

The distinction between persons and things in portuguese pronouns*

In Portuguese, there is a group of pronouns that never have an antecedent, never occur as determiners, and are invariable for gender or number (they do not have inflection). These pronouns can be divided into two classes, one used only to refer to things, the other for persons only. These classes are shown in (1).

(1)	For things:	For persons:
Demonstrative	Isto, isso 'this' aquilo 'that'	
Relative	que 'what' 'which'	quem 'who'
Indefinite	nada 'nothing' algo 'something' tudo 'everything'	ninguém 'nobody' alguém 'somebody'

They always function as pronouns, as can be seen in (2).

(2) Alguém esteve aqui. 'Somebody has been here.'

Ninguém sabe nada. 'Nobody knows anything'.

These pronouns usually occur alone in the NP, except for the demonstrative pronoun which can be preceded by **tudo**, as in (3).

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(3) Tudo aquilo está terminado. 'All that is finished.'

Some gaps can be seen in (1): there is no demonstrative pronoun for person corresponding to **isto**, **isso**, **aquilo**, which are used for things only. There is no pronoun used only for persons corresponding to **tudo**.

I intend to show in this paper that the gaps seen in (1) are filled in a very special way by forms taken from the determiner system. As far as I know, no grammarian has noticed the systematic way in which the pronouns are used for distinguishing persons from things in Portuguese.

When the pronoun is in the masculine plural, it indicates persons; when it is in the masculine singular, it indicates things. It is important to notice that this peculiarity is found only if the pronoun is alone in the NP (it is a pro-NP) and does not have an antecedent. The forms of the determiner are shown in (4).

Dem. **este**, **esse** 'this'; **aquele** 'that'

Rel. **que**, **qual**, 'which'

Ind. **muito** 'many', 'much'; **pouco** 'few, little' **todo** 'every, all'; **algum** 'some.; **um** 'a, one'; **tanto** 'so many, so much'; **quanto** 'how many, how much'; **nenhum** 'anyone'; **tanto** 'other'; **mesmo** 'same'.

Posses: **meu** 'my'; **teu** 'your'; **nosso** 'our'

When used as determiners, these words agree for number and gender with the noun in the NP, as in (5):

(5) **Muitos** homens foram chamados, mas **poucos** foram escolhidos.

'Many men were called, but few chosen.'

In (5), the determiners **muitos** 'many' and **poucos** 'few' agree in gender (masculine) and number (plural) with the noun **homens** 'men'.

If the noun **homens** 'men' is not repeated in the second clause, the word **poucos**, anaphorically referring to it, agrees with it in the same way, as shown in (6).

(6) **Muitos** homens são chamados, mas **poucos** escolhidos.

'Many men are called, but few chosen'.

In (6), as **poucos** is alone in the NP, it is usually considered a pronoun. This is an anaphoric use of the pronoun, but it should be noted that this is not coreferential anaphora, since the men are not the same in both cases. **Poucos** is anaphoric to **homens** 'men' in sense only, not in reference. This is typical of the pronouns which can be used as determiners in Portuguese and in other languages. It is a case of identity of sense anaphora.

These anaphoric pronouns can have an antecedent in the linguistic or pragmatic context. In (6), the antecedent of '**poucos**'

is recovered from the linguistic context (homens), and it appears in the first clause. The antecedent could be in the previous sentence, as can be seen in (7).

(7) **Muitos** homens foram chamados. **Poucos** foram escolhidos.
'Many men were called. Few were chosen.'

(7) is an example in which the antecedent is in the discourse, but the context is still linguistic. As (8) shows, it is possible for the antecedent to be in the pragmatic context only.

(8) **Voltaram todos?** 'Have all of them come back?'

The pronoun **todos** in (8) can refer to the cattle, which have not been mentioned before but are implicit in the pragmatic context.

Another example of pragmatic antecedent is seen in (9).

In a boy's bedroom, the mother says to her child, who is playing with his toys:

(9) **Me dá alguns!** 'Give me some!'

In examples (8) and (9), the anaphoric pronouns are used to refer to animals and things, respectively.

Even if the context is pragmatic, the pronoun agrees with the entity to which it refers. In (10), the pronoun is in the feminine singular (used in a context in which **cerveja** 'beer' is supplied).

(10) **Me dá mais uma?** 'Can you give me one more?'

It can be seen, then, that the anaphoric pronoun can be used to refer to any entity previously mentioned in the discourse (in the same sentence or in a previous sentence), or it can be inferred from the pragmatic context. Further it agrees in gender and number with the noun to which it is anaphorically linked ('anaphor' here is used as in Hankamer and Sag, 1976).

I now want to show that there is a particular use of the words listed in (4) of which the masculine plural forms (used in the plural), without an antecedent, refer exclusively to persons, while the masculine singular forms refer exclusively to things. Compare example (11) with examples (5) and (6).

(11) **Muitos** são os chamados, **poucos** os escolhidos.
'Many are called, few are chosen'.

In (11), **muitos** 'many' and **poucos** 'few' have no antecedent in the discourse nor in the pragmatic context. Both refer to persons.

In contrast with (11), the masculine singular in (12) is used alone without antecedent, indicating 'things' [— Animate]:

(12) **Muito** ainda está por vir. 'Much is yet for coming'.

If, instead of **muito**, we had **muitos** in (12), the meaning would change completely, as is seen in (12a).

(12a) **Muitos** ainda estão por vir. 'Many are yet for coming'.

The main difference between the pronouns shown in (7) through (10), and those in (11) and (12), is that the latter do not have an antecedent, they are not anaphoric. Whenever there is an antecedent, the pronoun enters in an anaphoric relation to it. If there is no antecedent, the pronoun can be either in the masculine

plural, when it will refer to persons only, or it can be in the masculine singular, when it will refer to things only.

It is not possible to have a pronoun in the feminine (singular or plural) without an antecedent. So, (13) is ungrammatical.

(13) *Muita ficou por fazer. 'Much (fem.) remains to be done'.

*Muitas são chamadas. 'Many (fem.) are chosen'.

The sentences in (13) can be grammatical if the pronoun is anaphoric: they are ungrammatical only if there is no antecedent to the pronoun.

The status of the pronouns in reference to animals is not very clear as far as nonanaphoric pronouns are concerned.

Plural pronouns refer to persons, singular to things, and there is no specific form used for animals only. Even in a context which favors the interpretation of the pronoun as referring to 'animals', it would still refer to persons if it is masculine plural and to things if it is singular. Consider example (14):

(14) Todos são bonitos neste zoológico.

'Everybody is pretty in this zoo.'

Tudo é bonito neste zoológico.

'Everything is pretty in this zoo'.

This is a systematic process, which encompasses all the classes of pronouns. Examples (15) and (16) below show different pronouns in which the plural refers to persons and the singular to things.

(15) Para alguns, a vida é uma brisa, para outros é trabalho duro.

'For some, life is a breeze, for others is hard work.'

(16) Nunca tão poucos tiraram tanto de tantos.

'Never so few took so much from so many'.

In (15), one may substitute *uns* 'some', *muitos* 'many', *poucos* 'few', *tantos* 'so many', *quantos* 'how many', for *alguns* 'some'. In (16), *poucos* 'few' and *muitos* 'many' again refer without antecedents to persons (+Human) and *tanto* 'so much' refers to things. In place of *tanto* 'so much', one could have *muito* 'much', *pouco* 'little', *tudo* 'everything' and *quanto* 'how much'.

Although the paradigm of the demonstrative pronouns follows that of other pronouns, there is a difference, regarding the singular demonstrative pronoun, which may be used non anaphorically for persons, too.

It should also be noted that the demonstrative pronouns can occur without antecedent only if they are followed by a restrictive clause as in (17).

(17) Aqueles os que pecarem serão condenados.

'Those who sin will be condemned'.

In (17), it is possible to have the masculine singular *aquele* in place of *aqueles* with the same meaning. But if one substitutes for *os* the singular form *o*, the result is not the same and the sentence is not so good. I believe that the explanation for this fact is that, for expressing things, there is a corresponding pronoun *aquilo* for *aque-*

les but there is no special form for things, in the case of *os*. Then, *aquele* can be used for persons, but *o* is reserved for things [-Animate].

Consider example (18).

(18) *O* que você fez está errado. 'What you did is wrong'.

In place of *o* in (18) one could use *aquilo*, the form for [-Animate] corresponding to *aquele*.

On the other hand, the demonstrative pronouns *estes*, *esses* 'these' seem, like the singular forms (*este*, *esse*), to be used only anaphorically. As deictic pronouns, they can be linguistically or pragmatically related to an antecedent. I could not find any example with these pronouns used without antecedent.

Example (19) shows the distribution of the pronouns in Portuguese into two groups, one for persons and the other for things. The underlined pronouns are those which mark the difference between things and persons exclusively by the contrast plural/singular. It can be seen that they are in majority.

(19)	Persons:	Things:
Dem.	<i>aquele(s)</i> 'that'	<i>aquilo</i> 'that'
	<i>os</i>	<i>o</i>
Ind.	<i>todos</i> 'everybody'	<i>tudo</i> 'everything'
	<i>muitos</i> 'many'	<i>muito</i> 'much'
	<i>poucos</i> 'few'	<i>pouco</i> 'little'
	<i>alguns</i> 'some'	
	<i>alguém</i> 'somebody'	<i>algo</i> 'something'
	<i>ninguém</i> 'nobody'	<i>nada</i> 'nothing'
	<i>uns</i> 'some'	
	<i>outros</i> 'others'	
	<i>tantos</i> 'so many'	<i>tanto</i> 'so much'
	<i>quantos</i> 'how many'	<i>quanto</i> 'how much'
Rel.	<i>quem</i> 'who'	<i>que</i> 'which'

The pronouns listed in (19) are very common in general sentences, as is seen in (20).

(20) *Todos* cantam sua terra, também vou cantar a minha!
'Everybody praises his land, I will praise mine too!

The pronouns in (19) occur also in sentences in which some adverbial restricts their reference, as illustrated in (21).

(21) Nesta cidade, *todos* são estranhos. *Alguns* vivem passeando, *outros* estão sempre trabalhando, *muitos* se divertem, *poucos* estudam.

'In this town everybody is peculiar. Some live as if on vacation, others are always working, many are just having fun, a few study.'

In (21), all pronouns refer to the persons in town. It is possible to restrict even more the set to which the pronouns refer. In a phone conversation, or in a personal letter, if the question in (22) is asked,

the adverbial *ai* 'there' restricts the set of *todos* to the hearer's family:

(22) *Como vão todos ai?* 'How is everybody there?'

The answer to (22) can be (23).

(23) *Vão todos bem.* 'Everybody is fine'.

In contrast to (23), (24) refers to life in general [-Animate].

(24) *Vai tudo bem.* 'Everything is fine'.

Even with possessive pronouns, one can find the masculine plural used only for persons, without an antecedent, as shown in (25).

(25) *Lembranças aos seus!* 'Remember me to your folks!'

Mateus, primeiro os teus! Mathew, yours first!'

It can be seen that there is in Portuguese a process of using masculine plural forms of pronouns without an antecedent in order to express persons, and masculine singular forms to express things. It is important that Portuguese grammar account for these facts. The pronouns could be listed in the lexicon, the feature [-Animate] being assigned to each in the masculine singular and the feature [+Human] to the masculine plural forms. But listing each form in the lexicon (singular and plural) would duplicate the lexical entries, which is not an economic solution and fails in generalization.

It seems clear that there is a rule by which, whenever there is a nonanaphoric masculine plural pronoun, it is interpreted as [+Human] and when the nonanaphoric pronoun is masculine singular it is interpreted as [-Animate].

This rule is very general. I could not find a nonanaphoric pronoun in the plural which is not [+Hum.]. Even personal pronouns are not exceptions to this rule because the only personal pronoun which can refer to things is *ele* 'he', but it cannot be nonanaphoric. All pronouns, then, are either anaphoric in which case they can be related to things, animals or persons, having syntactic or pragmatic control or nonanaphoric, and are subject to the rule above. The demonstrative pronouns *estes*, *esses* 'these' are not exception either, since they cannot be nonanaphoric.

I believe that these facts have to be handled by the interpretive part of the grammar. Jackendoff (1974) has a rule of noncoreference stating that "any noun phrases that have not yet been related by a rule of coreference are noncoreferential". This rule, of course, applies after the rules of coreference. Lasnik (1976) argued against the necessity of two rules, one of coreference and another of noncoreference (for him, Jackendoff's coreference rule is superfluous) and stated one only rule of Noncoreference, which Bresnan (1978) adopts:

(26) "If NP_1 precedes and commands NP_2 and NP_2 is not a pronoun, then NP_1 and NP_2 are noncoreferential".

According to Bresnan (1978), one of the advantages of this noncoreference rule is that it applies also to the discourse, it is not

“sentence bound”, as in previous treatments of anaphora. I cannot go on to discuss all the implications of this rule to the problem studied in this paper, but I want to notice that what is pertinent to the pronouns studied in this paper is that the rule permits that the pronoun be coreferent or not. It does not predict the condition in which a pronoun will be or will not be coreferent to another NP. I will not go into this problem, either. I only have to say that if the pronoun is nonanaphoric (or noncoreferent, if the definition of coreference is broadened), then:

(27) a) it will be [+hum], if it is [+P1];

b) it will be [-Anim.], if it is [-P1].

Looking at b), one question appears: Why do not state it in a way similar to a), with the feature for number preceding the feature for animateness? The answer is that, stated the way it is, there is no exception to the rule; if stated the other way, there would be one exception: *aquele*, which can be used for persons.

Some residual problems:

Examining example (19) we see some gaps in the distribution of the pronouns. There are the plural forms *alguns* and *uns* for persons, but only *algo* (which is disappearing from colloquial Brazilian Portuguese, replaced by the phrase *alguma coisa*) for things. But I do not believe that this is really a gap, because *uns* and *alguns* are synonymous and the forms for things (*algo*, *alguma coisa*) correspond to the three forms for persons (*alguém*, *alguns*, *uns*).

The gap in the column for things corresponding to *outros* ‘others’ is an actual gap; I could not find an example of *outro* ‘other’ meaning *outra coisa* ‘other thing’, without antecedent.

It must be stated that, although *alguns*, *uns* and *outros* are used for persons, there is no *algum*, *um* or *outro* for things; instead, the phrase formed by the determiner followed by the word *coisa* ‘thing’ is used. Thus, the generalization is more complete in the first column of example (19). The fact is that these pronouns cannot be used in the singular without an antecedent, as they are used in the plural for persons.

The examples in (28) are ungrammatical, because the pronouns cannot be nonanaphoric:

(28) *Algum

*Outro está por fazer.

*Um

There are some idiomatic expressions in which the pronoun is used in the feminine plural referring to things, as if the word *coisas* ‘things’ were omitted as shown in (29).

(29) Eu disse poucas e boas. ‘I said few and good things’.

Tantas ele fez, que acabou mal. ‘He did so many things, that he finished badly’.

Ele tomou umas e outras. ‘He drank a little’.

There is also the expression *cada uma*, in which the pronoun appears without antecedent, meaning 'thing', as shown in (30):

(30) *Você tem cada uma!* 'You do such funny things'

I do not see any systematicity in these expressions, and thus, I believe that they must be listed separately.

NOTES

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2. Grammarians have noticed that some pronouns refer to persons and other to things, but no one have noticed the systematic way the singular forms are opposed to plural ones in order to distinguish persons from things (see, for example, Said Ali, Cunha and Thomas).
3. The pronouns which can occur in the singular are not exception to this rule, since the rule states only that the plural forms are [+Human], not that the singular forms cannot be [+Human]. A true exception would be a nonanaphoric masculine pronoun in the plural meaning things, which was not found. There is no feminine pronoun which can be nonanphoric, either.

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