

On "Newspaper Deck Constructions" in Brazilian Portuguese

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Rizzi (1997) not only inaugurated, together with Cinque (1997), a "cartographic version" of the Principles and Parameters theory of Generative Grammar; his seminal work exploring general aspects of the left periphery also identifies a set of categories—such as topics and focus, which differ in a number of respects that only are visible through tests such as the Resumptive Clitic and Uniqueness. Built on Rizzi's (1997, 2004) analysis and successive work, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the syntactic properties of a construction which ordinarily appears in Brazilian newspaper decks—such as the one indicated in Figure 1. I am from now on referring to this construction as NDC (from Newspaper Deck Constructions). Specifically, the paper aims to understand whether what looks like a subordinate clause appearing to the left in NDCs (see the italicized sequence in (1) and Oliveira (2022)) is topicalized or focalized. In general, NDCs appear below headlines and serve to "complete its meaning" or provide additional information.

Quantos de nós damos conta do desastre socioambiental que vivemos?

'Se entendermos onde está a verdade, toda a desordem se transformará em ordem, harmonia, fraternidade', escreve Milton Rondó

← NDC

Fig. 1: Example of a Newspaper Deck in a Brazilian newspaper

(1) "Se entendermos onde está a verdade, toda a desordem se transformará em ordem, harmonia, fraternidade", escreve Milton Rondó ("If we understand where the truth is, all disorder will be transformed into order, harmony, fraternity", writes Milton Rondó) To apply the tests commonly used to discriminate topics and foci, the subordinate sentence was replaced by a demonstrative (isso 'this')—see (2). Examples (3) and (4), respectively featuring a focus and a topic (italicized), show this construction is grammatical in both cases. For the resumptive clitic test, Brazilian Portuguese doesn't present a clitic within the comment position, as we can see from ((3) to (5)). Therefore, since there isn't a clitic in NDCs (due to the null object (see Oliveira (2022)), we can only consider that the subordinate sentence occupies a focus position. Finally, the Uniqueness test (5) seems to show that the pronoun can't co-occur with another element in the focus position, because only "Isso" can be at this position, "aos prantos" and "today" are topics, which means that the subordinate sentence is focused.

(2) "Isso, escreve Milton Rondó".

(3) "Isso, escreve Milton Rondó (não aquilo)".

“This, writes Milton Rondó (not that)”.

(4) “Isso, escreve Milton Rondó (não o ministro)”

“This, writes Milton Rondó (not the minister)”.

(5) “Aos prantos, isso, hoje, escreve Milton Rondó (não aquilo)”.

“In tears, this, today, writes Milton Rondó (not that)”.

If the tests can indeed be applied to NDCs in Brazilian Portuguese, then one would say that NDCs do involve a focus-presupposition structure in the Left Periphery in BP.

Keywords: Cartography; Newspaper Deck Constructions; Brazilian Portuguese.