On the change in double object constructions in Brazilian Portuguese

Berlinck, R. (UNESP Araraquara), Torres-Morais, M.A. (USP), Cyrino, S. (Unicamp/CNPq)

In this paper, we discuss the diachronic change that affected dative/indirect objects in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), as in (1):

(1)　　a. Eu　dei-***lhe/ a ele***　　　o livro.
　　　　　I　　gave-himCL　　the book.
　　　　b. Eu　dei　o livro　***a ele /para ele***.
　　　　　I　　gave the book to him

Although superficially similar, these structures actually corresponded, in previous stages of BP, to two different constructions in the context of ditransitive verbs: a) the double object (applicative) construction; b) the prepositional ditransitive construction. The change which affected BP is that the applicative construction was lost (although the double object construction remained only in some dialects), while the prepositional ditransitive construction took over.

This process is related to the change in BP pronominal paradigm, which affected the 3rd person (dative and accusative) clitics and led to the loss of *lhe*, the former head of the applicative construction. This item used to pronominalize the sequence *a DP*, in which we have a *dummy* preposition solely marking dative case – with the loss of *lhe* , we have the loss of the applicative construction and the indirect objects are now only available with lexical prepositions (*a* or *para*). We have empirical evidence which show: a) the rise of the preposition *para* in ditransitive constructions; and b) the loss of morphological distinctions in BP pronominal paradigm: with the loss of clitics, the lexical pronouns are used for all grammatical functions – former nominative forms are used for accusative/dative constructions, for example.

Studies with data from different regions of Brazil and from documents dated of the XVIIIth-XXth centuries show that the preposition *para* is rarely found in ditransitive constructions until the end of XIXth century. On the contrary, it can reach 93% of the data obtained from samples of spoken BP (BP dialects behave differently in using less or more *para*; nonetheless, the preposition *para* is always preferred in relation to the *a* variant). An inverse process affected dative clitics, leading to the picture we have in the XXth century (Cyrino 1998; Berlinck (2000, 2001); Gomes (2003); Salles & Scherre (2003); Iseke Bispo (2004); Torres-Morais & Berlinck 2006)).

This change is reminiscent of the change which affected Old English double object constructions, in which there was morphological case, and variable order (Direct Object-Indirect Object/ Indirect Object – Direct Object). It is traditionally accepted (cf. McFadden 2002) that this construction appeared due to the ambiguity caused by the loss of case distinctions in Middle English. The construction with *to*-dative was possible from sentences with *to* + human goals, in which the preposition was reanalyzed as not marking goal, but as a dative marker (due to the similiarity between human goals and dative recipients). Besides that, Polo (2002) also shows that the relationship between the loss of the double object construction and the loss of the dative-accusative distinction of 3rd person pronouns in English.

In BP, the functional dichotomy of the preposition/dative marker reinforced by the loss of morphological marking in pronouns led to the change of BP double object constructions.

References

BERLINCK, R. (2000) O objeto indireto no português brasileiro do século XIX. *Anais do II Congresso Nacional da ABRALIN*. Florianópolis, 2000. p.210-220.
BERLINCK, R. (2001) 'Dativo ou locativo?' Sobre sentidos e formas do 'dativo' no português. *Revista Letras*, n.56, p.159-175.
CYRINO, S. (1998) O objeto direto e indireto nulo no português brasileiro, *Signum*, 1: 35-54, 1998.
GOMES, C. A. (2003) Variação e mudança na expressão do dativo no português brasileiro. In Paiva, M. C. & M. E. L. Duarte (eds.) *Mudança Lingüística em Tempo Real*. Rio de Janeiro: FAPERJ/Contra Capa, p. 81-96.
ISEKE BISPO, K. C. I. (2004) *A Sintaxe do Objeto Indireto no Português do Brasil*. Dissertação de Mestrado. Universidade de Brasília.
McFADDEN, T. (2002) The rise of the *to*-dative in Middle English. In Lightfoot, D. (ed) *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change* . Oxford, OUP. p. 107-234
POLO, C. (2002) Double objects and morphological triggers for syntactic case. In Lightfoot, D. (ed) *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change* . Oxford, OUP. p. 124-142.
SALLES, H. M. L. & M. M. P. SCHERRE (2003) "Indirect objects in Brazilian Portuguese and in English'. In Núñez-Cedeno, R & L. L. Cameron (eds) *A Romance Perspective on Language Knowledge and Use – Selected Papers from the 31st LSRL*, 151-165. Amsterdam/ Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.
TORRES-MORAIS & BERLINCK, R.de A. (2006) A caracterização do objeto indireto no português: aspectos sincrônicos e diacrônicos. In: T. LOBO; I. RIBEIRO; Z. CARNEIRO & N. ALMEIDA. *Novos dados, novas análises*. Vol.VI. Tomo I. Salvador. EDUFBA..p 73-106.