

Are preverbal dative experiencers in European Portuguese "quirky" subjects? A self-paced reading study

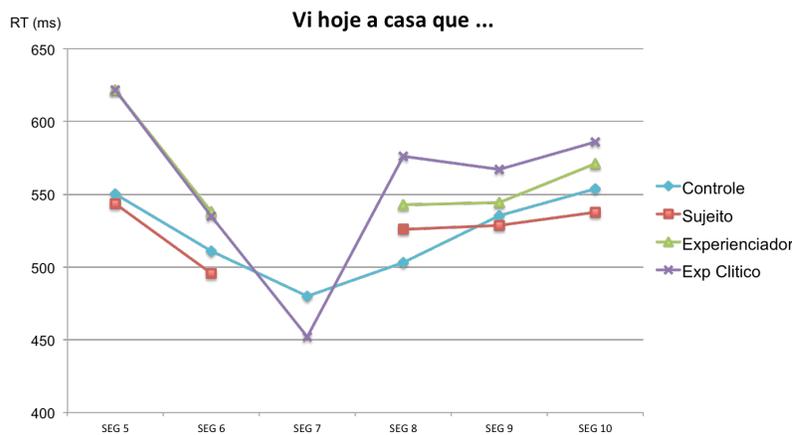
Pilar Barbosa, Juliana Novo Gomes, Cristina Flores, Carmo Lourenço-Gomes, Sílvia Araújo
CEHUM/UMinho

In European Portuguese, dative experiencer topics differ from dative goal topics: while the former may appear inside a relative island (1a), the latter may not (1b) (Barbosa et al, 2020):

- (1) a. *Vi hoje a casa que, à Maria, tanto (lhe) convém adquirir.*
 b. **Vi hoje a casa que, à Maria, tanto (lhe) querem vender.*

Belletti & Rizzi (1988) argued that these differences are due to the fact that preverbal dative experiencers are "quirky" subjects – a notion applied to oblique arguments that behave like surface subjects. This hypothesis predicts that preverbal experiencers should pattern with preverbal subjects in island contexts. In this talk, we report on the results of a self-paced reading test designed to determine the validity of this prediction. We examine the processing effects of embedding a dative experiencer as opposed to a pre-verbal subject within a relative island, while at the same time controlling for the effect of the presence of a clitic resuming the dative experiencer. We compared fully acceptable relative clauses within four conditions contrasting two independent factors: the status of the intervening topic (*subject* versus *dative experiencer* versus *frame adverbial*, as in *Vi hoje a casa que, este ano, tanto nos convém adquirir*) and the presence of a clitic doubling the experiencer (*with* versus *without the clitic*). Sentences were presented in a self-paced phrase-by-phrase moving window paradigm (Just, Carpenter & Woolley 1982). A yes/no comprehension question followed each sentence. Acceptability ratings from individual participants and reaction times (RTs) for each word were measured.

Our results show statistical differences between a pre-verbal subject, an intervening adverbial and a pre-verbal dative experiencer, the latter having the greater response times (RTs). We found a facilitating effect at the clitic in (1a) versus the free clitic in the adverbial condition (Figure1). At the verb, our results show the greater RTs for the *dative experiencer* conditions. Condition (1a) was the most difficult sentence to process. This result establishes that speakers perceive dative experiencer topics differently from preverbal subjects.



Controle	este ano,	tanto	nos	convém	adquirir	na cidade ...
Sujeito	a Maria	tanto	anseia	adquirir	na cidade ...	
Experienciador	à Maria,	tanto		convém	adquirir	na cidade ...
Exp Clítico	à Maria,	tanto	lhe	convém	adquirir	na cidade ...

Barbosa, P., Lourenço-Gomes, M. do C., Araújo, S., Castro, C., & Athayde, E. (2020). Constraints on multiple dependencies in the left-periphery in European Portuguese. *Journal of Portuguese Linguistics*, 19(1), 11. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/jpl.229>

Belletti, A.; Rizzi, L. (1988). 'Psych-verbs and θ -theory', *Natural Language and Linguistics Theory* 6: 291-352. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00133902>

Just, M. A., Carpenter, P. A., & Woolley, J. D. (1982). Paradigms and processes in reading comprehension. *Journal of experimental psychology: General*, 111(2), 228.