

Constructional changes in Brazilian Portuguese in the 20th century: Two cases of linguistic deletion

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Abstract

This chapter analyzes two constructional changes by deletion of linguistic elements in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in the 20th century, namely, the null *se* (reflexive-reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive, impersonal) constructions and the chopping relative construction, as two relevant manifestations of the recent standardization of the BP variety diverging from European Portuguese (EP). Based on a usage-feature and profile-based analysis and adopting a sociocognitive view of language, especially Cognitive Grammar, this study shows that the deletion of the clitic *se* conveys a shift to a nonenergetic, absolute construal of the event, and the deletion of the preposition correlates with the grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* and highlights the accessibility of the nominal antecedent. Three contributions to research on language change are stressed: changes by deletion generate new constructions with their own meanings; synchronic constructional alternation, such as the one existing in BP between overt and null *se* constructions and the one already nonexistent in BP but existing in EP between pied-piping and chopping constructions, allows simulation of the diachronic constructional change in real time; and successful media from

the mid-20th century onward, such as *TV Globo* for the huge Brazilian population, play a central role in language change and standardization.

Key words: constructional change, standardization, Cognitive Grammar, construal, grammaticalization, ellipsis, *se* constructions, relative constructions, allostructions, Portuguese

1. Introduction

Linguistic variation and change are natural and constant phenomena for the simple reason that variation and change are immediate and inevitable consequences of language use. Linguistic variation and change may be more frequent and more rapid in one period than in another, and certain varieties of a language may change more than others. Social, political and technological transformations since the mid-20th century, especially the democratization of societies and the massification of education, the mediatization of the various fields of communication in the public sphere, the enormous impact of new technological media, the new forms of instantaneous interpersonal communication, and globalization, have triggered and even hastened language changes; these new technological media are the main means of propagation of language changes and standardization.

The Portuguese language has a long and rich history; its first written records date back to the 12th century, and in its nine centuries of life, it has had a huge expansion outside Europe and has naturally undergone several changes in all linguistic areas. The transformations mentioned above also naturally led to

changes in Portuguese throughout the 20th century and more visibly from the middle of the 20th century in its two well-established national varieties, both the older European Portuguese (EP) variety and the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) variety, which emerged in the second half of the 19th century and consolidated throughout the 20th century. Some of these changes, especially syntactic and morphosyntactic, are still ongoing, both in EP, where they are described as “critical areas of Portuguese” (Peres & Mória, 1995) or “the changing Portuguese language” (Mateus & Nascimento, 2005), and in BP, constituting facts of endonormative standardization (e.g., Roberts & Kato, 1993; Mattos e Silva, 2004).

The media, including newspapers, radio, and especially television, contributed greatly to the dissemination and conventionalization of the ongoing or accomplished changes during the second half of the 20th century in both EP and BP. Both in Portugal and in Brazil, schools are no longer the only or main means of education, with television and the internet becoming the most important means for the diffusion of the linguistic norm and the standardization of linguistic variants. In Portugal, the normative roles of RTP, the state-run television channel founded in the 1950s and unique until the 1990s, and of national newspapers and radio stations, stand out. In Brazil, *TV Globo*, founded in the early 1950s, played a key role in consolidating the Brazilian Portuguese standard variety through two of its most successful and influential programs: the news program *Jornal Nacional* and popular soap operas, which are broadcast daily in the prime-time slot from 6 pm to 10:30 pm. From Monday to Sunday, the enormous Brazilian population, whose great majority has access to television and consumes several hours of television programs daily, receives three different soap operas every day, which

are subdivided by the news programs of the *Jornal Nacional*. To become widely accessible to the general Brazilian population, *TV Globo* has tried to reduce the distance between writing and orality, making the register closer to the spoken language and presenting the audience with a seemingly spontaneous use of language. The texts of *TV Globo*, *Jornal Nacional* and soap operas, as well as of television in general, are designed to be presented orally, but their orality is secondary, since they are originally written and do not contain the characteristics of spontaneous use of language, such as abrupt sentence breaks or repetitions of words.

In this study, we will analyze two constructional changes, representative of the BP variety, that emerged in the second half of the 19th century and consolidated in the second half of the 20th century mainly in the informal and colloquial register. The two constructional changes under study are both expressed in the deletion of linguistic elements, namely, the deletion of the clitic *se* in all *se* constructions, i.e., reflexive, reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive, and impersonal constructions, which we will call null *se* constructions, and the deletion of the preposition in prepositional relative constructions, a relativization strategy that is known as a chopping construction. The null *se* constructions also occur in EP but with much less frequency and productivity, being practically restricted to a few anticausative *se* constructions. On the other hand, the chopping relative construction also exists in EP but much less frequently and in alternation with the canonical or pied-piping relative construction. These two new typically Brazilian ellipsis or null-category constructions join other typical BP constructions that also involve deletion of linguistic elements, such as the null object construction, which seems to manifest a BP tendency toward

morphosyntactic changes by ellipsis leading to null categories. This BP tendency can lead to the complete disappearance of categories, as happened with the relative pronoun *cujo* ‘whose’ or the third-person accusative clitics. Null categories or changes by deletion of linguistic elements are not, however, exclusive to BP but also occur in EP, although less frequently, as in the case of the null subject construction, in contrast to the BP tendency to the overt subject.

The paper unfolds in three stages. First, a brief description of the standardization of the Portuguese language is provided, focusing on the recent standardization of BP, divergent with regard to EP and characterized by a tension between exonormative standardization, based on the Portuguese literature of the 19th century, and endonormative standardization, based on the new Brazilian variants emerging in the second half of the 19th century and consolidating in the 20th century. Second, several examples of constructional changes by deletion of linguistic elements in BP are presented, arguing that they constitute not just morphosyntactic phenomena but rather the emergence of new constructions with their own meanings. Third, two of these new constructions by deletion in BP are analyzed from a sociocognitive perspective, especially considering Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1991, 2008) and in line with historical cognitive linguistics (e.g., Winters et al., 2010; Allan & Robinson, 2012; Winters, 2020). They are the null *se* (reflexive, reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive and impersonal) constructions, which still alternate with the overt *se* constructions, and the chopping relative construction, which has practically supplanted the pied-piping relative construction. At the same time, the factors of both synchronic variation between the alternating constructions and diachronic innovation and conventionalization of the two constructions based on null categories are

analyzed, showing that the mechanisms and motivations of these constructional changes are cognitive and social in nature. The concluding section briefly situates the findings within the broader context of constructional change and the diachronic approach of the 20th century.

2. Portuguese and the standardization of Brazilian Portuguese: between exonormative and endonormative standardization

Portuguese is a pluricentric language with different national standard varieties, namely, EP, BP and African standards in development, especially in Mozambique and Angola. Regarding the two well-established standards, namely, EP and BP, Portuguese is one of the few languages that come closest to the rare condition of *symmetric* pluricentricity (Soares da Silva, 2014, 2016, 2018). This is mainly due to the balance between the time supremacy of EP and the spatial supremacy of BP, the strong codification of the two national standards, and the increasing awareness of the international importance of the bicentricity of Portuguese in sociopolitical, economic and cultural terms. The EP standard is also applied in Portuguese-speaking African countries, as well as in East Timor and other Asian territories. The BP standard, in turn, is valid only in Brazil. Interestingly, however, Brazilian culture, media and language enjoy wide diffusion in Portugal and other Portuguese-speaking countries (Soares da Silva, 2022).

The standardization of Portuguese started after the establishment of the Kingdom of Portugal in the 12th century, and the first normative codification instruments appeared four centuries later, in the 16th century. From the second half

of the 19th century onward, with the Brazilian Romanticism project of establishing a national literary language after Brazil's independence in 1822, a second pole emerged in Brazil, which developed its own relatively independent and divergent standard during the 20th century. As a result, the Portuguese language thus inherited two spelling systems, two sets of grammatical nomenclature, two academies and two standards with important differences in grammar and lexicon, competing with each other on the geopolitical stage. Over the last few years, the community of Portuguese-speaking countries has tried to transform the Portuguese language policy by switching from a bipolar to a multipolar and multilateral management model (Oliveira, 2015). However, the standardization process is still fundamentally *bicentric*, with two major divergent poles in Portugal and Brazil (Aguiar e Silva, 2007; Soares da Silva, 2020).

The process of standardization of Brazilian Portuguese emerged only in the course of the 20th century, with the modernist movement, and is marked by a tension between exonormative standardization based on the Portuguese literature of the 19th century and endonormative standardization based on the emergent Brazilian variants. As a result, it is characterized by a considerable distance between the idealized and prescriptive traditional norm and the real norm (or norms) used in big city centers, as well as between written and spoken language, leading to a situation of diglossia. However, a gradual reduction of the marked Brazilian diglossia can currently be observed due to the introduction of patterns of the spoken language into BP written language by the aforementioned influence of *TV Globo*.

As far as exonormative influence is concerned, there still exists a powerful social imagery in Brazilian society that leads journalists, intellectuals and teachers

to wage social “wars” in defense of the dogmatic and immutable “standard” calqued on the literary European variety (Faraco, 2001, 2008, 2011). Beneath this linguistic purism lies an ideology of *identity* nationalism, which entails social exclusion, economic discrimination and white supremacy (Bagno, 1999, 2000; Scherre, 2005). There is also the mythical idea of a single homogeneous language in the immense territory of Brazil and the so-called “veritable Brazilian miracle” – a myth reinforced by the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro, who argues that the numerous immigrants were irrelevant in establishing the characteristics of Brazilian culture and the amazing “cultural homogeneity” of the Brazilian people (Ribeiro, 1997). In short, this is the ideology of “national unity” founded in the romantic vision of “one nation, one culture, one language” (Soares da Silva, 2015).

However, a widening gap between written EP and written BP and a progressive decrease in the distance between oral and written BP is currently noticeable. Crucially, endonormative Brazilian features are increasingly introduced into the written language. This is the case, for instance, for two syntactic changes, namely, the loss of third-person clitic pronouns and the loss of the null pronominal subject. Overt subjects and the replacement of third-person clitics by other strategies are used by Brazilian speakers across social groups, regardless of gender, social class or level of schooling (Duarte, Gomes & Paiva, 2016, 2022).

Other Brazilian variants, though, still predominantly exist in colloquial BP or in the speech of less/uneducated people. This is the case, for instance, with the lack of nominal agreement in number and the lack of verbal agreement and consequent strong simplification of the morphology of the verb. Another set of

Brazilian variants exist only in nonurban dialects, chiefly in isolated communities. This is the case with the lack of gender agreement, for instance. The fact that some endonormative features are already incorporated into the written language, whereas others are still restricted to the spoken language, while at the same time exonormative features are still partially used as a reference, means that current school education has to deal with features of two grammars simultaneously (Mattos e Silva, 2004; Faraco, 2008; Mendes, 2016). As stated by the renowned Brazilian linguist Mattos e Silva (2004), “o português são dois” (‘there are two kinds of Portuguese’), one being vernacular Brazilian Portuguese and the other educated Brazilian Portuguese. The bipolarization of the educated and vernacular norms is accentuated in Brazil, given the enormous universe of speakers who use the vernacular norm and the clearly minority universe of speakers who know and use the prestigious educated norm (Lucchesi, 2015). It is also expected that an increasing number of endonormative Brazilian features will sooner or later be standardized and incorporated into the written language, including formal register. However, the increase in education level and the attitudes of linguistic purism mentioned above may prevent the standardization of some of these typical Brazilian variants.

As Lucchesi (2001) states, antagonistic tendencies coexist in sociolinguistically polarized Brazil: both the tendency of vernacular Portuguese to move toward the models of the educated norm through the linguistic contact of the less literate population with the means of formal (in)training and the diffusion in the middle and upper classes of linguistic constructions that originate in the defective nativization of Portuguese by the numerous speakers of African descent with Brazilian citizenship. The great challenge that continues to be faced today is

the consolidation and pedagogical valorization of vernacular Brazilian Portuguese, which is used by the vast majority of Brazilian speakers and tends to be subordinated because of the lower prestige associated with it.

3. Constructional changes by deletion: morphosyntactic deletion or emergence of new constructions?

As we saw in the previous section, there are several syntactic changes in BP that consist of the loss of linguistic elements, some that are already part of the standard norm, regardless of the speakers' age or level of instruction, such as the replacement of third-person clitics by strong pronouns, such as nominative pronouns used as direct objects (e.g., *viu ele* 'saw (he) him') or their omission as the null object (e.g., *viu Ø* 'saw him'), and others that still predominantly exist in vernacular BP or in the speech of less/uneducated people, such as the loss of verbal agreement and the consequent strong simplification of the morphology and lack of nominal agreement in number.

Clitic pronouns constitute one of the most salient domains of syntactic change in BP compared to EP, exhibiting, since the 19th century, two changes: the change of position in the sentence from the enclitic to the proclitic position (preceded by the strong shift in EP in the early 18th century from proclisis to enclisis) and their strong decrease in use (e.g., Tarallo, 1983; Roberts & Kato, 1993; Galves, 2001). The general trend in BP toward the morphological loss of clitics was accentuated throughout the 20th century (Cyrino, Duarte & Kato, 2000; Nunes, 1995; Scherre & Duarte, 2016). Only first- and second-person singular clitics (*me*, *te*) are

consistently used in BP. These are deictic clitics, which cannot be excluded from an utterance under the penalty of compromising their understanding. Third-person clitics, both the accusative *o(s)*, *a(s)* and the dative *lhe(s)*, which are anaphoric clitics, are almost extinct in BP (Duarte et al., 2021). The obsolescence of third-person clitics was consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s, when Brazilian writers stopped trying to reproduce the Lusitanian norm, and became even more accentuated after the 1990s. In fact, the third-person accusative clitic is almost absent in the speech of university graduate speakers of BP, with a preference for the anaphoric NP and the null object. The second-person plural *vos* and the nominative pronoun *vós* have completely disappeared. The first-person plural clitic *nos*, due to the obsolescence of the nominative *nós*, is rare in spontaneous speech in urban areas. Finally, the clitic *se*, in all *se* (reflexive, reciprocal, middle, impersonal, anticausative, passive) constructions, as we will see in the next section, is mostly omitted in the colloquial register in certain contexts and retained in others and is even more frequently omitted as an indefinite clitic, i.e., in passive and impersonal constructions (Nunes, 1991; Scherre & Duarte, 2016; Duarte et al., 2021).

Another domain of linguistic deletion and morphosyntactic change in BP is that of prepositions. There are cases where the absence of prepositions occurs in Brazil more marginally, mainly, but not only, in isolated communities, especially Afro-Brazilian rural communities. Naro & Scherre (2007, p. 75) exemplify this phenomenon with three different cases: the use of the verb *gostar* ‘to like’ without the preposition *de* ‘of’, a locative complement without the preposition *em* ‘in’, and ditransitive constructions without the prepositional marking of the indirect argument with *a* ‘to’. However, there are other situations where the disappearance

or deletion of prepositions is very commonly found in Brazil, including in the formal register and among the youngest and more educated speakers. For instance, the BP tendency to substitute the preposition *a* ‘to’ in its dative function with the preposition *para* ‘for’ (as well as to substitute *a* ‘to’ in its locative function with *em* ‘in’), associated with the loss of the distinction between accusative and dative pronouns (due to the aforementioned disappearance of the accusative third-person clitic pronoun *o/a* ‘him/her’ and the use of the third-person dative clitic pronoun *lhe* ‘to him or her’ as direct object), mean that BP seems to have completely lost the morphosyntactic expression of the dative case (Torres Moraes & Salles, 2010). Another very salient and very common prepositional deletion is the loss in relative clauses of the so-called process of “pied-piping”, in which the relative pronoun is preceded by a preposition. BP speakers strongly prefer other relativization strategies, such as “chopping”, in which the preposition is deleted. We will address this constructional change later on.

It should be noted that constructional changes by deletion are not unique to the BP variety, nor do the main constructional changes in BP compared to EP always involve the deletion of linguistic elements. For example, null subjects are a property of the EP variety, which remains the consistent null subject language (Duarte & Silva, 2016), whereas the null subject property has tended to decrease significantly in BP since the 19th century, becoming rare in the second half of the 20th century (Duarte, 1993; Duarte & Marins, 2021). However, if we compare the morphosyntactic changes of BP and EP in the 19th century and throughout the 20th century, there are clearly more changes by deletion in BP than in EP, as confirmed by the loss of verbal agreement, the simplification of inflectional verbal and nominal morphology, the disappearance of some clitic pronouns and some

prepositions, and the null object property in BP. Interestingly, most of these constructional changes by deletion in BP are also found in the African varieties of Portuguese, hence the so-called *Afro-Brazilian continuum of Portuguese* (Álvarez López, Gonçalves & Avelar, 2018).

These constructional changes by deletion in BP are usually interpreted in essentially morphosyntactic terms as the result of general tendencies in BP toward the morphological or morphosyntactic loss of the corresponding linguistic categories. Although most studies acknowledge that the deletion of a linguistic category triggers constructional changes and that some changes can result from others, they interpret the presence or absence of the category in essentially morphosyntactic terms. In contrast, we will show that semantic, pragmatic and social factors determine the two case studies on constructional changes in BP, both the deletion of the clitic *se* in all *se* constructions and the deletion of the preposition in prepositional relative clauses. At the same time, we will argue that these linguistic deletions led to the emergence of new constructions and, consequently, to changes in the network of constructions, both at the taxonomic, vertical dimension as *allostructions* (Capelle, 2006; Perek, 2015) and at the horizontal dimension (Diessel, 2019) as horizontal links between the allostructions within the same level of abstraction and other types of horizontal links.

4. Clitic *se* deletion: null *se* constructions

Portuguese *se* constructions have a constructional counterpart in which the clitic is absent. The null clitic construction, observed in all *se* constructions, namely, reflexive, reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive and impersonal constructions, is more frequently used in BP than in EP and is mostly used in the informal register. In EP, the null *se* variant is mainly limited to anticausative constructions.

4.1. The alternation between overt and null *se* constructions

Examples (1)-(10) are from colloquial BP and illustrate the overt and null *se* constructions in the reflexive/reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive and impersonal constructions (the absence of the clitic is marked with \emptyset). These constructions are positioned along a transitivity continuum. The most active/agentive constructions are the reflexive and reciprocal constructions, as in (1)-(2), and the impersonal *se* construction with only one participant, as in (9)-(10). Regarding the reflexive construction, coreferentiality between the participants entails a decrease in transitivity, as they are conceptually less well distinguishable. The impersonal *se* construction tends to be replaced in BP with other impersonalization strategies, such as the use of 1PL, 2PL, or 3PL personal pronouns and verb forms. The middle (3-4) and reflexive constructions are distinguished by the degree of transitivity, distinguishability of participants and degree of control over the event (Kemmer, 1993; Maldonado, 1999). The anticausative construction (5-6) highlights the affectation of the subject, the defocusing of the actor and the spontaneity of the event as being internally motivated (García-Miguel, 1995). Finally, the passive *se* construction (7-8) is practically lost in present-day BP, being replaced by the impersonal *se*

construction. The surviving instances of passive *se* are barely attested in colloquial BP and are confined to the written, formal language because of the prescriptivist tradition that condemns the use of impersonal *se* constructions with transitive verbs (see, e.g., Nunes, 1991; Galves, 2001).

- (1) *ele, né, vai lá assim, de boa, e tal, e aí quando ela menstrua, e tá pronta pra casar, aí eles vão e se casam, né* (C-Oral)

‘He, right?, goes there, like easygoing and stuff, and then when she gets her period, and is ready to marry, they get married?’

- (2) *não precisa nem de festa [...] pra gente Ø casar, Leandro. Precisa ter eu, você, uma testemunha e o padre* (C-Oral)

‘There is no need not even for a party [...] for us to marry, Leandro. There has to be me, you, a witness and the priest’

- (3) *Mas, como é que foi, assim, que cê se lembra desse processo, assim, conta.* (C-Oral)

‘But, how was it, like, what is it that you remember from this process? Tell us’

- (4) *pq ela já Ø lembra dos episódios que ela viu* (Fóruns)

‘Because she can now recall the episodes she saw’

- (5) *é muito mais fácil pra quem separa o lixo reaproveitar ele. assim tem muita coisa que poderia ser reaproveitada e se perde no meio de porcarias.*

(Fóruns)

‘It’s much easier for those who separate rubbish to reuse it. This way, there’s a lot which could be reused that becomes lost in the middle of the rubbish’

(6) *O arroz, Ø perdeu muito arroz na roça, porque a gente não podia trabalhar, né, Ø perdeu arroz.* (Pessoa)

‘The rice, a lot of rice was wasted in the farm, because we couldn’t work, you see? Rice was wasted’

(7) *Mas aquela história se contava na família e eu muito cedo tive vontade de viajar.* (Pessoa)

‘But that story was told in our family and very early on I felt like traveling’

(8) *o primeiro telefone que Ø pôs aqui na...que foi colocado aqui na Serra do Cipó...* (C-Oral)

‘The first phone that was set up here in...that was installed here in the Serra do Cipó...’

(9) *na minha cidade não se tem muito um clima que se pode usar muito as botas* (Fóruns)

‘In my city, one doesn’t have the kind of climate that allows one to use boots a lot’

(10) *No meio Ø usa um verde cor cana* (Fóruns)

‘In between, one wears a sugarcane green color’

Soares da Silva et al. (2021), performing a corpus, profile-based and sociocognitive analysis of overt/null *se* constructional variation, showed that the synchronic alternation between overt and null *se* constructions is motivated by semantic and lectal factors. Collecting data from three informal subcorpora in BP from the 2000s and 2010s, constituted by spontaneous oral language and interview transcripts and written informal language from internet fora, and compiling a database of 1,313 occurrences of *se* constructions (514 overt *se*

constructions and 799 null *se* constructions), they showed that one semantic factor is the main predictor for the overt/null constructional variation in all *se* constructions, namely, an *energetic* or force-dynamic and a nonenergetic or *absolute* construal of events, in the sense of Langacker's Cognitive Grammar (Langacker, 1991, 2008). When the event is construed as energetic, the pivotal moment of the force-dynamic, unexpected change being profiled, the overt *se* construction is preferred. On the other hand, when the moment of change is not profiled, the null *se* construction is typically produced: it encodes an *absolute construal*, profiling a self-contained whole, a single participant thematic process conceptualized autonomously, without explicitly invoking a force-dynamic interaction.

Turning to examples (1) and (2) above, they denote the reciprocal event of getting married. However, the conceptualization of this event is different. In (1), the clitic *se* encodes the crucial moment or condition of change of state and, consequently, the energetic event of getting married, profiling the agency and the affectedness of the participants. In contrast, the absence of the clitic *se* in (2) correlates with an absolute, nonenergetic construal of the reciprocal act of marriage, viewing this event as a whole and as an object of the speaker's conceptualization. There is independent evidence to argue for the energetic vs. absolute construal as explanatory conceptual criteria for the presence/absence of the clitic *se*. In (1), the presence of dynamic adverbs (*ai ... ai* 'then ... then') or adverbial clauses (*quando menstrua* 'when she menstruates'), as well as sequences of dynamic events (*eles vão e* 'they go and'), are independent markers that profile the moment of change, putting forward an energetic construal. The overt *se* construction is, therefore, produced. The same applies to the above

examples of the other overt *se* constructions, namely, the presence of the adverb *assim* ‘so’ in (3) and (5), the *but* clause in (3) and (7), and the intensifier *muito* ‘a lot’ and the final meaning of the relative clause in (9). The absence of change focus markers is, on the other hand, associated with the null construction, as in the reciprocal null in (2) and in (4), (6), (8) and (10) regarding the other *se* constructions, i.e., the null middle, anticausative, passive, and impersonal constructions, respectively.

Other semantic factors play a role, but speakers’ choices are now somewhat constrained to some contexts, as conditional inference trees set up by Soares da Silva et al. (2021) show. For instance, the verbal semantic class, namely, existential, modulation and relational verbs, triggers a higher number of overt *se* constructions when the change of state is not focused. In addition, cognition, union, denomination, and bodily action verbs occur more frequently with the null *se* construction in middle constructions, whereas emotion and perception verbs prefer the presence of the clitic. The lexical aspect of the verb also plays a role: activities and states associate more with the overt *se* construction than achievements and accomplishments do. Another factor for the Brazilian speakers’ choice between the overt and null *se* constructions is the lectal factor of register in some specific *se* constructions. Register is a predictor in middle construction, an important predictor in anticausative construction, and the only predictor in passive construction: there is a tendency for the null *se* construction to be produced mostly in informal and spontaneous oral registers.

4.2. Changes in *se* constructions and the new null *se* construction

Let us now look at the constructional change involved in the *se* clitic deletion and the consequent null *se* construction in BP. First, it is worth noting, albeit very briefly, the diachronic development of the network of polysemous constructions marked by the clitic *se* in the Portuguese language. The primitive meaning of the clitic *se* was reflexive, and it was from the Latin reflexive *se* that all the other meanings of the clitic *se* in Spanish and Portuguese were formed (Cano Aguilar, 1987, p. 256; Lapesa, 1981; Naro, 1976). The slow but continuous semantic expansion of the reflexive pronoun to the other meanings involved several grammaticalization processes. Already in the Latin of different eras, one finds the reflexive, reciprocal and, more rarely, middle *se* constructions, with the historical difference that the reflexive or reciprocal pronoun *se* is probably the continuation in Latin of the corresponding Indo-European pronominal form, whereas the middle *se* construction is a Latin innovation (Martins, 2003). The middle construction is originally expressed in Latin by the use of verbal forms with passive morphology and later includes the clitic *se* as a result of the semantic proximity between the active construction with the reflexive *se* and the corresponding mediopassive construction (e.g., *se lavit–laveor* ‘one was washing’) (Martins, 2003, p. 20). The mediopassive construction with the clitic *se* becomes more common as the morphological passive disappears in Latin. The Latin middle clitic *se* undergoes a process of grammaticalization of a number of properties of the reflexive clitic, mainly the bleaching of its referential value and argumentative status, as well as the reduction of the prominence of the agent of the reflexive *se* construction.

This process of grammaticalization is accentuated by the emergence already in the Romance period, first of the passive *se* and later of the impersonal *se*. The passive *se* construction emerges in the Early Romance period in both Spanish and Portuguese, coexisting with the periphrastic passive. Its passive nature is manifested in the restriction to transitive verbs, the obligatory agreement between the verb and its internal argument, which assumes the role of grammatical subject, and the optional expression of the agent phrase, the latter feature being blocked later (Martins, 2003, p. 20). The passive *se* represents a more advanced stage in the process of grammaticalization of the reflexive *se*, since it loses the typical properties of pronouns and comes somehow closer to the affixal categories. It is the passive *se* construction (such as *Vendem-se árvores* (sell-3PL-SE trees) ‘We sell trees (here)’) that appears in the late medieval period, from the 15th century on and more frequently in the 16th century in Spanish and Portuguese (Lapesa 1981, Naro 1976), a new construction of *se* without agreement between the verb and its internal argument (such as *Vende-se árvores* (sell-3SG-SE trees) ‘We sell trees (here)’), in which the clitic *se* is associated with the grammatical subject position and thus with an active construction and is interpreted as close to an indefinite pronoun or a personal pronoun of indeterminate reference. Thus, the construction of impersonal *se* emerges, no longer restricted to transitive verbs but now used with any type of verb, by a process of reanalysis of the construction of the passive *se*, more specifically the passive *se* construction without explicit agreement between the grammatical subject and the verb, with omission of the agent and with the grammatical subject in a postverbal position (see, e.g., Naro, 1976; Martins, 2005; Martins & Nunes, 2016). The identity of meaning between an agentless passive and an active sentence with an indefinite (or generic) subject

opened the way for the reanalysis of a VS passive sentence as an SVO active sentence.

BP variety exhibits another set of changes in *se* constructions that are not seen in EP. From the 19th century on, the diachronically more recent impersonal *se* construction becomes the clear majority in comparison with the historically older passive *se* construction, which tends to disappear from that time on. Nunes (1991) notes that after the impersonal *se* construction started being the canonical impersonal construction in BP, leading the passive *se* construction to its present-day obsolescence, a new construction that resulted from the deletion of the impersonal *se* emerged in the 19th century in BP. It is the null *se* impersonal construction, practically inexistent in EP, which became frequent in the 20th century in BP, probably starting in the middle of the 20th century. Nunes (1991, p. 48) shows that the deletion of impersonal *se* registers at approximately 80% in interviews of São Paulo speakers with different levels of schooling carried out in the 1980s, although with higher percentages in speakers with lower levels of schooling, in contrast to only a 3% deletion of impersonal *se* in interviews of EP speakers of the same period.

Examining texts written in Brazil from the 16th to the 20th century, Nunes (1995) finds that deletion of the clitic *se* occurs with all clitic values since the 16th century, increasing considerably in the 19th and especially the 20th century and primarily affecting the reflexive, middle and anticausative *se* and resisting deletion of the fossilized clitic that is part of essentially pronominal verbs. Comparing the presence vs. deletion of the clitic *se* (including also the reflexive, reciprocal and middle first- and second-person clitics: *me*, *nos* and *te*, *vos*) in the São Paulo colloquial Portuguese in two sets of interviews separated by 10 years

(1986-87 and 1997-2001), Pereira (2007) concluded that (i) the percentage of deletion of the clitic was higher than its realization and remained similar in the two periods (approximately 60% vs. 40%), and (ii) the truly reflexive *se* resisted deletion more than the other types of *se*. Soares da Silva et al. (2021) also found with corpus data from the 2000s and 2010s that reflexive and reciprocal constructions were the ones that exhibited a higher percentage of overt *se* constructions and that there were no significant differences between the two decades.

These results from short (Pereira, 2007; Soares da Silva et al., 2021) and long (Nunes, 1995) diachronies in BP show two interesting realities. On the one hand, the sharpest shift to deletion of the clitic *se* and the different null *se* constructions occurred prior to the 1980s in the speech and writing of Brazilians of different educational levels and from different regions, probably progressively throughout the first half of the 20th century (we do not have linguistic data nor are we aware of studies that point to specific periods). This shift to null *se* constructions represents the last stage of the diachronic evolution of *se* constructions. On the other hand, the shift toward the disappearance of the clitic *se* (and the other anaphoric clitics) has not been completed, since the variation between overt and null *se* constructions in present-day BP is clear, as amply demonstrated by Soares da Silva et al. (2021).

More important is to know how and why the constructional shift toward null *se* constructions in BP occurred more markedly throughout the first half of the 20th century. The ongoing general trend in BP toward the morphological loss of clitics and other associated changes in BP, such as the loss of third-person accusative clitics and the emergence of null object constructions, are not the main

reasons for this shift, contrary to what most existing studies argue. The main factor of the change is the same as we found for the synchronic variation between overt and null *se* constructions (Soares da Silva et al., 2021) and mentioned above, namely, differences in meaning, especially *construal* (Langacker, 1991, 2008) differences. Specifically, the deletion of the clitic *se* is the new construction for a nonenergetic, absolute and objective construal of the reflexive, reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive or impersonal event, detached from the energetic elements and from the conceptualizer and focused on the resulting state. The *absolute* construal is typical of ergative languages, in which unmarked construal events take the perspective of the end point, i.e., the resulting change of state or thematic process. The preference for the null *se* construction in the Brazilian variety can be explained by a voice change in BP toward ergativization, and it is possibly due to a Bantu substratum and contact-induced changes (see Negrão & Viotti, 2011, 2015).

This constructional change triggers changes in the network of *se* constructions and related constructions. The new null *se* constructions now occupy their own place in the network of *se* constructions (see Soares da Silva & Afonso, submitted). The overt and null *se* constructions are allostructions, as defined by Capelle (2006) and elaborated by Perek (2015), which are posited at the relatively lower levels of schematicity, i.e., at the level of the constructeme and below. They inherit the same propositional/referential meaning from the constructeme (e.g., reflexivity, passivization, impersonalization, etc.) and instantiate the form, which is partially underspecified in the constructeme [V (-SE)]. For example, the overt and the null impersonal *se* constructions inherit from the partially underspecified impersonal *se* construction the meaning (i.e., they are

also impersonal constructions) and the form instantiating it as a null *se* or overt *se* construction. In addition to the taxonomic relationship between the constructions at different levels of abstraction, the allostruction also holds horizontal relationships within the network (Diessel, 2019). These horizontal relationships capture the similarity and contrast in terms of form and meaning between constructions at the same level of abstraction.

Furthermore, other types of horizontal links are established with other constructions that perform similar (reflexivizing, impersonalizing, etc.) functions, but which are formally distinct. For example, an alternate strategy to the overt and null *se* reflexive variants that has developed more recently in BP is to use the strong pronoun plus the lexical item *mesmo* ‘even’ to function as a reflexive, such as *Ele viu ele mesmo no espelho de água* ‘He saw himself in the water mirror’, rather than *Ele se viu/Ø viu no espelho de água* ‘He saw himself in the water mirror’. New impersonalization strategies that have emerged in BP as alternatives to overt/null *se* constructions include the impersonal use of personal pronouns – such as *gente* ‘the people > we’, which is fully grammaticalized in contemporary BP as a first-person plural pronoun completely replacing *nós* ‘we’, *voc/vocês* ‘you, you all’ and *eles* ‘they’ – and the impersonal version of causative alternation constructions without the presence of the clitic *se* (*Depois que a janela abriu ...* ‘After the window opened...’), including the recent expansion in BP of the class of causative alternating verbs to serve the function of impersonalization, such as the verb *dar* ‘to give’ (*Essas plantas estão dando no meu jardim* ‘These plants are growing in my garden’) (see Negrão & Viotti, 2008).

5. The deletion of the preposition in relative clauses: the chopping construction

5.1. Three prepositional relative constructions

Portuguese exhibits three types of prepositional relative constructions, as illustrated in examples (11)-(13) from colloquial EP and BP: the so-called pied-piping relative, in which the preposition is used (11); the chopping relative, in which the preposition is deleted (12) and the head noun may be coreferential with a complement of the relative clause (12a) or with an adjunct (12b); and the resumptive relative, characterized by a resumptive pronoun or adverb (13).

(11) *LUI: / &eh / e qualquer / actividade / a que uma pessoa assista / aproveita sempre qualquer coisa // \$ (EP, C-Oral)

‘And any activity that a person attends, he or she always gets something from it’

(12) a. *AMA: *queres ir ver* // \$ e <porquê> ?\$ *PED: / [<] <à aula> magna // \$ &ah / porque / há uma canção que eu gosto muito // \$ (EP, C-Oral)

‘Do you want to see, and why? To Aula Magna, because there is a song that I like very much’

b. *O primeiro restaurante que comemos foi horrível.* (BP, Google)

‘The first restaurant [in] which we ate was horrible’

(13) a. *JOA: / &ah / a não ser pontualmente // \$ quando há alguns / esqueletos que aparecem / e que se possa extrair / material genético deles // \$ (EP, C-Oral)

‘Except occasionally when there are some skeletons that appear and that genetic material can be extracted from them’

- b. *Uma loura vestida de longo, branco, e que, dava carona para ela.* (BP, C-Oral)

‘A blonde dressed in long, white, and who gave her a ride’

The pied-piping relative, the only standard type of prepositional relative construction in Portuguese, is usually indicative of formal, educated speech and occurs more frequently in EP than in BP. Chopping and resumptive relatives are thus regarded as noncanonical constructions, mostly in EP (Raposo et al., 2013: 2127-2133). The chopping relative is productive in BP (Tarallo, 1983; Kato, 1993). It has long been thought to be an innovation of BP that EP has only recently developed (Tarallo, 1983). The resumptive relative, which is the oldest relativization strategy and occurs in nonprepositional contexts, is the least productive and the most marked construction, both in EP and BP (Alexandre, 2000).

Existing studies about the variation of prepositional relative constructions point out the differences of register and the stage at which these constructions are in both national varieties or describe it in formal terms, such as *wh*- movement and raising (Tarallo, 1983; Brito, 1991; Kato, 1993; Kenedy, 2017).

5.2. The alternation between pied-piping and chopping relative constructions

In a study in preparation (Soares da Silva & Afonso, 2022), performing a corpus, profile-based and sociocognitive analysis of the variation in prepositional relative constructions in Portuguese, we intend to show that the alternation among pied-piping, chopping and resumptive relatives is determined not only by structural factors but also, above all, by cognitive and social factors, particularly semantic, pragmatic-discursive and sociolinguistic ones. The data are extracted from three informal subcorpora in BP and EP from the 2000s and 2010s, constituted by spontaneous oral language and interview transcripts and written informal language from internet fora. More than 1000 occurrences of pied-piping, chopping and resumptive relatives were annotated according to semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic factors at three levels: the head noun from the antecedent NP (animacy, specificity, adverbial value, interference, accessibility, accessibility marker, prominence, prominence marker), the verb of the relative clause (semantic class, argument grid and syntactic roles, grammatical person of the subject), and the relative constituent (type of prepositional relative, type of preposition used or expected, semantic and syntactic role of the relative constituent).

In the EP corpus, out of a total of 554 instances of prepositional relative constructions, pied-piping relatives account for 70.9%, chopping relatives for 27.1% and resumptive relatives for 2%. In the BP corpus (smaller than the EP corpus), from a total of 242 occurrences, the distribution is as follows: 90.5% chopping relatives, 3.7% pied-piping relatives and 5.8% resumptive relatives. This confirms the productivity and conventionalization of chopping relatives in BP and the effective variation between pied-piping and chopping relatives only in EP.

Relative clauses are *reference-point* constructions (Langacker, 1993), i.e., relative constructions consist of a reference-point relationship between a noun/topic and a proposition, which is interpreted in the conceptual frame evoked by the noun/topic. Relative clauses are also *discourse topic* constructions (Fox & Thompson, 1990) whose primary discourse function is to identify a participant that is relevant to ongoing discourse within a set of possible referents. They are also *conceptual integration* (or *blending*) constructions (Nikiforidou, 2005), i.e., instructions to conceptually integrate the meaning of the head noun with the meaning of the relative clause. The depronominization and grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* into a complementizer (e.g., Brito, 1995; Cristofaro & Ramat, 2007; Alexandre & Hagemeijer, 2013; Camacho, 2013) facilitate noncanonical strategies and open the way to more flexible semantic and pragmatic relationships between the nominal head and relative constituent.

Our hypothesis is that the more accessible (Ariel, 1991) the relativized item and/or the less cognitively prominent (as a conceptual reference point and discourse topic) it is, the easier it is to omit the marking of its syntactic role, which, in turn, facilitates the relative chopping construction. This hypothesis is based on the principle of cognitive complexity and increased grammatical explicitness established by Rohdenburg (1996), namely, the more formally and/or cognitively complex a sentence is, the more syntactic elements it contains.

By way of illustration, let us compare examples (14) and (15).

(14) *LUI: / &eh / e qualquer / actividade / **a que** uma pessoa assista / aproveita
sempre qualquer coisa // \$ (EP, C-Oral)

‘And any activity that a person attends, he or she always gets something from it’

(15) *&eh / portanto / esse / essa / essa / esse combate que &te / **que** estamos a assistir / sob o ponto de vista da / da atribuição de subsídios / nada impede que / haja qualidade / na produção a que temos* (EP, C-Oral)

‘And so this struggle that we are witnessing in terms of allocation of subsidies, nothing prevents our output from being good’

The antecedent in (14) *qualquer actividade* ‘any activity’ is less accessible because its identification depends on general knowledge and not on the cotext or immediate context. The use of the indefinite determiner (*qualquer* ‘any’) indicates, in this case, low accessibility, hence, the use of the low accessibility marker (which includes more information) *a (que)* in which the syntactic function is specified. In contrast, in (15), the use of the deictic *esse* ‘this’ indicates greater accessibility of the referent of *combate* ‘struggle’, which can be more easily identifiable very likely through cotext, hence, the use of a high-accessibility marker (i.e., with less information) *que* with no information specification of the syntactic function.

The same happens in (16) and (17).

(16) *no entanto diria que / se podemos reduzir / estas questões / àquele triângulo / **de que** tantas vezes falamos / em / cujos vertices / vertices / se encontrarão / o autor / de um lado / o texto / do outro / e o leitor do outro* (EP, C-Oral)

‘However, I’d say that if we can reduce these questions to that triangle that we talked about so many times, at the end of which one finds the author, the text and the reader’

(17) *VIR: / pronto // \$ não / aqui não // \$ &eh / fala o / &eh / eu / eu / &eh + \$ esta
minha colega **que** eu há bocado falei / que o marido era / vice-reitor da
técnica (EP, C-Oral)

‘This colleague of mine that I talked [about] earlier whose husband was vice dean of the Technic [School]’

The antecedent of (16) depends on general knowledge; therefore, we have the pied-piping construction (although the preposition may also be motivated by the formal register and by the speaker’s proficiency, also expressed in the use of *cujos* ‘whose’, almost nonexistent in spontaneous and informal discourse). On the other hand, in (17), the accessibility of the antecedent is high (easily retrievable via cotext; the referent was mentioned earlier in the discourse *há pouco* ‘earlier’). Therefore, we have the chopping construction.

However, can we explain the chopping construction in (8)?

(18) *SUS: [<] < pois / eu também não > / não sabia // \$ mas afinal há diversos
tipos de tuberculose / até na traqueia e em outros lados // \$ **que** eu nunca
tinha ouvido falar (EP, C-Oral)

‘Yeah, I didn’t know, either. But after all, there are different types of tuberculosis, even in the trachea and in other places, that I’d never heard [of]’

The antecedent *outros lados* ‘other places’ or *diversos tipos de tuberculose* ‘different types of tuberculosis’ (that I’d never heard of) is not accessible, therefore one would expect the preposition. However, another factor intervenes here: the low discursive and cognitive relevance of the antecedent *outros lados/diversos tipos de tuberculose* ‘other places/different types of tuberculosis’. It is indeterminate, of little discursive relevance (the relative clause is not being used to identify an entity relevant to ongoing discourse or a particular entity within a set of possible referents) and of little cognitive prominence (the antecedent is a weak conceptual reference point).

The cognitive accessibility of the antecedent is operationalizable through a set of markers, namely, anaphora, cataphor, deictic, definite time, identification, lexical association, presentative clause, generic noun, and topic continuation. On the other hand, the prominence of the antecedent is operationalized by the following markers: causal, contrastive, elaboration, and topic elements.

Our corpus, profile-based analysis of the variation between pied-piping and chopping relatives in EP (Soares da Silva & Afonso, 2022) shows that the cognitive accessibility of the antecedent is the main predictor of this variation, i.e., the more accessible the nominal antecedent is, the easier chopping construction is. Chopping construction thus exhibits less cognitive and formal complexity. Another but secondary predictor of the same variation is the syntactic-semantic function of the relative constituent: relative constituents with the role of complement of the verb of the relative clause facilitate chopping construction, whereas adjunct relative constituents are associated with pied-piping construction. Thus, in cases where the antecedent is inaccessible, and therefore pied-piping construction is expected, the frequency of the chopping construction

increases when the relative constituent is the complement of the predicate or of a noun of the relative clause. On the other hand, when the antecedent is accessible and therefore chopping construction is expected, and at the same time there is interference between the head noun and the relative constituent, the percentage of pied-piping construction increases in cases where the relative constituent plays the role of adjunct. Contrary to our expectations, the prominence of the antecedent, as a conceptual reference point, was not found to be a predictor of variation between pied-piping and chopping relatives.

5.3. The conventionalization of the noncanonical chopping relative construction

The chopping relative has been quite productive in BP since the late 19th century and is considered an innovation created by BP grammar (Tarallo, 1983; Kato, 1993; Galves, 2001). With the disappearance of the pied-piping relative in colloquial BP, the chopping relative became the most productive relativization strategy in BP throughout the 20th century (Tarallo, 1983). In corpora of the informal BP register, this construction is clearly dominant, with no significant variation observed. Arden (2015) shows that in the broadcast news program *Jornal Nacional* from Brazilian *TV Globo*, the normative pied-piping relative is virtually the only construction attested in the newscasters and reports, while the chopping relative prevails with 72% among the interview partners. The soap opera *Paraíso Perdido*, also from *TV Globo*, confirms the assumption that in spoken language, the chopping relative is the dominant relativization strategy.

In EP, the chopping relative has become productive in recent decades, especially in informal and oral registers, but it is also present in journalistic texts. Peres & Mória (1995) show the occurrence of the chopping relative in Portuguese journalistic texts of the 1980s and 1990s. Arim et al. (2005) also show the generalization of the chopping relative in the Portuguese media and point to the influence of BP in EP and the increasing decrease in the use of the pronoun *cujó* ‘whose’ as factors of this generalization.

The chopping relative construction is generally pointed out as a feature of BP and its generalization as an indicator of endogenous BP standardization. In his pioneering and extensive study on relativization strategies in BP, Tarallo (1983) points to the chopping construction as a BP innovation that began to emerge in the second half of the 19th century and considers that this new construction arose from a process of ellipsis. Kato (1993) also describes the chopping relative as coming from an ellipsis process, although with a relatively different explanation, based on the generative perspective of principles and parameters. Bagno (2001, p. 89-92) gives two reasons for the victory of the chopping relative in BP, namely, an attitudinal reason and a syntactic-semantic reason. On the one hand, the chopping relative represents the choice of educated Brazilian speakers to avoid both appearing too pedantic when using the standard relative, seen as too right, and appearing ignorant when using the resumptive relative, seen as too wrong. On the other hand, the chopping relative is motivated by the BP tendency to use null categories and ellipsis and by the addressee’s ease of interpreting the deleted preposition. While it emerged in BP in the second half of the 19th century, it was in the second half of the 20th century that the chopping relative construction became normalized among educated Brazilian speakers and became

conventionalized, thanks in large part to the influence of *TV Globo*, especially its *Jornal Nacional* and its soap operas, as Arden's (2015) study referred to in the evidence above.

The emergence and conventionalization of the chopping relative results from a process of depronominalization and grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* into a complementizer and consequent simplification of the preposition-complementizer complex, resulting in the erasure of the prepositional element, and this process of simplification and grammaticalization is identical to that also occurring in the completive constructions (on the depronominalization of the relative pronoun *que* in Romance languages, see Brito, 1995; Cristofaro & Ramat, 2007; Alexandre & Hagemeyer, 2013; and Camacho, 2013). It can be argued that this is not exactly a process of reanalysis of the relative pronoun as a complementizer, since resumptive construction is quite old and in it *que* was already a complementizer. However, the fact is that the grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* facilitates noncanonical strategies and opens the way to more flexible semantic and pragmatic relationships between the nominal head and relative constituent. However, it should also be noted that the process of grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* leading to preposition deletion is facilitated by the transparency of the relative clause verb in relation to its prepositional complement or adjunct, by the fact that preposition deletion does not cause ambiguity, and by the cognitive accessibility of the nominal antecedent. In contexts where there may be ambiguity and/or the nominal antecedent is not accessible, the speaker may opt for the resumptive construction or, in the case of the educated speaker, the pied-piping construction, or for a strategy other than relativization. The results of our corpus-based analysis show, as we saw in the

previous section, that in EP, the speaker can choose between the pied-piping and chopping constructions, and the main factor of choice is the accessibility of the nominal antecedent. In BP, on the other hand, this choice does not occur mainly in the informal register, given the predominance of the chopping relative. Moreover, the high frequency of preposition deletion in BP in contexts of relative constituents playing the role of adjunct (144 occurrences among 153 examples of an adjunct relative constituent), in addition to contexts of complement relative constituents (75 of 86), is a clear indicator of the standardization of the chopping construction in BP and the neutralization of the conceptual differences that still occur in EP.

6. Conclusions

Three main conclusions can be drawn from this sociocognitive study about two constructional changes by deletion in Brazilian Portuguese in the 20th century. First, the constructional changes toward the null *se* (reflexive, reciprocal, middle, anticausative, passive and impersonal) constructions and the chopping relative construction cannot be described only or essentially as the result of an ongoing general tendency in BP toward the morphological loss of clitics or toward the syntactic loss of other categories such as prepositions, as is generally presented in the literature on variation and change in BP, but rather as new constructions originating from conceptual and social factors. Null *se* constructions are new constructions that deserve a place in the network of *se* constructions, next to overt *se* constructions. The overt and null *se* constructional variants are allostructions

that inherit the same propositional/referential meaning from the constructeme (e.g., reflexivity, passivization, impersonalization) and instantiate the form that is partially underspecified in the constructeme. Moreover, these allostructions also hold horizontal relationships within the network between constructions at the same level of abstraction, as well as horizontal links with other constructions that perform similar (reflexivizing, impersonalizing, etc.) functions, but which are formally distinct. The new null *se* constructions resulted from a shift in the conceptual *construal* (Langacker, 2008) of the event, from an energetic construal focusing on the crucial moment of change to a nonenergetic, absolute construal, detached from the energetic elements and from the conceptualizer and focused on the resulting state. The new null *se* construction is a manifestation of voice change in BP toward ergativization. In turn, the chopping relative construction is a new construction in BP grammar, resulting from the depronominization and grammaticalization of the relative pronoun *que* into a complementizer and facilitated by the transparency of the argument structure of the verb of the relative clause and the cognitive accessibility of the nominal antecedent. In both cases, the two constructional changes by deletion in BP carry out the principle of cognitive complexity (Rohdenburg, 1996) in the sense that the less cognitively and formally complex a sentence is, the fewer syntactic elements it has. On the theoretical and methodological levels, the important conclusion is that the description and explanation of constructional change benefit from a sociocognitive perspective on language change as explored by historical cognitive linguistics (e.g., Winters et al., 2010; Allan & Robinson, 2012; Winters, 2020) and the application of corpus-based multifactorial and multivariate methods.

Second, language variation and language change are of course closely related, the former being the antechamber of the latter but without the former necessarily implying the latter. The important thing is that defining a constructional alternation as an individual speaker's choice between semantically equivalent constructions, in the sense that they designate the same referential situation but have differences in meaning, especially differences in their semantic *construal* (Langacker, 2008), as well as the thorough analysis of how, why and where two alternate constructions vary are important tasks for the study of a constructional change. The variation between overt and null *se* constructions productive in colloquial BP reveals the mechanisms and motivations of the emergence of null *se* constructions and the ongoing voice change in BP toward ergativization. The current variation between the chopping relative construction and pied-pipping relative constructions in EP allows us to better understand the shift of relativization strategies in BP toward the dominance of the chopping construction. The study of a constructional variation not only ensures a more adequate and complete description of the corresponding potential constructional change but can also allow observation of a real-time change, both in its mechanisms and motivations.

Finally, the two constructional changes by deletion in BP, both the null *se* construction and the chopping relative construction, show how important and special linguistic changes are in the 20th century in Brazil for two main reasons. First, these two constructional changes constitute two typical features of the endonormative standardization of the Brazilian variety diverging from the European variety and therefore of the very grammar of BP. Although the two constructional variants emerged in the second half of the 19th century, the

respective constructional changes happened entirely in the 20th century. Second, these two constructional changes were widely diffused and conventionalized among the huge Brazilian population throughout the second half of the 20th century thanks to the strong influence of *TV Globo* as the main medium of standardization of the Brazilian variety, especially through its news program *Jornal Nacional* and its famous soap operas. This shows the extraordinarily important role that television played, in its elaborate and staged orality and multimodal communication, in language change and the equally diachronic process of language standardization from the mid-20th century onward. It also shows how television throughout the second half of the 20th century and the internet in the 21st century enhance, activate, and accelerate the correlations between the different dimensions of language change and standardization, such as their cognitive, sociocultural, linguistic, and ideological aspects.

The 20th century, as the century of television and the internet, new forms of spontaneous immediacy language, and mediatization and globalization, allows us to zoom in on the acquisition, spread, relative speed and correlation between the cognitive and social factors of language changes. It also allows us to recognize the productivity and expressive richness of certain linguistic changes that are apparently losses of categories and simplifications or grammatical impoverishment but that give rise to new grammatical constructions conveying new conceptualizations and thus make grammar more adapted to the cognitive and communicative needs of speakers.

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