

The role of prosody in the identification of relative clauses in Brazilian Portuguese spontaneous speech

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This work aims at presenting a functionally based definition for the phenomenon of clausal relativization in spontaneous speech. To that end, it departs from the observation of the behavior of so-called relative clauses in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in a speech corpus. This research was carried under the auspices of the C-ORAL-BRASIL project (Raso & Mello, 2012), which is devoted to the study of speech and the compilation of speech corpora. Comparable to the set of Romance language subcorpora that make up the C-ORAL-ROM corpus (Cresti & Moneglia, 2005), the C-ORAL-BRASIL corpus is prosodically segmented in accordance with the principles and guidelines established by the *Language into Act Theory* (Cresti, 2000), which holds that speech is organized into utterances consisting of tone units that are in principle isomorphic to information units. The methods employed for data extraction focused on the identification of utterances in which relative clauses occur. For this task, the DB-IPIC platform (Panunzi & Gregori, 2011) was used. Then, for the manual sorting of the types of relative clauses found, i.e. restrictive and nonrestrictive ones, the computational tools of the *AntConc* software were used. The *WinPitch* software (Martin, 2004), which allows for the simultaneous access to transcripts and their acoustic signal, was used for the examination of the information structure of the previously selected utterances. In this work, we define *relative clause* in spontaneous speech as a *dependent state-of-affairs* (EsCo²) that is included in a *main state-of-affairs* (EsCo¹), whose prosodic contour is given in terms of an information unit within an utterance that can be either simple or compound. The function performed by the EsCo² is to supply some type of specification about a nominal phrase of EsCo¹. This definition for relative clauses, derived from that of subordination, takes into account three properties that go beyond purely morphosyntactic criteria, namely (i) *the lack of assertiveness in dependent clauses* (Cristofaro, 2003), i.e., in LAcT terms, no independent illocutionary force; (ii) *the superposition of the profile of the dependent clause to that of the main clause at the base of the semantic structure* (Langacker, 1991), and, in the context of spontaneous speech, (iii)

the syntactic linearization of the dependent clause in the information unit within the utterance (Cresti, 2014). Given this definition, only restrictive relative clauses in the broader grammatical tradition would comprise domains of relativization. Nonrestrictive relative clauses, although showing morphosyntactic features that are mimetic to those of restrictive clauses (referential NP + relative pronoun + finite verbal form), would thus be excluded, for they do not show the three defining features presented above. In fact, nonrestrictive relative clauses would comprise domains of patterned syntax, fulfilling an informational function, not a syntactic one. This finding in relation to restrictive relative clauses in PB spontaneous speech corroborates research by typologists like Keenan & Comrie (1977), Comrie (1989), and Cristofaro (2003), considering that it confirms the fact that morphosyntactic criteria, in a cross-linguistic perspective, are insufficient for defining linguistic constructions, given that not all languages resort to the same morphosyntactic structuring in the realization of a certain phenomenon. Regarding relativization, not all languages, for example, employ the strategy of embedding a relative pronoun followed by finite verbal forms in order to construe relativization, which is the case with BP under some specific circumstances in its vernacular (Tarallo, 1983; Mello, 1996; Kato *et. al.*, 2002). Furthermore, in order to justify the choice made for such definition for relative clauses, we resort to the following principles: (i) prosody is a central component in spontaneous speech, both with respect to production and interpretation (Di Cristo, 2012), (ii) the utterance, as the minimal pragmatically autonomous linguistic unit, accomplishing a speech act and, thus, carrying the illocution, is evoked by and performed within a pragmatically oriented scene (Cresti, 2000). The principles assumed in this paper will be demonstrated through the analytical results which emerged from our probing of the C-ORAL-BRASIL minicorpus data.