# European Portuguese relative clauses in a spoken corpus

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## 1 - Introduction

One of the strategies for relative clauses construction in European Portuguese (EP), based on data collected from a spoken corpus, is the resumptive pronoun strategy. The description of this construction is a step further in the study of the main syntactic and discursive properties for different strategies for relative clauses construction in EP and in the observation of how far these properties pattern with the ones described for other languages.

The relative clauses here observed were collected by the author. Whenever availability of data for other languages allow us, we will compare the described properties in EP with those of different languages.

## 2 – Corpus Description

This corpus contains 139 relative clauses with resumptive pronoun, collected manually by the author from 2004 to 2005, in situations of different formality: 99 clauses were produced in spontaneous conversations among friends or colleagues (72%); 38 clauses were collected from media sources, mainly TV (27%); 2 were produced in formal contexts – namely university classes (1%).

## 3 – Resumptive Strategy in EP – Main Properties Observed

### A – Processing function – Island Violations

As described for many other languages by different authors, the resumptive pronoun strategy occurs frequently whenever an island violation is at stake (McCloskey 1990, Prince 1990, Suñer 1998, Bianchi 2000, a.o.). EP patterns likewise with respect to this context. From the 139 clauses in the corpus, 52 result from long extraction in island contexts (37.4%).

(1) A um antigo patrão meu / que eu estive quase para <u>lhe</u> dar uma pêra no focinho

  *to an old boss mine / that I have been almost to* him *give a punch in the face*

  '*to an old boss of mine whom I was almost punching in the face*'

(2) Há coisas fantásticas // que eu nem sei como é que <u>elas</u> me acontecem

  *There are things amazing  that I not even know how is it that* they *to me happen*

  '*There are amazing things which I don't even know how they happen to me*'

From these 52 contexts for long extraction, 21 were produced in a coordination of relative structures. In these cases,  the second member of the coordinate pair is usually the resumptive one (as in (3)), but  both of the coordinates can resource to this strategy (as in (4)).

(3) porque isso são ordens que eu tenho e que não posso fugir a <u>elas</u>

  *because that are orders that I have and that not can escape from* them

  '*because that are the orders I was given and that I can't escape from*'

(4) Eles tinham umas 200 ou 300 cabeças de gado que ninguém <u>as</u> ia levar

  *They had about 200 or 300 heads of cattle that no one* them *was going to take*

  nem ninguém <u>as</u> ia buscar ao pasto

  *nor no one* them *was going to collect from the meadow*

  '*They had about 200 or 300 heads of cattle that no one was taking to nor*

  *collecting from the meadow*'

## B – Presentational Structures

**Main verb** – From the 139 contexts under analysis, 29 were incomplete in what concerns the verbal form introducing the relativized DP, either because the structure is verbless or because it wasn't possible to reconstruct the full context. For the remaining 110 contexts, it is interesting to notice that in 77% of these, the verb selecting this DP is a presentational one *(ser (permanent to be) – 28* occurrences; *ter (to have) – 27; haver (existential to be) – 24; estar (transitory to be) – 5;* and 2 occurences of appearing verbs*)*. This kind of structures appears in several articles concerning different languages (Deulofeu 1981, Prince 1990, Suñer 1998, Bianchi 2000), although we don't have their statistical values of occurrence.

**Determiner of the antecedent** – Excluding 6 contexts where it wasn't possible to reconstruct the determiner, for the remaining 133 the antecedent is introduced by an indefinite determiner in 86% of the cases. This property was already observed for other languages by, for instance, Prince 1990, Suñer 1998 and Bianchi 2000.

## C – Discursive Properties

Based on these characteristics, we would like to establish a relation between different analysis, from different theoretical fields.

Lambrecht 2000 relates predicative relative clauses, appearing mainly in presentational contexts, with the discursive properties involved. For this author, in these structures the antecedent is the focus of the main clause but the topic for the relative one, this being a secondary predicate, expressing new information about that topic.

Prince 1990, following Heim 1983, presents a similar analysis for indefinite relative clauses with resumptive pronoun strategy: "The NP is indefinite, it represents a 'Brand-new entity (…) and the hearer must add that entity, or construct a new file-card (…) the relative clause serving simply to predicate some property of that entity, that is, where the appropriate file card has already been independently constructed".

Kato 1993 also relates the resumptive strategy with topic properties, further claiming that in this type of relatives, the relativization site is a topic position, similar to that of a Clitic Left Dislocation construction.

Interacting their syntactic and discursive properties, we can parallel the analysis for presentational relative clauses with the one for the resumptive pronoun strategy, since the latter appear mainly in the contexts of the former. The formalization of this interaction under the theoretical background of the Minimalist Program is our next goal.

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