Prosody and constructional meaning: data on spoken Brazilian Portuguese

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Summary

- Language into Act Theory (Cresti 2000)
- C-ORAL-BRASIL corpus (Raso & Mello 2012)
- Prosody and constructions
- Brazilian Portuguese spoken syntax: informational structuring distribution of constructions
L-AcT

• Language into Act Theory (Cresti 2000):
  • corpus-driven theory (LABLITA, Florence University)
  • extension of Austin’s Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962)
  • emphasis on the **prosodic dimension** of speech =>
    information structure and illocutionary values

• C-ORAL-ROM project (Cresti & Moneglia 2005)
  • spoken corpora: Ita, Fre, Spa, EuPort (Informal + Formal)

• C-ORAL-BRASIL project (Raso & Mello 2012)
  • spoken corpus: BrPort (Informal)
L-AcT

• The utterance is the unit of reference for speech, understood as the shortest linguistic unit interpretable as prosodically and pragmatically autonomous, i.e. as a speech act.

1. lá na frente // right there ahead//

2. tá vendo /=CMM= como é que mudou //=CMM= do you see / how it has changed //
Prosody and Information Units

• The **tonal units** segmented in the speech flow convey **information units**, characterized by specific:
  
  – **prosodic profiles**
    
    \((root, prefix, postfix; t’Hart, Collier & Cohen 1990)\)
  
  – **pragmatic functions**
  
  – **distributions** within the utterance
## Textual Information Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>It accomplishes the illocutionary force of the utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>It establishes the domain of application of the illocution expressed by the Comment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix of Comment</td>
<td>APC</td>
<td>It integrates the text of the Comment and concludes the utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix of Topic</td>
<td>APT</td>
<td>It gives a delayed integration of the information given in Topic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenthesis</td>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>It provides instructions about how the utterance, or a part of it, has to be interpreted; it has a backward or forward scope.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<th>Type</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locutive Introducer</td>
<td>INT</td>
<td>It signals that the subsequent locutive space has to be interpreted by means of different coordinates (generally, it introduces metaallocutions).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Comments</td>
<td>CMM</td>
<td>They constitute a chain of Comments forming an illocutionary prosodic pattern, which is interpreted holistically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bound Comment</td>
<td>COB</td>
<td>It constitutes a chain of Comments, produced by progressive adjunctions which follow the flow of thought. Chains of COB are called Stanzas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Topic</td>
<td>TPL</td>
<td>List of two or more TOP units semantically and syntactically connected, forming one prosodically marked major unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Parenthesis</td>
<td>PRL</td>
<td>List of two or more PAR units semantically and syntactically connected, forming one prosodically marked major unit.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Dialogic Information Units

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Incipit</td>
<td>INP</td>
<td>It opens the communicative channel in order to start a dialogic turn or an utterance, bearing contrastive value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conative</td>
<td>CNT</td>
<td>It pushes the interlocutor to participate or to stop a non-collaborative behaviour in a dialogue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phatic</td>
<td>PHA</td>
<td>It controls the communicative channel, contributing to its maintenance and stimulating the interlocutor towards social cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allocutive</td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>It specifies the addressee of the message, keeping his attention and having a social cohesive function.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>EXP</td>
<td>It provides emotional support to the speech act, marking social cohesion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse Connector</td>
<td>DCT</td>
<td>It connects different parts of the discourse, marking continuity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Units without information value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Tag</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scanning Unit</td>
<td>SCA</td>
<td>It is a tonal part of a bigger information unit, whose locutive content needs to be scanned, normally for expressive or speech incompetence reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrupted Unit</td>
<td>i-[TAG]</td>
<td>It is part of an information unit which is interrupted by a PAR or dialogic unit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty Unit</td>
<td>EMP</td>
<td>Unit whose locutive content is not to be considered as part of the utterance, as it happens in case of 1) retracting; 2) interrupted last unit of an utterance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taking Unit</td>
<td>TMT</td>
<td>It corresponds to the so-called filled pause.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclassified Unit</td>
<td>UNC</td>
<td>Unit to which it is not possible to attribute another tag for some reason.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C-ORAL-BRASIL (Raso&Mello, 2012)

Brazilian Portuguese spontaneous speech corpus, representative of the state of Minas Gerais diatopy (Belo Horizonte area).

Same architecture and segmentation criteria adopted by the C-ORAL-ROM (Cresti & Moneglia 2005) as well as its alignment software, the WinPitch (Martin 2004).
C-ORAL-BRASIL

- 139 informal speech texts, 208,130 words, 21:08:52 hours of recording (6.1 GB wav files); mean word number per text is 1,500; CHAT format implemented for prosodic annotation

- High resolution recordings

- Text-to-speech alignment (WinPitch software, Martin 2004)

- Documentation of diaphasic variation in Brazilian Portuguese spontaneous speech
Data analysed: DB-IPIC minicorpus

http://lablita.dit.unifi.it/app/dbipic/index.php
DB-IPIC minicorpus

- Representative sample of C-ORAL-BRASIL
- Morphosyntactically annotated: PALAVRAS (Bick, 2012)
- **Informationally** annotated
- Ready access to transcription, IUs annotation, audio and alignment (text-sound-spectrogram) files through DB-IPIC.
Constructions and prosody

• Similar syntactic structures stand for different constructions or groupings (cf. Langacker 1997) depending on their prosodic organization vis-à-vis informational patterning (eg. Subordination, insubordination) => constructional schemas

• Hypothesis: Constructions pair with prosodic structuring => constructional schemas
Langacker (2009:5)
Prosody/Constructional level

UTTERANCE

PROSODIC Structure / INFORMATIONAL Structure

SYMBOLIC Structure

PROSODIC Structure

... CONSTRUCTIONAL Structures ....
Data on BP spoken syntax and distributional variation

• Subordination
  – complement clauses
  – adverbial clauses

• Insubordination
Single IU: Complements in COM

bpubdl01, 259

*PAU: tô achando que eu vou fazer ela com um metro //=COM=

I think that I’m making it a meter (tall) //
Complements: TOP/COM

bpubdl01, 259

*PAU: acho que com um metro e vinte /=TOP= ela fica boa /=COM= né //=PHA=

I think that with a meter and twenty (of height) / it will be fine / you know //
bfamcv01, 39

*GIL: problema é que esse último campeonato nosso /*TOP= <foi ruim> */=COM=
the problem is that this last tournament of us / went bad /*=COM=

Complements: TOP/COM

bfamdl03, 181

*LUZ: porque eu acho que no mesmo concurso / =TOP= cê não pode fazer duas // =COM=

because I think that in the same contest / you can’t run for two (disciplines) //
Complements: CMM/CMM

bfamdl03, 275

*LAU: tá vendo /=CMM= como é que mudou
//=CMM=

Do you see / how it has changed //
Complements: CMM/CMM

bfamcv04, 78
*SIL: cê entende /=CMM= qual que é //CMM= Do you understand / which one it is //
Complements: CMM/CMM

bfammn04, 134

*REG: e cê acha /=CMM_r= que eu não te conheço //CMM_r=

And you think / that I don’t know you //
Time adverbial clauses: COM

bfamdl02,238

*BEL: sabe que que aconteceu quando eu fui de intercâmbio //=COM=

Do you know what happened when I went studying abroad //
When (it) had been more or less / a week that she was with me / the [1] her mother sent someone to pick her up //
Time adverbial clauses: TOP/COM

bfamdl02,243

*BEL: quando eu cheguei aqui /=TOP= todas as minhas calças tinham ficado lá hhh /=COM=
When I arrived here / all my trousers had been left there //
Conditional clauses: COM

bpubdl01,71

*PAU: esse tipo de muro / =TOP= se ficar baixo demais ele fica feio / =COM= This type of wall / if (it) is too low it looks ugly//
Conditional clauses: TOP/COM

bpubdl01,74

*PAU: se ficar alto demais /=TOP= ele fica feio
//=COM=

If it’ too high / it looks ugly //
Conditional clauses: TOP/COM

bfamdl04,163

*SIL: se for vinho importado /=TOP= eu tomo
//=COM=

If it’s imported wine / I drink it //
Causal clauses: COM

bfamn05,58

*CAR: não falo porque eu acho muito pesado

//=COM=

I don’t talk (about it) because I find it very loaded

//
Causal relation shift to epistemic domain

The causal relation between two clauses is shifted by the speaker to the epistemic domain: (s)he gives an account of why (s)he thinks/knows something expressed in the first clause.

Sweetser (1990: 77)

*He came back, because he loves her.* (direct cause)

*He loves her, because he came back.* (indirect cause)

Causal relation shift to epistemic domain

bfammn02,53

*DFL: que o meu avô /=TOP= era de uma família abastada /=COB= porque o professor ia em casa /=CMM= nũ ia po grupo não //=/COM=

That my grandpa / (he) was from a rich family / because the teacher went to his place / (he) didn’t attend regular school //

shift to the epistemic domain: my grandpa had a rich family [and I think so ] BECAUSE the teacher went to his place to teach him
Cause relation shift to Speech Act domain

The speaker gives an account of why (s)he performed a previous speech act.

(cf. “justification énonciative” Moeschler 1986; Ducrot et al. 1975)
Dancygier & Sweetser 2005: 92

“[C]ausal relations between the clauses are not between the content of the clauses, but between the epistemic states or speech acts involved in believing or expressing the clauses”
BEL: you have OCD // BAL: I do // BEL: ah // BAL: I do // BEL: ehm / do you know why // BAL: big things / in big things’ places // BEL: because my sister has OCD // and well / you [/1] you are pretty the same / man //

shift to the speech act domain: I have said this BECAUSE ...
*LAU: é //COM= mas eu pensei em fazer os dois //COM= mas vão ver //COM=

*LUZ: mas <pode> //COM=

*LAU: <eu vou [/1]=SCA= vou olhar com calma> //COM=

*LUZ: fazer as duas /=CMM= do> mesmo concurso //CMM= nũ sei se <pode> não //COM=

*LAU: <nãø> //COM= são datas <diferentes> //COM=

*LUZ: <ah /=CMM= só> //CMM= são <editais diferentes> //COM=

*LAU: <é> //COM=

*LUZ: <ah /=CMM= tá> //CMM=


*LUZ: <ham ham> //=COM= &t [/1]=EMP= tá //=COM= tá certo //=COM= porque eu acho que no mesmo concurso //=TOP= cê nũ pode fazer duas //=COM=
Insubordination

• “would be main clause” retrievable from the nearby context
*OSV: mas se for só o dela então /TOP/ eu tiro
//COM=

*CAR: se for só o dela //COM= se for mais gente numa situação pior //TOP/ aí nós vamos ter que pensar //COM=

*OSV: if it’s only hers then / I remove it //

*CAR: if it’s only hers // if there are more people in a worst situation / then we’ll have to think about it //
*EUG: se cê quiser comprar as duas //=COM= eu fico mais feliz //=COM= viu //=PHA= 
Insubordination

• no would be main clause retrievable from the adjacent [linguistic] context

ANE: eh // = PHA = se cê nã tiver um carrinho que [/1] que sobe aqui // = COM = CES: ahn // = COM = é // = COM = isso não é muito bom // = COM =

ANE: so it’s the street parallel to this one // CES: yes // ANE: then let’s climb / and see which are // CES: so + ANE: which is / the parallel one // CES: thank you very much / madam // thank you //

ANE: well / if you don’t have a good car that [/] that climbs here //

CES: uhm // yes // this is not very good //
Luzia desativa essa bomba pelo amor de Deus. Não tem jeito. Dá muito trabalho agora desativar. Andando não dá não. Mas e se ela explodir?

Luzia: explode não. A programação dela é pra frente.

Luzia: defuse this bomb for God’s sake. It’s impossible. It’s too difficult now to defuse it on the move. It’s impossible.

Luzia: but what if it explodes? It won’t. It is programmed (to explode) later.
Conclusions

• Constructions in speech cannot be studied without access to their acoustic signal, given that it is necessary for perception of prosodic breaks and informational structuring => prosody is an integral part of constructional schemas

• Relevant relationship between prosody/information structuring and constructional schemas needs further investigation


Thank you!

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