

Pronominal syntax in Maputo Portuguese (Mozambique) from a comparative Creole and Bantu perspective

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1. Introduction

Portuguese is the ex-colonial language in Mozambique and remains the only official language of the country although it is spoken natively only by a few percent of the population (amounting to 16 million), who instead use one of the 20 or so Bantu languages spoken in Mozambique.

The capital Maputo was originally a Xironga-speaking area, but today the major Bantu language in the capital is Xichangana, which is also spoken in the neighbouring provinces of Gaza and Maputo. It should also be added that Xichangana is the language of the current political elite. Today it would seem that Xironga and Xichangana have fused into some kind of vehicular Tsonga in the capital, something which has been facilitated by the fact that these languages are very similar to each other.

However, Maputo is also inhabited by many people from all over the country, who fled to the capital during the civil war and have stayed on, often living in neighbourhoods with people from the same place of origin. This situation has turned Maputo into a linguistically very mixed space, where the use of Portuguese as a lingua franca is increasing. Today, Maputo Portuguese is still considered a non-native variety, e.g. in the large research project *Panorama do português oral de Maputo*, led by Perpétua Gonçalves and Christopher Stroud at the Instituto Nacional do Desenvolvimento da Educação/Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (INDE/UEM), during the 1990s, but it may begin to nativize quite rapidly in the future, similarly to what is happening to ex-colonial lingua francas spoken in other major African cities. As just mentioned, the number of L1 speakers is small: in the 1980 census it amounted to 1.2%, and in a later,

comparable study from 1998, to 3.0%, 91% of whom lived in urban centres. However it may be more interesting to look at the figures of Portuguese used as an L2, which amounted to 23% in 1980 and was extrapolated to 40% in the 1998 investigation by Lopes (1999).

Needless to say, Maputo Portuguese, let alone Mozambican Portuguese, displays a continuum where some varieties are close to European Portuguese, whereas others only consists of a few formulaic phrases, sufficient to trade goods by the side of the road. To this should be added the common habit of code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing. However, Maputo Portuguese can be said to display a number of robust contrasts to the Portuguese of Portugal (henceforth called European Portuguese), the syntax of pronominal objects being a case in point. The pronominal syntax of European Portuguese is very complex and constitutes a part of the grammar which should be particularly vulnerable to the linguistic restructuring which often results from vehicular language use, such as that of Portuguese in Maputo.

In this paper I will give various illustrations of the pronominal syntax of Maputo Portuguese with comparisons to European Portuguese. Certain examples will also be given from Portuguese creoles, “ordinary” Bantu languages and Bantu koinés. The data on Maputo Portuguese is taken from the just mentioned project *Panorama do português oral de Maputo* (see Gonçalves (1996, 1997), Gonçalves, Moreno, Tuzine, Diniz & Mendonça (1998), Stroud & Gonçalves (1997a, 1997b), and Gonçalves & Stroud (1998). Additional data come from Semedo (1997).

The conclusion which I hope to reach is that transfer from Bantu is notable in Maputo Portuguese but not in Portuguese creoles nor in Bantu koinés. The reason for this must be that Maputo Portuguese is a second language variety learned in a context quite removed from European Portuguese, whereas creoles and koinés are first languages, which serve as identity markers for their speakers and consequently allow the overruling of substratal transfer effects.

2. Data

In the following we will take a look at a number of constructions involving pronominal objects. For the sake of simplicity they will sometimes be called “clitics” without further defining the concept. These clitics can be either preverbal (proclitics) or postverbal (enclitics). I will regard them as in principle comparable to other complements of the verb, and the first structure will be referred to as OV (object + verb) and the second VO (verb + object).

2.1 Root single-verb sentences

2.1.1 Affirmative declaratives

In a maximally simple type of affirmative sentence, Maputo Portuguese (henceforth MP) and European Portuguese (henceforth EP) both display VO structure:

M/EP: *via-me*
saw.3SG-1SG
'he saw me'

According to Spencer (1991: 363), the EP construction is unusual in Romance languages, which prefer proclisis in cases such as these. Actually, MP can display this syntax at times, but not EP:

MP: *me via*
1SG saw.3SG

MP: *ele se responsabiliza* (Gonçalves et al. 1998: 72)
3SG REFL take responsibility

EP: *ele responsabiliza-se*
3SG take responsibility-REFL
'he takes the responsibility'

MP: *nos deram ...*
1PL gave.3PL

EP: *deram-nos ...*
gave.3PL-1PL
'they gave us ...'

MP: *aquela senhora nos ajudou*
this lady 1PL helped

EP: *aquela senhora ajudou-nos*
this lady helped-1PL
'this lady helped us'

Actually, in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), the MP pattern can also be found:

BP: *o empregado me mostrou muitas gravatas*
 the employee 1SG showed many ties
 ‘the employee showed me many ties’

This is an interesting case of similarity between MP and BP, to which we shall return.

2.1.2 Negative declaratives

In simple negative declaratives, MP puts the object clitic after the verb:

MP: *não deram-lhe a chance* (Gonçalves et al. 1998: 69)
 NEG gave.3PL-3SG a chance
 ‘they didn’t give him a chance’

EP, on its hand, displays a preverbal clitic in this case, following the general behaviour of Romance languages:

EP: *não o tenho* (Spencer 1991: 364)
 NEG 3SG have.1SG
 ‘I don’t have it’

2.1.3 *wh*-questions

In simple *wh*-questions, MP positions the object clitic post-verbally:

MP: *como dar-lhe o recado?* (Semedo 1997: 35)
 how give-3SG the message
 ‘how to give him the message?’

In the same kind of construction, EP demands a proclitic pronominal object:

EP: *quando o vendem?* (Spencer 1991: 364)
 when 3SG sell.3PL
 ‘when do they sell it?’

2.1.4 Sentences introduced by quantifier

Quantifier-introduced simple sentences retain VO-order in MP:

MP: *alguém viu-a no cinema* (Semedo 1997: 35)
 somebody saw-3SG at-the cinema
 ‘somebody saw her at the cinema’

whereas in EP, we again find the proclitic, as in the sentence below:

EP: *ambos se sentiam bem* (Spencer 1991: 364)
 both REFL felt.3PL well
 ‘they both felt well’

2.1.5 Sentences introduced by quantificational adverb

Bjellerup (1990: 68) notices that several types of lighter sentence-initial adverbs cause the clitic to appear before the verb in EP. Examples of these adverbs are *ainda* ‘still’, *apenas* ‘hardly’, *assim* ‘so’, *bem já* ‘of course’, *logo* ‘immediately, then’, *longe* ‘far’, *ou* ‘or’, *poco* ‘a little, somewhat’, *quer* ‘either’, *sempre* ‘always’, *só* ‘only’, *talvez* ‘sometimes’, *também* ‘also’. It comes as no surprise that the object clitic stays *in situ* in corresponding sentences in MP:

MP: *mesmo o Orlando viu-a* (Semedo 1997: 35)
 even the Orlando saw-3SG
 ‘even Orlando saw her’

EP: *sempre o vi assim*
 always 3SG saw.1SG like that
 ‘I have always seen him like that’

Maybe the below example fits here as well (see also embedded single-verb sentences under section 2.3):

MP: *sem decidir me ...*
 without decide REFL

EP: *sem me decidir ...*
 without REFL decide
 ‘without deciding myself ...’

2.1.6 Focalisations

Semedo (1997: 36) notices further that a focalized phrase leads to proclisis in EP but enclisis in MP:

MP: *por esse meio* *convenceram-no*
 in this manner convinced.3PL-3SG
 ‘in this manner they convinced him’

EP: *por esse meio* *o* *covenceram*
 in this manner 3SG convinced.3PL
 ‘in this manner they convinced him’

It is difficult to say how Semedo defines focalisation, but it would seem that any sentence that starts with another than XP than the subject counts as a focalisation.

2.1.7 Mesoclitics

Mesoclitics are object clitics which intervene between the verb root and the tense marker in the simple future and the conditional in EP. Cf. the following examples:

EP: *levá-lo-ei* (\leftarrow *levarei* + *o*, *eu vou levá-lo*)
 lift-3SG-1SG.FUT
 ‘I will lift it’

EP: *levá-lo-ia*
 lift-3SG-1SG.COND
 ‘I would lift it’

Mesoclitics is an unusual phenomenon, and possibly limited to literary and/or conservative contexts (cf. Roberts 1994: 213). Thus it comes as no surprise that MP prefers alternative constructions. Semedo (1997: 44–45) notices the following pattern:

MP: *a* *Josefa* *lhe* *afirmar-ia* *a mesma coisa*
 the Joseph 3SG affirm-3SG.COND the same thing

	<i>a</i>	<i>Josef</i>	<i>afirmar-ia-lhe</i>	<i>a mesma coisa</i>
	the	Joseph	affirm-3SG.COND-3SG	the same thing
EP:	<i>a</i>	<i>Josefa</i>	<i>afirmar-lhe-ia</i>	<i>a mesma coisa</i>
	the	Joseph	affirm- 3SG-3SG.COND	the same thing
				‘Joseph would tell him the same thing’

That is, MP replaces mesoclysis with proclisis as well as enclisis, with enclisis being more common, in conformity with expectations.

2.2 Root periphrastic sentences

2.2.1 Affirmative

When it comes to root sentences containing auxiliaries, the picture becomes quite complex, since non-main verbs come in different types. With certain exceptions, for example involving temporal *ter* ‘have’, we find both structures in both varieties, MP unexpectedly preferring proclisis and EP enclisis:

M/EP:	<i>devo-o</i>	<i>fazer</i>	(Bjellerup 1990: 66)
	ought to.1SG-3SG	do	

M/EP:	<i>devo</i>	<i>fazê-lo</i>
	ought to.1SG	do-3SG
		‘I ought to do it’

2.2.2 Negative

In periphrastic root sentences introduced by negation or an “operator” in general, MP and EP also allow both structures, MP again surprisingly preferring proclisis and EP enclisis:

MP:	<i>não</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>ver</i>	(preferred)
	NEG	can.1SG	3SG	see	
	<i>não</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>vê-lo</i>		
	NEG	can.1SG	see-3SG		
EP:	<i>não</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>posso</i>	<i>ver</i>	(preferred)
	NEG	3SG	can.1SG	see	

não posso vê-lo
 NEG can.1SG see-3SG
 'I cannot see him'

A similar phenomenon can be observed in exceptionally case marked constructions, where MP prefers or demands the interverbal position, and MP the preverbal one:

MP: *não deixavam-me sair* (Gonçalves et al. 1998: 69)
 NEG let.3PL-1SG leave

EP: *não me deixavam sair*
 NEG 1SG let.3PL leave
 'they didn't let me leave'

2.2.3 Mesoclitics

In root sentences containing periphrastic constructions, mesoclitics appear inside the auxiliary in EP, whereas MP has a three-way choice (Semedo 1997: 45):

MP: *a Josefa ter-ia-lhe falado ontem*
 the Joseph will-3SG.COND-3SG talked yesterday

a Josefa lhe ter-ia falado ontem
 the Joseph 3SG will-3SG.COND talked yesterday

a Josefa ter-ia falado-lhe ontem
 the Joseph will-3SG.COND talked-3SG yesterday

EP: *a Josefa ter-lhe-ia falado ontem*
 the Joseph will-3SG-3SG.COND talk yesterday
 'Joseph would have talked to her yesterday'

2.3 Embedded single-verb sentences

2.3.1 Indirect speech

In embedded sentences after verbs of saying, MP normally exhibits a postverbal clitic and EP a preverbal one:

MP: *disseram-me que o Caifás encontrou-a*
 said.3PL-1SG that the Caifas met-3SG

EP: *disseram-me que o Caifás a encontrou*
 said.3PL-1SG that the Caifas 3SG met
 ‘they told me that Caifas had met her’

2.3.2 Relative

The similar pattern can be discerned when it comes to relative clauses:

MP: *o armazém onde compra-los*
 the shop where buys.3SG-3PL

EP: *o armazém onde os compra*
 the shop where 3PL buys.3SG
 ‘the shop where he buys them’

2.4 Embedded periphrastic sentences

When the embedded clause contains more than one verb, MP inserts the clitic between the auxiliary and the verb. EP exhibits variation between pre-auxiliary and postverbal position, but prefers the former.

MP: *eu não sei se pode-nos ajudar*
 1SG NEG know if can.3SG-1PL help

EP: *eu não sei se nos pode ajudar*
 1SG NEG know if 1PL can.3SG help

eu não sei se pode ajudar nos
 1SG NEG know if can.3SG help 1PL
 ‘I don’t know if he can help us’

2.5 Parallel sentences from Portuguese creoles

In opposition to both MP and EP, Portuguese creoles position object clitics after the main verb in all constructions. Cf. the following examples from Guinée-Bissau Kriyol:

karu yara maja l (Kihm 1994: 28)
 car almost do kill 3SG
 ‘the car almost killed him’

ningin ka pudi tuji ne l (Kihm 1994: 164)
 nobody NEG can prohibit 1SG 3SG
 ‘nobody can stop me from doing it’

ê ka diss-a sair (Cissoko, pc)
 3PL NEG let-3SG leave
 ‘they didn’t let me leave’

kal kussa bu sin-a (idem)
 which thing 2SG taught-3SG
 ‘what did you teach him?’

n ka sibi si bu pudi djudâ-nu (idem)
 1SG NEG know if 2SG can help-1PL
 ‘I don’t know if you can help us’

Cf. also the below example from Cape Verdean Crioulo:

nha mai sabe ki n odja-bu onti (Baptista 1997: 257)
 my mother knows that 1SG saw-2SG yesterday
 ‘my mother knows that I saw you yesterday’

2.6 The verb complex in Bantu languages

Now since the substrate of Maputo Portuguese consists of different Bantu languages, it is relevant to examine what the pronominal system in those languages looks like. As it turns out, Bantu languages always display the structure S+Aux+O+V(+Extensions), i.e. pronominal objects are proclitic to the main verb but enclitic to Aux. Cf. the following example from Xironga:

hi-ta-mu-vona (Xironga)
 1PL-FUT-3SG-see
 ‘we will see it’

2.7 Examples from Bantu koïnés

Interestingly, in koïnés derived from Bantu languages, pronominal objects are always postverbal. Cf. the following contrast between the non-koïné Kikongo and the related koïné Kituba (Mufwene 1997: 176–177; 1989):

(*yáandi*) *ka-ku-zól-elé* (Kikongo)
3SG AGRSU-2SG-like-PERF

yáandi *zól-a* *ngé* (Kituba)
3SG like-SUFF 2SG
'he likes you'

Pételo *ka-ki-zól-elé* (Kikongo)
Peter AGRSU-REFL-like-PERF

Pételo *zól-a* *yáandi* *mósi* (Kituba)
Peter like-SUFF 3SG one
'Peter likes himself'

3. Analysis

Below is a table which summarizes the data from MP and EP exemplified so far. In case more than one construction is possible, the preferred one is indicated.

Construction type	Maputo Portuguese	European Portuguese
Single verb root sentence (<i>via-me</i>)	SVO	SVO
Single verb root sentence introduced by negation or other "operator"; embedded single verb clause introduced by complementizer (<i>alguém viu-a, alguém a viu; que ele encontrou-a, que ele a encontrou</i>)	Op/Comp SVO	Op/Comp SOV
Periphrastic root sentence (<i>devo o fazer, devo fazê-lo</i>)	S Aux OV	S Aux VO
Periphrastic root sentence introduced by negation or other operator; embedded periphrastic sentence introduced by complementizer (<i>nao posso o ver, nao o posso ver; se pode nos ajudar, se nos pode ajudar</i>)	Op/C S Aux OV	Op/C S O Aux V

In order to pursue the analysis, I have to make the two following stipulations:

MP is underlyingly S Aux OV (presumably due to Bantu transfer), whereas EP is underlyingly S Aux VO. Furthermore, EP is sensitive to clause-initial operators/complementizers, which MP is not. This makes possible the below formalization:

Construction type	Maputo Portuguese	European Portuguese
Single verb root sentence	S Aux _i O V _i	S Aux _i V _i O
Op-introduced single verb root sentence, comp-introduced single verb embedded clause	Op/Comp S Aux _i O V _i	Op/Comp S O _t Aux _i V _i t
Periphrastic root sentence	S Aux O V	S Aux V O
Op-introduced periphrastic root sentence, comp-introduced periphrastic embedded clause	Op/Comp S Aux O V	Op/Comp S O _t Aux V t

The data contains a number of possible but dispreferred constructions or counterexamples, which are accounted for in the following way.

- The possibility in EP of having Op/Comp S Aux VO in periphrastic sentences (*não posso vê-lo*) but not *Op/Comp S Aux_i V_i O in single-verb ones (**não tenho-o*) may be due to a condition on intervening material between operator and pronominal object.
- Optional SOV in maximally simple single-verb sentences in MP (*me via*) may be due to the fact that such sentences do not provide triggering evidence for or against verb movement, and the verb can then remain *in situ*; cf. the analysis of similar phenomena in Gbadi and Vata in Koopman (1984). In such cases, verb movement vs. verb *in situ* in MP result in two different structures: S Aux_i O V_i (=SVO) vs. S Aux (empty) O V (=SOV), whereas verb movement is string vacuous in EP and we get SVO in both cases: S Aux_i V_i O (=SVO) vs. S Aux (empty) V O (=SVO). Notice though that Brazilian Portuguese also exhibited SOV in cases like this, which is difficult to account for unless one assumes an underlying S Aux O V structure in BP as well (from Bantu?). Presumably, the different pro-drop properties of the languages or constructions under discussion here play some role as well.

Remaining problems which I at present have no solution to are

- Optional (Op/Comp) S Aux VO in periphrastic sentences in MP (*devo fazê-lo, não posso vê-lo*)
- S Aux OV in non-operator introduced periphrastic sentences in EP (*devo o fazer*).

4. Conclusion

The data presented shows that MP is not a pidgin, creole or koïné but a non-native variety of Portuguese characterized by substratal transfer effect from Bantu syntax S Aux O [+pron] V. Portuguese creoles display VO syntax at all times. Bantu koïnés exhibit VO *although* their contributing languages are OV when it comes to pronominal objects. VO syntax in creoles and koïnés is activated by principles of Universal Grammar in contact situations, and overrules OV even if this is present in both/all contributing languages. Maputo Portuguese is not the result of language contact as in the case of pidgins, creoles and koïnés, but is a second language characterized by substratal transfer effects. Therefore it displays S Aux O [+pron] V syntax, as opposed to what we find in European Portuguese, Portuguese creoles and Bantu koïnés. The analysis just carried out shows the fruitfulness of applying formal linguistic analysis to such sociolinguistic phenomena as pidginization, creolization, koïnéization and second language learning.

ABBREVIATIONS

AGRSU	Subject agreement	NEG	Negation
BP	Brazilian Portuguese	PERF	Perfect
COND	Conditional	PL	Plural
EP	European Portuguese	REFL	Reflexive
FUT	Future	SG	Singular
MP	Mozambican Portuguese	SUFF	Suffix

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