

Frequency of vowel raising and clitic prosodization in Brazilian Portuguese

In Brazilian Portuguese (BP), both pronominal and non-pronominal clitics presumably undergo identical phonological processes, such as vowel raising (VR) (/e, o/ → [i, u], e.g. *m[i] fale* ‘tell me’) and vowel sandhi phenomena with the initial vowel of the host (e.g. *m[i] [i]squeci* → *m[i]squeci* ‘1SG.REFL forgot’) (Bisol 2000, 2005). Considering only the application of phonological phenomena, the prosodization of BP pronominal and non-pronominal clitics apparently occurs in a single domain.

This paper argues, however, that frequency of VR application is a factor of prosodic differentiation between pronominal and non-pronominal clitics in BP. Based on data from a dialect in which VR is variable in clitic position (the Italian Immigration Area dialect, spoken in southern Brazil), we compared pronoun *se* ‘3SG/PL.REFL, passive marker’ with conjunction *se* ‘if’. Data from 32 speakers (urban and rural, males and females, from four distinct age groups; n=827) were modeled using a mixed-effects logistic regression (`glmer()`) in R. The overall frequency of VR is 62.3% in pronominal clitics, but 80.3% in non-pronominal clitics. The model showed that pronominal clitics significantly lower the odds of VR by a factor of 2.55 ($\hat{\beta}=-0.9362$, $p<0.00001$). Age group is also a significant factor: as age increases, the odds of VR gradually lower.

This difference in VR, as well as distinctions in morphosyntactic behavior (for example, clitic fusion is observed only between non-pronominal clitics), suggests that these two types of BP clitics are prosodized in separate domains (*contra* Simioni 2008, Schwindt 2013, 2014).