

Morphological doublets in wh-constructions in Brazilian Portuguese

The problem. Contemporary Brazilian Portuguese (BP) exhibits variation in *wh*-constructions (exs. (1)), which, at first sight, faces a problem concerning the *wh*-parameter, according to which languages can be of two types: with or without *wh*-movement (Huang 1982). Moreover, the VS order in *wh*-constructions is optional, as can be seen in (2). What we have in BP *wh*-constructions is a three-way variation (see (3)), which should not be allowed considering the “Blocking Effect” (Aronoff 1976), a principle that excludes morphological “doublets,” or “triplets.” According to Kroch (1994: 181) “doublets are always reflections of unstable competition between mutually exclusive grammatical options, which normally result from grammatical change.”

My claim. My claim in this paper is that the three variants in (3) do constitute reflexes of change, though they do not constitute a “triplet.” The phenomenon of variation under scrutiny is related to three previous changes: a) BP has been changing from a prototypical Null Subject (NS) language into a partial NS language with the loss of free inversion (Duarte 1995; Kato 2000); b) in BP the Focus position has changed from the sentence periphery to a sentence internal position making it possible for the *wh*-element to undergo a short *wh*-movement, resulting in a fake *wh-in-situ* as in (1b) (Kato 2013), and c) in BP a *wh*-construction can also derive from a different numeration, namely from a cleft sentence (ex, (4a)) (Lopes-Rossi 1995), which has also undergone a change, from the inverse type (*wh-é que*) to the canonic type (*é wh-que*) as in (4b).

Theoretical assumptions. I assume a) the cartographic perspective (Rizzi 1997), and b) the extension of the cartographic view, due to Belletti (2004), according to which the *vP* has a periphery where it is possible to have some of the projections of the sentential periphery; and c) the *wh*-head is syncretic with the Focus head. Adding a and b, we can have (5).

The analysis. The most striking structural change that occurred in BP regarding *wh*-constructions was the change from the use of the FocusP projection in the sentential periphery to the lower FocusP position left-adjacent to *vP* (Kato & Ribeiro 2009). The apparent ‘*wh-in-situ*’ in BP is proposed to derive from a short movement of the *wh*-constituent to the *vP*-adjacent FocusP position (6). From (4a), BP changes to (4b), with the *wh*-element also moving to the medial periphery of the main copula clause (see (7)). In BP there is no long *wh*-movement or a real *wh-in-situ* construction. From (4b) the cleft construction undergoes grammaticalization, with the erasure of the copula, resulting in the reduced cleft construction (8). I propose further that from the reduced cleft type, a stylistic rule of haplology erases the complementizer *que* resulting in (9). But we still do not have the whole story, as the oldest WhVS pattern seems legitimate in examples (1a), (2a) and (3a). Free inversion has been lost with the change in the NS parameter, with the exception of unaccusative verbs. I propose that the order *wh*-VS today results from right dislocation with a null subject (see (10)). BP has been losing null subjects, but there are residues, and null subject resumptives are still a possibility.

Conclusion. The three variants in (3) derive from the same grammar, with the FocusP position in the medial periphery of the sentence. These *wh*-structures with short movement can undergo further grammaticalization. Even the right dislocation structure in (1a, 2a, and 3a), with the order *wh*-VS, can be derived by the same grammatical processes (see (11)). Hence the apparent triplet in (3) does not violate the “blocking effect”.

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| (1) a. <i>Onde moram os seus amigos?</i> | [+wh-movement] |
| b. <i>Os seus amigos moram onde?</i> | [-wh-movement] |
| ‘Where do your friends live?’ | |
| (2) a. <i>Onde dormem as crianças?</i> | [wh-VS order] |

- b. *Onde as crianças dormem?* -‘Where do the children sleep?’
- (3) a. *Onde dormem as crianças?* [wh-VS order]
 b. *Onde as crianças dormem?* [wh-SV order]
 c. *As crianças dormem onde?* [‘wh-in-situ’]
- (4) a. *Onde é que as crianças dormem?* [inverse cleft wh-question]
 ‘Where is it that the children sleep’
 b. *É onde que as crianças dormem?* [canonic cleft wh-question]
- (5) [ForceP [TopicP [FocusP [TopicF [FiniteP [TP [TopiP [FocusP [TopicP [vP [VP]]]]]]]]]]]
- (6) [ForceP [.....[TP ~~as crianças dormem~~ [FocusP **onde** [~~vP as crianças~~ [vP ~~dormem~~ **onde**]]]]]]]]
- (7). [ForceP [TP ~~É~~ [FocusP **onde** [FiniteP **que** [TP ~~as crianças dormem~~ [~~vP as crianças~~ ~~dormem~~ [vP ~~dormem~~ **onde**]]]]]]]]
- (8) ~~É~~ *onde que as crianças dormem?* [Copula erasure at PF]
- (9) *Onde ~~que~~ as crianças dormem?* [Stylistic erasure of the complementizer *que*]
- (10). *Onde (elas) dormem as crianças?* [Right dislocation]
 ‘Where do they sleep, the children?’
- (11) *(É) onde (que) (elas) dormem as crianças.* [Right dislocation]

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