Historical corpora and variation in clitic-X-verb sequences in Classical and early Modern European Portuguese

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The central topic is interpolation (clitic-verb non-adjacency) in Classical and early Modern European Portuguese (EP). In that period, the não negative marker was the only expression eligible to break the continuity of clitic-verb sequences. The aims of the study are twofold. First, previous assumptions on the syntax of this linear model are matched against corpus data (44 texts released between 1614 and 1858, stored in Biblioteca Nacional Digital; 13.708 manually retrieved instances of clisis). The study demonstrates that interpolation was allowed outside obligatory proclisis contexts, being due to the presence of the negative marker in four structural positions where enclisis and proclisis were freely interchangeable in former stages of EP and where enclisis is nowadays mandatory (see 1-2). This result coerces into refining some of the previous proposals dealing with clitic attachment in sequences with clitic-verb non adjacency:

1. revolvendo toda a praya fe naõ achou nada
walk.around-PTCP all ART beach REFL.3 NEG find-PST.PRF.3.SG nothing
‘Walking around the beach, nothing was found’ (1650 http://purl.pt/28100)

2. Eu o não Creio
I ACC.M.3.SG NEG believe.PRS.IND.1.SG
‘I cannot believe that’ (1804-1810 http://purl.pt/11977)

The second aim is to account for the overrepresentation, underpinned by corpus data, of 3rd person direct object pronouns in sequences with interpolation (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>clusters</th>
<th>CNV</th>
<th>NCV</th>
<th>NVVC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lhe, lhes</td>
<td>15 (78.94 %)</td>
<td>3 (15.78 %)</td>
<td>1 (5.26 %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>61 (77.21%)</td>
<td>14 (17.72%)</td>
<td>4 (5.06%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nos</td>
<td>57 (80.70%)</td>
<td>8 (14.03%)</td>
<td>3 (5.26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>te</td>
<td>28 (75.67%)</td>
<td>7 (18.91%)</td>
<td>2 (5.40%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vos</td>
<td>9 (66.6 %)</td>
<td>3 (33.3%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>se</td>
<td>387 (68.47%)</td>
<td>96 (24.80%)</td>
<td>26 (6.71%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o, a, os, as</td>
<td>176 (83.52%)</td>
<td>20 (11.36%)</td>
<td>9 (5.11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>580</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Number of occurrences and frequency of interpolation of particular (classes of) clitic pronouns compared to cases of clitic-verb adjacency (proclisis and enclisis on non-finite verb combined)

The decrease in clitic-verb adjacency with the o, a, os, as series is traced back to the configuration of syllables subsequent to the juxtaposition of não and 3rd person direct object clitics. Speakers are thought to have been at a loss processing such sequences (surfacing either as não o V or as não no V; cf. 3-4 respectively)

3. Por certo que os Medicos o não podem negar, ...
for sure COMP ART physician.PL ACC.M.SG NEG can-PRS.IND.3.PL deny
‘Certainly physicians cannot deny it’ (1800) http://purl.pt/11500

4. naõ no fazendo defde o dia que lhe puzerem a dita pena ...

‘… not doing this from the day when he will receive this punishment’ (naõ no < naõ o)
(1639) http://purl.pt/30213

The reversal of this order, i.e. interpolation, acted as an allomorphy-preventing device, enabling EP users to get rid of morpho-phonological ties between the o, a, os, as series and nasal diphthongs in the preceding non-verbal sound material (X³ elements, or heads não, quem ‘who’, nem ‘nor, not even’). As a consequence, in contemporary standard EP, clitic-specific allomorphy is earmarked for enclisis. By contrast, preverbal pronouns are subject to phrasal attachment to their host.

References:


