Portuguese-speaking schoolchildren’s linguistic abilities’, Marina Augusto and Leticia Correa present the results of a study with 7- and 8-year-old children assessing their processing abilities in *wh*-questions. The empirical discussion is couched within a (very appropriate) theoretical discussion of intervention hypotheses, whereby some kinds of extraction could potentially be

harder for children to process than others due to intervention effects. The results convincingly show that intervention alone does not explain children's behavior, and the authors propose that the number of 'c-command units' (452) (such as a complex subject, which must be spelled out independently) and the D-linking properties of complex *WH*-expressions should also be factored in. It is not clear, though, how spell-out (an operation devised for a theory of competence) can be translated into a theory of performance. Though a reference is cited, that discussion is vital to the argument being made in the chapter and should have been included and properly defended.

Overall, the book offers a good contribution to researchers of BP in its breadth regarding the three sentence types; the volume includes varied empirical issues and several different perspectives. On the other hand, it also (unfortunately) includes a few chapters that could have been better polished and perhaps waited a little longer to be published. It is also worthy of mention that the Introduction of the book promises a volume that will fill a gap in the comparison of the left periphery and the periphery of *vP*, but only one of the 14 chapters of the book (namely, Caterina Bonan's) actually deals directly with the periphery of *vP*. A reader (such as myself) interested in that discussion will inevitably feel disappointed in that particular respect.

Despite these shortcomings (which I felt in the obligation to point out), there is interesting empirical discussion and potentially relevant theoretical contributions in all chapters (to varying degrees). Likely, specific chapters will interest readers more than the volume as a whole, but, importantly, all chapters certainly further our understanding of the analyzed phenomena and spark further research, which is very much welcome.

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