ON VERBAL AGREEMENT VARIATION IN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE: SYNTACTIC CONDITIONS FOR THE 3SG/3PL ALTERNATION
A PROPÓSITO DA VARIAÇÃO NA CONCORDÂNCIA VERBAL EM PORTUGUÊS EUROPEU: CONDICIONAMENTO SINTÁTICO DA ALTERNÂNCIA ENTRE 3SG E 3PL

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In this paper we scrutinize a case of concord variation in European Portuguese (EP) concerning third plural *vs.* third singular verbal agreement in the co-presence of an overt plural argument, which in the standard variety agrees with the inflected verb. The paper is focused on the linguistic factors that correlate with singular concord in this context. Going beyond previous proposals that emphasize the correlation between agreement variation and particular morphological and phonological factors, it is shown that the incidence of non-standard singulars in EP may be straightforwardly explained within a syntactic account. The empirical basis for this investigation is CORDIAL-SIN, a dialect *corpus* of EP (600,000 words). The evidence from this *corpus* leads us to discuss and reconsider the role that different linguistic factors play in the manifestation of non-standard singulars. It is shown that this case of third singular agreement occurs in the investigated EP varieties in correlation with particular syntactic conditions, mainly in unaccusative-like configurations. Furthermore, it is suggested that this kind of agreement variation may be ultimately ascribed to lexical variation concerning the availability and feature specification of (null) expletives.

Keywords: agreement, unaccusativity, syntactic variation, null expletive, European Portuguese varieties

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Neste artigo investiga-se um caso de variação na concordância em português europeu (PE), relativo à alternância entre terceira pessoa do singular e terceira pessoa do plural em coocorrência com um argumento plural que, na variedade padrão, concorda com a flexão verbal.

A investigação incide sobre os fatores linguísticos que podem explicar a manifestação de concordância singular neste contexto. Demarcando-se de propostas prévias que enfatizam a correlação com fatores fonológicos e morfológicos, este estudo mostra que a incidência de formas de concordância verbal singular não padrão em PE pode ter uma explicação sintática. Toma-se como base empírica para este trabalho o CORDIAL-SIN, um *corpus* dialetal de PE (de 600.000 palavras). Com base na evidência extraída deste *corpus*, discute-se e reavalia-se o papel que diferentes fatores linguísticos desempenham na manifestação de formas de singular não padrão. Mostra-se que este caso de concordância de terceira pessoa singular ocorre nas variedades de PE investigadas em correlação com condições sintáticas particulares, principalmente em configurações de tipo inacusativo. Adicionalmente, sugere-se que este tipo de variação na concordância pode ser derivado de variação lexical na disponibilidade e na especificação de traços dos expletivos (nulos).

Palavras-chave: concordância, inacusatividade, variação sintática, expletivo nulo, variedades do português europeu

1. Introduction [1]

The expression of subject-verb agreement is a well-known *locus* of variation not only across languages but also across varieties of a single language (Tagliamonte, 1998; den Dikken, 2001; Chambers, 2001, 2004; Tortora & den Dikken, 2010, a.o.). This paper examines a particular instance of variation in subject-verb agreement across popular varieties of EP: the case where non-standard third singular agreement (henceforth, 3SG) co-occurs with a plural argument that standardly agrees with the verb. The examples in 1 illustrate the pattern: the standard variant is presented in 1a; example 1b shows the relevant non-standard subject-verb number agreement "mis-

match" (the nominal phrase *as declarações prestadas* 'the made declarations' is plural but the verbal form *veio* 'came' is singular):

(1) a.**Vieram**-nos à memória <u>as declarações prestadas</u>.
     came3PL-to.us to.the memory the.PL declarations made
     'We remembered the made declarations.'

   b. **Veio**-nos à memória <u>as declarações prestadas</u>.
      came3SG-to.us to.the memory the.PL declarations made
      (from a weekly newspaper, *apud* Peres & Móia, 1995: 453)

Although examples like 1b are not acknowledged in standard EP (see, for instance, Peres & Móia, 1995), this manifestation of verbal agreement is not uncommon in non-standard varieties and, in fact, it may also occasionally occur in standard oral situations.[2]

Such cases of agreement variation in Portuguese have been mainly connected with morphological, phonological or processing factors (Naro & Scherre, 2007, Mota & Vieira, 2008, a.o.). The correlation with syntactic conditions, which is also sometimes emphasized in the literature, appears usually atomized under items such as type of verb and position of the subject.[3] In this respect, we try to further elucidate here the relevant syntactic conditioning by a qualitative analysis of EP data, which hopefully contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the inspected pattern of verbal agreement.

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2 After data discussed by Costa (2001), Duarte (2003: 513) notes that unaccusative constructions (as in the example 1) are contexts where "in a colloquial style, we may find violations to the categorical rule of subject-verb agreement" (our translation).

3 The occurrence of this agreement pattern in sentences with unaccusative verbs has been noted and discussed in syntactic studies such as Costa (1998) and (2001), for EP, and Kato (2000), for Brazilian Portuguese. Carrilho (2003) takes into account a previous and partial version of the EP data inspected here and emphasizes the syntactic basis of this variation in verbal agreement, as found in constructions with unaccusative and copula verbs. Mota and Vieira (2008) also point to the relevance of syntactic factors in some concord variation patterns, even though they subsequently concentrate on morphophonological factors.
  In the extensive literature on Brazilian Portuguese agreement variation, the effect of the conditions "type of verb" and "position of the subject" has also been taken into account. The results of quantitative studies in this domain usually signal the correlation of 3SG with the postverbal position of the subject, but do not seem to be consensual with respect to the effect of the type of verb: for instance, while Scherre, Naro and Cardoso (2007: 24) conclude for the inoperability of this condition ("no que diz respeito à concordância, a classe dos inacusativos, nos termos até agora apresentados, é inoperante", *ibid.*), Monguilhott (2000) and Monguilhott and Coelho (2002) note the correlation of 3SG with unaccusative verbs.

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Taking a corpus of spoken dialectal EP as the empirical source for this study, we will consider the syntactic contexts where this kind of non-standard agreement arises and contribute to a syntactic explanation of the observed variation. For this, we will give special attention to the type of verb and also to the type of construction where 3SG appears. It will be shown that non-standard singulars occur in EP dialects in correlation with particular syntactic conditions, mainly in unaccusative-like configurations. Within a minimalist principles-and-parameters framework (Chomsky, 1995, a.o.), we submit that, in the case inspected here, concord variation in EP depends on the variable availability of different types of (null) expletives in EP varieties.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we briefly recall previous accounts of the linguistic conditions for 3SG/3PL subject-verb agreement variation in EP, which have often been tangential to the grammatical correlation to be considered here. In section 3, we present the empirical ground for this study as we provide the empirical generalizations for the contexts that show non-standard 3SG agreement in the relevant corpus. The linguistic factors inspected here mainly concern the type of construction where non-standard 3SG occurs. The grammatical conditions that underlie the alternation between standard plural and non-standard singular are discussed in section 4. Finally, we suggest an analysis for this variation, building on the variable feature content of non-referential null subjects.

2. Variation in subject-verb agreement in EP: notes on previous accounts

Even though studies on concord variation have mainly been focused on Brazilian Portuguese (BP), there have been some recent attempts to explain the patterns of non-concord in EP along the lines proposed for BP. Naro and Scherre (2007) take into account EP data drawn from several Portuguese dialectal monographs and claim that the same sort of linguistic conditions for variation in subject-verb agreement are operative in BP and in EP. Such conditions would strongly depend on phonological factors, like the phonic salience of the relevant verbal forms (Naro & Scherre, 2007: 53ff.). According to these authors, variation in third person agreement is more frequent when the difference between the singular and the plural form is not salient; in other words, non-standard 3SG would be more likely to occur in pairs of verbal forms such as those in 2 than in those in 3, which display more salient phonic differences in the verbal morpheme:

(2) a. t**em** / t**êm**
    has / have.3PL

  b. estav**a** / estav**am**
    was / were.3PL

(3) a. nasc**eu** / nasc**eram**
    was.born / were.born.3PL

  b. fic**ou** / fic**aram**
    stayed.3SG / stayed.3PL

Naro and Scherre (2007: 56-57) also invoke morphological factors for explaining some cases of agreement variation in EP: for instance, these authors take the examples in 4a,b as the result of variation in subject-verb agreement by "morphological replacement", whereby the 3SG form would replace the 3PL form (respectively, *são* and *faltaram*). Note that in these examples the contrast between 3SG and 3PL involves different stems (and not only different inflectional morphemes as in 2):

(4) a. **É** <u>duas partes</u>   para o dono […]
    is two parts for.the owner
    'Two parts are for the owner.'

  b. […] <u>pescadas e linguado</u> nunca lá **faltou** a eles
      whitefish and sole never there missed.3SG to them
    'They never missed whitefish and soles there.'

Other linguistic factors mentioned by Naro and Scherre (2007) (after Varejão, 2006) invoke syntactic position and processing effects: the relevant factor would be the position that the subject occupies (after or before the verb) and, when the subject is not adjacent to the verb, the number of syllables that occur between the verb form and the subject. According to Naro and Scherre (2007), the lack of plural agreement correlates with postverbal subjects (as in example 5) and with subjects that are not adjacent to the verb form (contrary to this same example):

(5) […] quando **morria** <u>pessoas</u> […]
    when died.3SG people.PL
  '… when some people died…'

Varejão (2006) also takes the postverbal subject position to be the determinant factor relating to non-standard 3SG agreement in EP. This is further confirmed by Monguilhott (2009) in a comparative study between BP and EP, which also shows that besides the postverbal subject position, [- human] subjects and some types of verb (namely unaccusative ones, like *morrer* 'to die') also favor non-standard 3SG agreement.

As Mota and Vieira (2008) extensively discuss, other morphophonological factors may also come into play. Apparent cases of concord variation in EP would in certain cases correspond to morphophonological isomorphism: the opposition between 3SG and 3PL may be morphophonologically inexistent, as a consequence of effective phonological processes that weaken the phonetic expression of the relevant morphemes. This could result in the absence of diphtongaison of nasal vowels, which also may become non-nasal and disappear in a non-tonic position. As such, a verbal form like the one represented in 6 could in fact correspond to both the 3SG and the 3PL forms in 7a,b:

(6)   beb[i]

(7)   a. beb**e**
      drinks

      b. beb**em**
      drink.3PL

Such morphophonological isomorphism would prevent us from unnecessary explanations at the morphosyntactic level.

3. Non-standard 3SG in EP: data from a dialect corpus
3.1 The *data* from CORDIAL-SIN

The empirical support for this work has been drawn from the Syntax-oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects(CORDIAL-SIN), a corpus that compiles a geographically representative selection of excerpts of spontaneous and semi-directed speech (600,000 words) from 42 locations within the continental and insular territory of Portugal.[4] Accordingly, the data

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4   For the geographical distribution and identification of the CORDIAL-SIN location, see Appendix. This *corpus* is available under different formats (*verbatim* transcripts, 'normalized' orthographic transcripts, morphologically tagged texts and syntactically annotated corpus) at http://

inspected here have been produced by speakers that have the sociological profile of traditional dialectal informants: old, non-educated, rural and born and raised in place of interview.[5]

Instances of 3SG have been obtained through concordances on the tagged corpus.[6] Inspection of these data revealed different cases of 3SG that may alternate with 3PL, which could not be treated as a whole in this work. As mentioned above, we focus here on the case of non-standard 3SG co-occurring with a plural argument that standardly agrees with the verb. Accordingly, we disregarded for now a collection of variant 3SG patterns that do not entirely conform to this object of research. The disregarded data, which may also be explained by syntactic reasons, involve: (i) verbs or constructions that allow for variation even in the standard variety, such as 8; (ii) all the instances of *ser* 'to be', which also allows for standard variation, as in 9;[7] (iii) verbs that are impersonal in non-standard varieties, e.g. the verbs *dar* 'to give', *ter* 'to have' or *estar* 'to be', when used as verbs of occurrence or existence, as in the example 10 below:

(8) **É preciso / são precisas** <u>laranjas</u>.
     is needed.M.SG / are.3PL needed.F.PL oranges
     'There's need of oranges.'

(9) Uma junta **é / são** <u>os dois bois</u>.
     a yoke is / are.3PL the two oxen
     'A yoke is two oxen.'

(10) **Tem** <u>outras ocasiões</u> que **dá** <u>formigas</u>. (ALV)[8]
     has other.PL occasions that give.3SG ants
     'There are other occasions where ants appear.'

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www.clul.ul.pt/en/resources/226-corpus-syntax-oriented-corpus-of-portuguese-dialects-cordial-sin.

5   The CORDIAL-SIN texts have been drawn from the tape-recorded interviews gathered from the mid-seventies till 2002 by the Dialectology Group, within the scope of several linguistic atlases projects, at Centro de Linguística da Universidade de Lisboa.

6   Concordances on the *corpus* were generated using the program Concordance for Windows NT4.0/2000/XP (Copyright © R.J.C.Watt 1999, 2000, 2002).

7   Furthermore, non-standard 3SG with *ser* is extremely frequent in CORDIAL-SIN data, which would hugely increase the data to be investigated here. As this verb enters different kinds of constructions, consideration of all the syntactic differences among them should be taken into account. In this paper we only consider instances of *ser* that appear as the auxiliary in passive constructions, leaving all other cases for future investigation.

8   Throughout the paper, each CORDIAL-SIN example is identified by a three-capitals code that corresponds to one of the CORDIAL-SIN locations presented in the Appendix.

Examples that may be structurally ambiguous were also ignored. This was the case of 3SG in constructions involving the clitic *se*, as in 11. This example may be seen as a case of passive *se* construction (which would involve agreement with the plural argument in the standard variant, as in 12). However, a 3SG form can also be found in standard EP if indefinite *se* is present (in which case the plural argument is to be taken as a complement).

(11) **Abriu**-se <u>os regos</u>.
    opened.3SG-SE the.PL furrows
    'The furrows were ploughed.'
    / 'Someone ploughed the furrows.'

(12) **Abriram**-se <u>os regos</u>.
    opened.3PL-SE the.PL furrows
    'The furrows were ploughed.'

Sentences that appear to have a kind of afterthought postverbal subject (example 13) and sentences with coordinated subjects (example 14) were also not considered. In both cases the syntactic explanation for 3SG agreement may go beyond a strict case of subject-verb concord variation.[9]

(13) Ainda **é** pisada a pés, <u>as uvas</u>.   (MTM)
    still is trodden.F.SG by feet the.PL grapes
    'The grapes are still trodden by feet.'

(14) **Sabia** <u>a minha mãe e as antigas</u>.   (LAR)
    knew.3SG the my mother and the.PL old.PL
    'My mother and the old (women) knew it.'

With all these cases excluded, CORDIAL-SIN displays 420 instances of non-standard 3SG. In the next section, we will characterize the syntactic context where these instances are found. Other linguistic factors such as the phonic salience of the morphemes that distinguish the singular and the plural forms in the verb and the position of the subject with respect to the verb will also be taken into account.

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9   In example 13 the postverbal element can be in a right-peripheric position (correfering to a null subject) and example 14 may involve partial agreement with the first conjunct of a conjoined subject.

3.2 On the syntactic context of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN

The data from CORDIAL-SIN that instantiate the cases of non-standard 3SG support the claim that this kind of putative variant is syntactically conditioned. As we will see, non-standard 3SG preferably occurs with certain verbs, or, more accurately, in certain constructions, independently of the verb.

We first recall the correlation between non-standard singular and unaccusative verbs, already noted in the literature (Kato, 2000, Monguilhott, 2000, Monguilhott & Coelho, 2002, Costa, 2001, Carrilho, 2003, Monguilhott, 2009). The CORDIAL-SIN data here inspected confirm this correlation. Even though non-standard 3SG may occur with different types of verbs, even with transitives (example 15), ditransitives (example 16), and unergatives (example 17), we find a high proportion of examples involving typical unaccusatives (such as 18 and 19) or the type of unaccusatives that take a Dative beneficiary/experiencer (cf. Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Everaert, 2004), as in 20:

(15) <u>As traineiras</u>, às vezes, não **apanha** peixe. (ALV)
    the.PL trawlers at times NEG catches fish
    'Sometimes, the trawlers didn't catch any fish.'

(16) <u>Eles</u> aqui **dá** pouco valor. (CLC)
    they here gives little value
    'Here, they give little value (to it).'

(17) E lucra nós e **lucra** <u>todos</u>. (ALV)
    and benefits we and benefit.3SG all
    ± 'We are those who take advantage (from it) and all the people take advantage (from it).'

(18) […] e, então, não **nascia** <u>umas certas ervas</u>. (ALV)
    and then NEG grew.3SG some certain.PL plants
    '… and then, certain plants didn't grow up (there).'

(19) […] <u>essas muitas variedades de cedros</u> **veio** quando […] (MIG)
    those   many varieties   of cedars came.3SG when
    '… those varieties of cedars appeared when…'

(20) […] nunca lhe **faltou** <u>calças</u> […] (PIC)
    never her.DAT failed.3SG trousers
    ± 'She was never in need of trousers.'

Copula verbs, such as *estar* and *ficar*, are also frequently attested in this construction (as already noted in Carrilho, 2003):

(21) […] dizem que **fica** <u>os cházinhos</u> bentos. (FIG)
    say.3PL that becomes the.PL tea.DIM.PL blessed.PL
    '… they say that the teas get blessed.'

(22) […] **ficava** assim <u>aquelas manchas</u> na seara. (SRP)
    stayed.3SG thus those spots in.the cornfield
    '… there were spots in the cornfield.'

The relative frequency of 3SG according to the type of verb is displayed in Table 1. Note that unaccusative and copula verbs appear in more than 60% of the total tokens of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN:[10]

Table 1. Non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN and type of verb

type of verb	total	%
unaccusative	205	*48,8*
copula	71	*16,9*
other	144	*34,3*
TOTAL	420	*100*

Among the verbs that most frequently display non-standard 3SG, we find different unaccusative and copula verbs, e.g. *aparecer* 'to appear', *nascer* 'to be born', *vir* 'to come=to appear', and *ficar* 'to stay, there to be', as shown in Table 2 (total of tokens *per* verb from a universe of 420 total tokens):

Table 2. Verbs displaying the higher incidence of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN

verb	total
estar 'to be'	49
vir 'to come', 'to appear'	42
ficar 'to stay'	34

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10 In Table 1, we only considered verbs unambiguously classified as unaccusatives. As it is commonly acknowledged, the limits of what counts as an unaccusative verb are far from clear-cut (cf. Alexiadou et al., 2004, a.o.).

aparecer 'to appear'	21
nascer 'to be born'	16

From a theoretical point of view, it is worth noting that unaccusative and copula verbs are taken to involve a similar syntactic derivation: in both cases there is a vacant or non-thematic subject position and the constituent that standardly agrees with the verb appears in a postverbal position (as the complement of an unaccusative verb (cf. example 23) or as the subject of a complement small-clause (cf. 24)):

(23) [-] **nascia** <u>umas certas ervas</u>.
    grew.3SG some certain.PL plants

(24) [-] **ficava** [$_{SC}$ [$_{DP}$<u>aquelas manchas</u>] [$_{PP}$na seara]]
    stayed.3SG those spots in.the cornfield

Interestingly, most of the remaining 34,3% cases of non-standard 3SG also involve a vacant subject position, namely, in passive constructions (as in 25) and in constructions with modal and aspectual verbs (see 26 and 27). Note that, according to Gonçalves (1996), modal verbs (as *poder* 'can' in 26) involve a raising structure with a vacant subject position at an initial stage of the derivation. In turn, aspectual auxiliaries followed by a gerund (as *ir* 'lit. go' in 27) are taken to involve a small clause (with a verbal head) as complement; hence, they also involve a vacant subject position.

(25) **É feito** <u>fardos</u>.[11] (ALC)
    is made.M.SG burdens.M.PL
    'Burdens were made.'/ 'People made burdens.'

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11 Passive constructions bring an additional layer of variation, with regard to participle agreement. Hence, whereas in example 25 the past participle (*feito*) does not agree in number with the plural *fardos* 'burdens', occurring in a plausible default masculine-singular form, other examples show that participle gender and number agreement display a wide range of variation:

   (i)   <u>Os raios</u> **é engatados** aqui da maça. (ALC)
        the.PL spokes.M.PL is clamped.M.PL here of.the (=in.the) mace
        'The spokes are clamped here in the mace.'
   (ii) […] e depois **era** aqui **atado** <u>a corda</u> […] (ALC)
        and then was.3SG here tied.M.SG the.FEM.SG rope.FEM.SG
        '… and then the rope was tied here'
   (iii) <u>Estas áreas</u> aqui, **era** aqui **combatida** dos lobos (CBV)
        these areas.FEM.PL here was here combated.FEM.SG from.the.PL
        'These areas were defended from wolves.'

(26) […] **podia** aparecer <u>baleias</u>. (CLC)
        could.3SG appear.INF whales
        'Whales could appear (there).'

(27) […] os novos, **vai** aprendendo alguns. (PIC)
        the.PL young go.3SG learn.GER some
        '… some of the young people are learning (that).'

Thus, excluding the cases that involve typical unaccusatives or copula verbs (already considered above, in Table 1, regardless of the type of construction where they occur), non-standard 3SG appears in 33 cases of passive constructions and in 21 occurrences of modal or aspectual constructions with other verbs. This means that from 34,3% of the occurrences of non-standard 3SG that appear in CORDIAL-SIN without an unaccusative or copular verb (see Table 1, above), 7,9% correspond to passive constructions and 5,0% to aspectual/modal constructions. In the whole, all these instances of unaccusative-related constructions amount to more than 75% of the cases of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN, as Table 3 summarizes:

Table 3. Non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN and type of verb or construction

type of verb / construction	total	%
unaccusative V	205	45,8
copula V	69	15,4
passive	33	7,9
modal/aspectual	21	5,0
other	90	21,4
TOTAL	420	100

At this point, thus, we find that the overall distribution of non-standard 3SG according to the type of construction appears fairly significant, showing that this case of concord variation may correlate with specific syntactic factors.

Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that, given our narrow classification of unaccusative verbs, other unaccusative-related constructions may be found among the remaining 90 tokens. Also, even if we cannot extensively discuss all the different cases here, we still may point out that a

predominant pattern in CORDIAL-SIN data involves non-standard 3SG in subject relative clauses, as in example 28:

(28) Havia uns buxos <u>que</u> **fazia** assim um arco. (MTV)
     was some box.trees that made.3SG like.this an arch
     'There were some box trees that made an arch like this.'

In connection to these relative clauses, some cleft constructions also display non-standard 3SG, as in example 29:

(29) Os paus é <u>que</u> **ia** arrastando aquilo. (AAL)
     the.PL sticks is that went.3SG grabbing that
     'it was the sticks that were grabbing it'

There exists actually a possible link between these constructions and the unaccusative-related constructions seen above. In fact, there have been proposals about the syntax of relative subject extraction that make use of a non-thematic subject position and subject extraction directly from a predicate internal position (Rizzi, 1982)[12]. Hence, no asymmetry is expected between unaccusative and transitive/unergative verbs (since the latter may also extract from a VP-internal position). This conforms to the presence of transitive verbs in non-concord contexts, as in 28. Such constructions would then resemble the unaccusative constructions in that the argument of the verb that usually controls verbal agreement does not move to a preverbal subject position.

3.3 Other linguistic factors and non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN

Finally, we briefly consider the correlation of non-standard 3SG in COR-DIAL-SIN and other linguistic factors, namely: (i) the phonic salience of the verbal morpheme; (ii)-(iii) the position and adjacency of the agreeing constituent with respect to the verb.

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12 Note that this analysis is either compatible with the adjunction analysis of relative clauses (originally proposed by Ross, 1967, Chomsky, 1977 and Jackendoff, 1977) or the raising analysis of RRCs (originally proposed by Schachter, 1973 and Vergnaud, 1974, and more recently revived by Kayne, 1994 and Bianchi, 1999). In the first case, *extraction* involves movement of the relative operator, whereas in the second case it involves head movement to the left periphery.

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(i) Phonic salience

The scale of phonic salience established by Naro (1981) and invoked in subsequent work distinguishes two different levels of phonic salience, depending on the presence vs. absence of stress in the contrasting verbal morpheme. Inside each level (stressed / non-stressed), further distinctions are obtained depending on the existence of differences on the vowel, and on the addition of other segments. More salient morphemes (stressed, displaying differences in the vowel and/or different segments) would correlate with less non-standard 3SG.

The correlation is loosely present in the observed CORDIAL-SIN data, where 208 occurrences of non-standard 3SG (i.e. 49,5%) correspond to less salient forms, like those in 30, while more salient forms like those in 31 display non-concord in 212 cases (50,5%).

(30) a. nasc**e** / nasc**em**
     is born / are.born.3PL

   b. fic**a** / fic**am**
      stays / stay.3PL

(31) a. nasc**eu** / nasc**eram**
      was.born / were.born.3PL

   b. fic**ou** / fic**aram**
      stayed.3SG / stayed.3PL

(ii) Position of the subject

The postverbal position of the subject is usually assumed to correlate with non-concord (Varejão, 2006, Naro & Scherre, 2007). In CORDIAL-SIN we observe that in non-standard 3SG contexts the subject can be preverbal (see 32), postverbal (see 33-34) or may appear between an aspectual verb and the main verb (see 35):

(32) <u>Todos</u> **tem** o seu nome […] (LUZ)
     all has the their name
     'Everything has a (specific) name...'

(33) Nunca mais **apareceu** <u>esses cardumes</u> aqui […] (VPA)
     never more appeared.3SG those shoals here
     'Those shoals have never again appeared here…'

(34) **Está** aqui <u>uns viveiros</u> […] (ALV)
    is here a.PL fishponds
    'There are some fishponds here…'

(35) […] já **começa** <u>as árvores</u> a rebentar (AAL)
    then starts the.PL trees to bud
    'then the trees start to bud'

There seems however to be a correlation between the postverbal position of the subject and non-standard 3SG. For the most frequent verbs displaying non-standard 3SG, subjects occur postverbally in more than 80% of all occurrences.[13] The syntactic significance of this correlation seems evident and strengthens the syntactic correlation pointed out in the previous section: in fact, the postverbal position of the otherwise agreeing element straightforwardly conforms to the unaccusative-related pattern of constructions that favor non-standard 3SG. Such postverbal position of this element leaves 'vacant' the canonical preverbal subject position.

(iii) Adjacency verb-subject

Another linguistic factor mentioned by Naro and Scherre (2007: 61ff) to explain the lack of verbal agreement concerns the adjacency between the subject and the verb. Accordingly, 3SG would correlate with subjects that are non-adjacent to the verbal form. In this case, the number of syllables that occur between the subject and the verb would play a leading role in the explanation, as non-standard 3SG would get more frequent as more material intervenes between the subject and the verb.

When we look at the total of 420 occurrences of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN, we find the figures represented in Table 4.[14]

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13 Although we cannot develop the issue here, it is worth remarking that preverbal subjects appear
    in this context always as a kind of marked topic, as noted by an anonymous reviewer for the
    example (4b) in section 2 above. To this respect, Cardoso, Carrilho and Pereira (2009) suggest
    that preverbal subjects in non-standard 3SG in fact always correspond to topic elements, as
    illustrated by examples such as:
    (i) INQ E os marcos são de pedra, é?
        'Interviewer: And the landmarks are made of stone, aren't they?'
        INF <u>Esses</u> **é** feitos em cimento e depois **leva** o nome da pessoa…
        those is made.PL in cement and then gets the name of.the person
        'Informant: Those are made of cement and then they get the name of the person.'
14 We consider separately, under the label 'others', relative clauses, clefts and null subject clauses,
    which are irrelevant for subject-verb adjacency. In this table, we classify as null subject the con-
    texts that involve non-covert subjects (hence, postverbal subjects are excluded). The most part
    of such null subjects are subjects in the second conjunct of a pair of coordinated sentences.

Table 4. Distribution of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN according to adjacency between the subject and the verb

adjacency	preverbal subj.	31
	postverbal subj.	118
non-adjacency	preverbal subj.	17
	postverbal subj.	102
other	relatives	66
	clefts	6
	null subj	80

If we leave special constructions (relatives and clefts) and clauses without an overt subject aside, we conclude that in the majority of non-concord contexts the subject is adjacent to the verb. This is an important point since it suggests that non-adjacency does not play a crucial role in the manifestation of non-standard 3SG, which to an important extent attenuates the role of processing factors in this type of agreement variation.

4. Beyond concord: final remarks on agreement variation and expletive subjects

We have thus noticed that, besides the role that other linguistic factors (especially, phonic salience) may play with respect to the occurrence of non-standard 3SG, CORDIAL-SIN data clearly support the hypothesis that concord variation is also syntactically conditioned. It has been shown that a little more than 75% of the cases of non-standard 3SG in CORDIAL-SIN occur in similar syntactic configurations featuring a vacant preverbal subject position. It is now worth noting that such configurations actually correspond to a well-known area of linguistic variation. This is in fact a kind of context that allows for some variation in agreement patterns both intra-linguistically and crosslinguistically, as shown by the contrast between 36, from English, and 37, from French:

(36) there **come** <u>many problems</u>

(37) il **est arrivé** <u>de problèmes</u>
  EXPL is arrived some problems
  'There arrived some problems.'

In English, standard agreement between the verb and the subject (i.e. the expletive *there*) reflects in fact a mechanism of agreement with an expletive-associate (*there-many problems*), whereby the agreement features in the verb and in the expletive-associate postverbal argument should match (Chomsky 1981, Safir, 1982, Burzio, 1986). Consequently, the verb occurs in the plural form in this example:[15]

(38) a. there **come** <u>many proposals</u>

b. *there **comes** <u>many proposals</u>

By contrast, the French example in 37 illustrates a case of agreement between the verb and the expletive *il*, independent from a potential expletive-associate (*de problèmes*). Such difference in fact corresponds to the distinction between two types of expletives, as stated by Chomsky (1995: 288): while *there* in English, as a "pure expletive", is totally devoid of featural content, *il* in French has the relevant features that may check verbal agreement, just like it is acknowledged for *it* in English.

Turning to EP non-standard 3SG examples, the main pattern of variation in CORDIAL-SIN could be explained along the lines of the contrast between English and French above, as has been suggested in Carrilho (2003).

(39) [–] **nasciam** <u>umas certas ervas</u>
        grew.3PL some   plants
'…certain plants grew up (there).'

(40) [–] **nascia** <u>umas certas ervas</u>
        grew.3SG some   plants

Example 39 displays verb agreement with the postverbal argument, similarly to the English example above. Example 40 involves a different agreement pattern, which may correspond to the French example above.

Within an early principles-and-parameters framework, the account for sentences such as 39 used to include a null expletive in the preverbal subject position, which entered a special chain-like relation with the postverbal argument (i.e. the expletive's associate), by means of which plural agreement on the verb could be obtained (a.o. Burzio, 1986, Chomsky, 1995).

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15 Note however that in English non-agreeing variants may equally be found (cf. Meechan & Foley, 1994, Schütze, 1999, a.o.).

Assuming more recent developments, however, null expletives appear as highly suspicious entities (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 1998, a.o.): besides their semantic emptiness, they also lack any kind of phonological and interpretable φ-features. The primary role of an overt expletive in a non-null subject language – that of checking some kind of EPP-feature – can in principle be undertaken by finite verb agreement in a null subject language (Barbosa, 1995, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou, 1998, a.o.). Verb agreement with the postverbal argument rather than with a postulated null expletive falls now under the generalized pattern of a Probe-Goal Agree operation (Chomsky, 1998), without any additional machinery (cf. Richards & Biberauer, 2005).

On this view, however, the cases of non-standard 3SG, such as 40, differ in that they cannot involve Agree between the inflected verb and the postverbal argument. To this extent, we may then postulate an agreeing element in the preverbal subject position, a dummy or expletive subject, which is regularly non-overt in a null subject language. Singular agreement on the verb would in this case be valued by this null expletive that would be endowed with a [singular] feature. Such kind of expletive must be distinguished from pure expletives such as *there* in English, rather corresponding to the non-overt counterpart of *il*-type expletives, which typically control 3SG agreement, despite their semantic vacuity, as in example 37 above.

The contrast between 39 and 40, just like in 36 and 37, would thus be reminiscent of the above mentioned distinction between two types of expletives: one of them is featureless while the other is endowed with some feature content. The suggested analysis posits that non-standard 3SG is the result of an agreement relation with a [singular] null expletive. Thus, a way of explaining non-standard 3SG in EP as considered here is to postulate that, at least in some EP varieties – those which allow for this kind of agreement variation –, there is a null expletive that, just like expletive *il* in French, has some feature content.

The data discussed in this paper may also lead us into considerations on the existence of null expletives in a null subject language.[16] Given the fact that the type of overt expletive that occurs in presentational and existential constructions often varies, not only among different languages (e.g. English

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16 The issue is fairly independent from considerations on overt expletives in a null subject language, like expletive *ele* in EP, which have recurrently been distinguished from expletive subjects. Thus, contrary to what is suggested by an anonymous reviewer, the analysis we suggest for non-standard 3SG is not incompatible with the proposal for expletive *ele* put forth in Carrilho (2005), which in fact emphasizes the differences between the overt expletive element in EP and expletive subjects and analyses *ele* as a left-peripheral element rather than a subject filler.

there vs. French *il*) but also among varieties of the same language (*there* and *it* in English, cf. Parrott, 2006), we could address the question of whether there is evidence for non-overt counterparts of such different expletives. A difference appears to this respect: while null subject languages may well dispense with so-called pure (null) expletives, the non-standard EP properties considered in the present paper may be taken as evidence for the role of null expletives endowed with φ-features in (varieties of) a null subject language. Ultimately, it is suggested that the supposed agreement variation can be ascribed to lexical variation regarding the availability of this type of expletive element involved in EP non-standard 3SG.

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Appendix: network of CORDIAL-SIN locations/micro-regions

01	VPA	Vila Praia de Âncora (Viana do Castelo)	22	EXB	Enxara do Bispo (Lisboa)
02	CTL	Castro Laboreiro (Viana do Castelo)	23	TRC	Fontinhas (Angra do Heroísmo)
03	PFT	Perafita (Vila Real)	24	MTM	Moita do Martinho (Leiria)
04	AAL	Castelo de Vide, Porto da Espada, S. Salvador de Aramenha, Sapeira, Alpalhão, Nisa (Portalegre)	25	LAR	Larinho (Bragança)
05	PAL	Porches, Alte (Faro)	26	LUZ	Luzianes (Beja)
06	CLC	Câmara de Lobos, Caniçal (Funchal)	27	FIS	Fiscal (Braga)
07	PST	Camacha, Tanque (Funchal)	28	GIA	Gião (Porto)
08	MST	Monsanto (Castelo Branco)	29	STJ	Santa Justa (Santarém)
09	FLF	Fajãzinha (Horta)	30	UNS	Unhais da Serra (Castelo Branco)
10	MIG	Ponta Garça (Ponta Delgada)	31	VPC	Vila Pouca do Campo (Coimbra)
11	OUT	Outeiro (Bragança)	32	GRJ	Granjal (Viseu)
12	CVB	Cabeço de Vide (Portalegre)	33	CRV	Corvo (Horta)
13	MIN	Arcos de Valdevez, Bade, São Lourenço da Montaria (Viana do Castelo)	34	GRC	Graciosa (Angra do Heroísmo)
14	FIG	Figueiró da Serra (Guarda)	35	MLD	Melides (Setúbal)
15	ALV	Alvor (Faro)	36	STA	Santo André (Vila Real)
16	SRP	Serpa (Beja)	37	MTV	Montalvo (Santarém)
17	LVR	Lavre (Évora)	38	CLH	Calheta (Angra do Heroísmo)
18	ALC	Alcochete (Setúbal)	39	CPT	Carrapatelo (Évora)
19	COV	Covo (Aveiro)	40	ALJ	Aljustrel (Beja)
20	PIC	Bandeiras, Cais do Pico (Horta)	41	STE	Santo Espírito (Ponta Delgada)
21	PVC	Porto de Vacas (Coimbra)	42	CDR	Cedros (Horta)