

Argument Structure in Distributed Morphology: evidence from Brazilian Portuguese

The question of how much information lexical representations encode, what their nature is and how they relate to syntactic structures has been central to the investigation in modern linguistic theory. In the Government and Binding Theory (CHOMSKY, 1981), lexical items are represented in the lexicon by a thematic grid, stating its grammatical class, the number of arguments it selects and the theta roles these arguments will bear. The Projection Principle guarantees that this information will be syntactically represented and the Theta Criterion ensures that this representation will exhibit all the arguments selected by the lexical item, and only them. More recent approaches to the theory, such as the Minimalist Program (CHOMSKY, 1995), do not present a substantially different model for Argument Structure (AS). Many problems have been presented for such a model. To name one, in accounting for the Brazilian Portuguese (BP) facts described by the unergative sentence *João correu na praia ontem* (João ran along the beach yesterday), the unaccusative one *A pedra correu até a porta* (cf. The pebble rolled to the door) and the two types of transitive sentences attested with this verb, as in *João correu a maratona* (João ran the marathon) and *João correu o cachorro da cozinha* (João had the dog run out of the kitchen), a theory based on thematic grids would, apparently, have to offer three or four alternative grids for the verb *correr* (run) in BP.

In the early versions of the Distributed Morphology (DM) (HALLE & MARANTZ, 1993) approach to grammar, AS is treated in terms of the licensing of roots in certain syntactic contexts (MARANTZ, 1997): a root will fit a syntactic structure, depending on the semantic properties and meaning encoded by this structure. More recently, research under this framework has been suggesting the elimination of the thematic hierarchies or linking rules, which determine the arguments' syntactic positions. It has also been claiming that the role the arguments will bear result from the position they occupy in a more complex syntactically represented predicate or event structure (CUERVO, 2003; LIN, 2004; PYLKKÄNEN, 2002).

This paper offers an alternative proposal to deal with the AS of BP verbs under the DM approach. We analyze i) causative-inchoative alternating verbs, such as in *O João ferveu o leite* (João boiled the milk) and *O leite ferveu* (The milk boiled), ii) unergative and non-alternating transitive verbs, such as in *O João gritou* (João shouted) and *O João pintou o muro* (João painted the wall), respectively, iii) transitive verbs whose complement introduces a path over which the event takes place, as in *O João leu um livro* (João read a book) and *O João andou a extensão daquela pista* (João walked along that track), and finally, iv) state verbs, such as in *O João possui uma casa em Ubatuba* (João has a house in Ubatuba). Our proposal assumes the following: i) arguments have aspectual roles (ARAD, 1996; BORER, 2005; RAMCHAND, 2008; TENNY, 1994) and are treated on new-davidsonian terms (PARSONS, 1990); ii) lexical items do not project syntactic structures. Rather, they, or the acategorial roots, in DM terms, are licensed in certain event structures with which they negotiate their meanings (MARANTZ, 2001); iii) argument roles are defined according to how their positions relate to the functional heads and to the root in the vP syntactic structure. (HALE; KEYSER, 1993 e MARANTZ, 1997); iv) Verbalizing heads (MARANTZ, 1997) are in, at least, three flavors: states (BE), inchoative processes (GO) and activities or events (DO) (RAMCHAND, 2008; CUERVO, 2003; LIN, 2004); (v) derivations are built by phases as in (MARANTZ, 2001, ARAD, 2003).

Once roots are licensed in syntactic structures which do not project them, we argue that the presence/absence of two properties, represented by the feature matrix [\pm DIN, \pm CAUS], determines the occurrence, or not, of a certain root in a certain context. Feature DIN will mark the root as a typically dynamic (non-stative) eventuality and feature CAUS will mark it as a caused eventuality in an event structure. A [+CAUS] root will also be able to occur as a predicate, directly merging to a DP, the result of this merger being later verbalized by a little

v, which introduces an eventuality to be interpreted as causing the more embedded one, represented by the root phrase. A [-CAUS] root will merge to little v, acting either as manner adverbial modifier for dynamic eventualities or as a state nominator (when a non-dynamic root merges with a stative little v and creates a transitive verb that denotes a state). This approach will easily account for three sentences with *correr* in BP mentioned above, by attributing to the root of this verb ($\sqrt{\text{corr-}}$) the following feature matrix [+DIN, α CAUS], where α means underspecification for the relevant feature. It means, $\sqrt{\text{corr-}}$ is not specified for the feature CAUS and it is the syntactic context that will give this feature its adequate specification: in its unergative and transitive readings, the root will be specified as [+DIN, +CAUS], while in its unaccusative reading, it will be marked as [+DIN, -CAUS] and serve as an adverbial modifier for little v.

By suggesting the existence of two basic properties for the root, our analysis offers an account for the AS of BP verbs which does not depend on a thematic grid, determining their grammatical class, the arguments they select and the theta roles to be attributed to these arguments. It is also free from the Projection Principle and from the undesirable imprecision of the Theta Criterion. Since one of the two proposed properties can sometimes be underspecified, the model can account for the observed freer behavior of certain roots in various structures.

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