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# SUBJECT POSITION IN ENGLISH, PORTUGUESE AND CROATIAN

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## 2 Abstract

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In this thesis we present the theory behind the position of the subject in Portuguese, English and Croatian since those languages, despite all being SVO languages, have certain differences concerning the position of the subject in a sentence. Portuguese and Croatian are the so-called null-subject languages, while English is a non-null-subject language. However, Croatian, being an inflective language, has a relatively free word order while Portuguese has restrictions. We also present two studies, a corpus and a questionnaire one. The corpus study was done in order to see whether the rules given by the linguists apply to the written usage found in the Corpus of the Portuguese language. The questionnaire study was conducted with 65 native speakers of Portuguese in order to see whether the theory and corpus results presented overlap with the real-life usage of Portuguese. The results of both the corpus and the questionnaire study showed that Portuguese is a SVO language despite some verbs having tendencies towards a different word order.

Key words: *subject position, Portuguese, English, Croatian, null-subject languages, syntax*

### 3 Introduction

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A grammatical subject is, along with the verb, one of the most important constituents of the sentence. Its features have been researched in many languages and it is quite hard to establish a universal definition since in different languages it has different characteristics. Some of the differences may be the existence or absence of cases, the possibility of the omission of the subject in a sentence or, on the other hand, the strict need for expressing the subject and also various positions in which the subject can appear in a sentence.

As it is known, the “sentences are not random collections of words, but strings of words which are organised according to certain rules” (Aarts 1997: 8) so therefore each language has to have a set of rules according to which the words are organised into sentences. Various languages allow various word orders. According to Hagège (in Matasović 2011: 89), around 36% of all the languages in the world are SVO languages, about 39% of them have a SOV word order and 15% of the languages are VSO while the rest belongs to the VOS, OVS and OSV word orders.

In this thesis we are going to discuss three SVO languages, English, Portuguese and Croatian, which, despite belonging to the SVO language group, differ in many ways. These languages were chosen because they are quite different when considering the syntax and semantics of the subject in a sentence. English has a fixed word order and the subject cannot be omitted in any way while the varieties of Portuguese range from null subject languages to non-null subject languages<sup>1</sup>. Croatian is a null-subject language with a relatively free word order. In addition to a general overview of the Portuguese language, we deal with both the European and the Brazilian variety of Portuguese in order to see the differences between them such as the fact that European Portuguese is a pro-drop language while the Brazilian variety is striving to become a non-pro-drop language. We also give a short insight into the semantical aspect of the subject in Portuguese. A corpus and a questionnaire studies that were conducted are be presented and their results discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Null-subject languages are those in which the subject can be omitted when the verb provides enough morphological information about it, e.g. inflection signalling person and number agreement.

## 4 Definition of Subject

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From ancient times, there has been a need for defining the parts and the functions of sentences. Aristotle was one of the first to provide a definition of the subject and the predicate. He used the terms *onoma* and *rhema* to describe what we nowadays call subject and predicate. According to Aristotle, *onoma* is “an utterance which has meaning by convention and lacks tense/time, and no part of it has meaning by itself.” (Law 2003: 29) An *onoma* is considered to be an early attempt of defining a noun or a subject because it is one of the main parts of a sentence, it has a case but no time so it has to be accompanied by a *rhema*. A *rhema*, Aristotle says, “consignifies time, no part of it has meaning by itself, and it is always a sign of something said about something else.” (Law 2003: 29) In other words, *rhema* gives time and tense to the *onoma*, or as van Kampen (2006: 1) states, *onoma* is the “referential naming part” of the sentence and *rhema* is the “characterizing part.”

In modern times, many authors strived to define the subject but its complexity “has defeated all attempts at a cross-linguistically valid definition.” (Svenonius 2002: 3) One of them, who was striving to grasp the universal definition of the term, was Keenan (1976: 312) who said that a subject “is rather a cluster concept, or as we shall say, a multifactor concept.” He defines it as such because of its complex structure and because the subject had different properties in various languages. In some it is in the nominative case, in others it is positioned at the beginning of the sentence or in some it does not have to be mentioned at all. Therefore, it is a “cluster” and “a multifactor concept.” (Keenan 1976: 312)

Aarts (1997: 8) defines the subject as

“the constituent that on the one hand tells us who performs the action denoted by the verb, and on the other hand tells us who or what the sentence is about.” He also adds that the questions used to find a subject in a sentence are “Who or what carried out the action denoted by the verb?” and “Who or what is the sentence about?” (Aarts 1997: 8)

Since this thesis compares the position of subject in English with that in the Portuguese language, we have looked into the definitions of subject by the Portuguese linguists as well. Therefore, Cunha and Cintra (2001: 122) state that the subject and the predicate are essential parts of a sentence. According to them, the subject is the entity about which something is said and the verb is all that is said about the subject. (Cunha and Cintra 2001: 122)

Mateus et al. (2003: 281) declare that the subject is one of the central grammatical functions. According to them, there are three types of subjects in basic sentences – a logical subject which is the most important argument in the thematic hierarchy, a psychological subject or an expression that functions as a topic (that of which the verb is affirmed, negated or interrogated) and a grammatical subject which is an expression that influences the verbal agreement (Mateus et al. 2003: 282) They also claim that the grammatical subject is the external argument of the predicate, i.e. it occupies the external position which is maximally defined by the predicate<sup>2</sup>. (Mateus et al. 2003: 161)

Azevedo (2004) agrees with those statements while stating that the subject is the topic while the predicate, which includes the verb, possible objects and complements, is the commentary. He adds that the “topic provides the background for the main information.” (Azevedo 2004: 144)

In *Gramática do português* the subject is defined as an expression which introduces the entity about which the speaker is making a statement. (Paiva Raposo, Bacelar do Nascimento and Coelho da Mota 2013: 352)

De Pina (2010: 14) defines the subject as a noun syntagm which indicates or is either the protagonist or the focus of the action of the verb. He also mentions some other definitions such as one by Faraco and Moura (in De Pina 2010: 15) who say that the subject is the term about which the statement is being told.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> “Relação gramatical sintáctica do constituinte que ocorre como argumento externo do predicador, i.e., do argumento que ocupa uma posição externa à projecção máxima definida pelo predicador” (Mateus *et al.* 2003: 161)

<sup>3</sup> “É o termo que denota o ser a respeito de quem se faz uma declaração” (Faraco e Moura 1998: 37)

## 5 Types of subjects

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Much like defining the subject is quite hard, the division of the term is also challenging. Once again, the division cannot be universal since the term *subject* doesn't have the same meaning in every language. We will present several divisions connected to the three languages in this chapter.

Svenonius (2002: 3) makes one categorisation of the term *subject* according to traditional grammarians and that is the division between the grammatical/formal subjects and logical/notional subjects. This division can be depicted by cleft sentences, which we are going to mention in relation to both English and Portuguese, in which both of these types of subjects appear. For example, in the sentence (1) *it* is the grammatical or formal subject because it is only filling the typical position of the subject, while *Martin* is considered to be the logical or notional subject of this sentence.

(1) *It was Martin who broke the window.*

Svenonius' (2002) definition of the subject is the following – “it seems that we can deconstruct the traditional subject into three components, one thematic-aspectual (the thematically most prominent argument of a predicate), one morphosyntactic (typically identified by case and/or agreement), and one discourse-informational (the topical or thematic entity named in a proposition)” (Svenonius 2002: 4) He adds that all of these elements usually overlap but sometimes not always.

Another type of subjects, which are crucial for English, are expletive subjects. Also known as pleonastic or dummy subjects, “they are identified by their lack of semantic content, and their resolutely grammatical nature makes them an excellent probe into the boundary between syntax and semantics.” (Svenonius 2002: 5) We discuss expletive subjects in more detail in chapters 7 and 8.

Cunha and Cintra (2001: 126) distinguish several types of subjects in Portuguese and those are: simple subject<sup>4</sup>, complex subject<sup>5</sup>, hidden subject (determined)<sup>6</sup> and undetermined subject<sup>7</sup>. According to Cunha and Cintra (2001: 126), the first group or the simple subjects consist only of one nucleus and the verb refers only to one noun, pronoun, nominal word or

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<sup>4</sup> Sujeito simples

<sup>5</sup> Sujeito composto

<sup>6</sup> Sujeito oculto (determinado)

<sup>7</sup> Sujeito indeterminado



nominal clause. Therefore, in the sentences in examples (2) and (3) subjects are expressed by the noun *Matilde* and the pronouns *ele* and *ela*.

(2) *Matilde entendia disso.* (A. Bessa Luís, OM, 170 in Cunha and Cintra 2001: 124)

‘Matilde understood this.’

(3) ...*ele arrumava a gravata, ela ajeitava o chapéu.* (É. Veríssimo, LS, 128 in Cunha and Cintra 2001: 125)

‘...he was fixing the tie, she was straightening the hat.’

The other type that Cunha and Cintra (2001: 126) mention is the complex subject, which has more than one nucleus and it consists of more than one noun, pronoun, nominal word or nominal clause. This type of subject can be seen in a sentence like (2) in which the subject are both the voices and the steps – *as vozes* and *passos*.

(4) *As vozes e passos aproximam-se.* (M. da Fonseca, SV, 248 in Cunha and Cintra 2001: 126)

‘Voices and steps were getting closer.’

Hidden determined subject is the one which is not expressed in the sentence but can be identified due to the verbal ending or because of the presence of the subject in another sentence that preceded the sentence which we are interested in. (Cunha and Cintra 2001: 127) It is common in Croatian and in Portuguese because they are null subject languages (also known as pro-drop languages) - verbal inflections in these languages give a clear indication of what the subject is, even if it is not overtly present in the sentence, as can be seen in (5) where the verb *doći* ‘to come’ is inflected to express the third person singular masculine and the past tense.

(5) *Došao je.*

‘(He) came.’

And finally, the undetermined subject, according to Cunha and Cintra (2001: 128), is a subject which is also not expressed in a sentence and cannot be identified because the verb doesn’t refer to a specific person or the doer of the action cannot be identified. This will be discussed more thoroughly in the chapter 9.

## 6 Subjects in Croatian

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As we have mentioned in the introduction. Croatian has a relatively free word order in comparison to the other two languages. However, the phrase “free word order”, has to be administered carefully since, as Chomsky (1965) states, there is no such thing as free word order in a language. He argues that

‘in every known language the restrictions on order are quite severe, and therefore rules of realization of abstract structures are necessary. Until some account of such rules is suggested, the set-system simply cannot be considered seriously as a theory of grammar.’ (Chomsky 1965: 126)

Seljan (2004: 3) explains that “the Croatian language, as all Slavic languages, belongs to the group of highly inflective languages with rich morphological system.” That means that Croatian is a language in which case is syntactically significant and each case has its function. Therefore the subject in Croatian is usually a noun phrase in the nominative. Subjects show agreement with the verb in gender, number and person, and with adjectives in gender, number and case. Barić, Lončarić and Malić (1997: 421) explain that if the verb is in the third person, the subject can be any noun or nominal word. They also add that if the verb is in the first person, only the personal pronoun in the first person can act as the subject and if the verb is in the second person, the personal pronoun in the second person can only be the subject. (Barić, Lončarić and Malić 1997: 422)

Barić et al. (1997) state that if the verb is in either the first or the second person, we do not need to explicitly express the subject since it can be foreseen. For example, in the sentence in the example (6) the verb is in the first person singular and therefore the personal noun *ja* ‘I’ is not needed because the subject can be seen from the verb. This type of subject is called unspoken/hidden<sup>8</sup>.

(6) *Odlazim.*

‘I am leaving.’

Sentences without a subject occur frequently in Croatian (and in Portuguese) with impersonal verbs. Examples of this are usually weather verbs such as (7).

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<sup>8</sup> In Croatian – neizrečen/skriven subjekt.

(7) *Sniježi.*

‘It is snowing.’

Impersonal verbs also exist in English but they need the expletive pronoun “it” so that the sentence would be grammatical.

Morphological categories are responsible for the flexibility of word order in Croatian. The word order which is “the most common and non-marked in style” (Seljan 2004: 3) in Croatian is SVO. In example (8) all six word orders are possible and grammatical in Croatian, the only difference is in stylistic marking – the more we move away from the unmarked SVO word order, the more stylistically marked the utterance gets and the place of the marked focus changes.

(8) SVO **Martin** jede jabuku.

SOV **Martin** jabuku jede.

VSO Jede **Martin** jabuku.

OSV Jabuku **Martin** jede.

OVS Jabuku jede **Martin**.

VOS Jede jabuku **Martin**.

A native speaker of Croatian would use some of the possible word orders more often than others. For example, SVO and VSO would be more common than the rest. The other structures could be used in poetic language when the author is in need of some specific stress. In all the remaining word orders – SOV, OVS, OSV and VOS – the object is marked and stressed.

According to Vojvoda (1982: 394), the position of the subject is mostly conditioned by the topic of the sentence.

(9) *Martin vozi bicikl.*

‘Martin is riding a bicycle.’

In the example (9) according to this definition, *Martin* is the topic and it is already known while the action that he is performing is comment or the new information. The word order could be reversed into OVS or as shown in example (10).

(10) *Bicikl vozi Martin.*

‘The bicycle is being ridden by Martin.’

Then it would mean that the topic was the bicycle and that the fact that Martin was riding the bicycle was new and stressed. This word order, according to which the subject, if it is part of new information, and has a tendency to move towards the end of the sentence, after the verb, is considered to be a stylistically marked word order.<sup>9</sup> (Vojvoda 1982: 395) Moreover, he adds that an adverbial of place also has an effect on the position of the subject in Croatian. So if an adverbial of place is positioned at the beginning of the sentence, the subject will move towards the end of the sentence, after the verb. (Vojvoda 1982: 395) This is shown in the following example (11):

(11) *U našem gradu živi poznati glumac.*

‘In our town lives a famous actor.’

(12) *U našem gradu poznati glumac živi.*

‘In our town a famous actor lives.’

However, if we put the subject in front of the verb in this sentence, like exemplified in (12), it would not be ungrammatical and it would be understood, but it could imply a different meaning, for example that this actor only lives in our town but works somewhere else.

As we have mentioned before, the subject in Croatian is usually a noun phrase in the nominative case. However, as opposed to English and Portuguese, Croatian shows yet another language specific characteristic: it can sometimes have a subject in cases other than the nominative. For example, a subject in Croatian can also be expressed with a noun phrase in dative as can be seen in the example (13) mentioned by Kunzmann-Müller (2008: 18).

(13) *Pozlilo mu je.*

‘He got sick.’

In this sentence, the pronoun in the dative “*mu*” is the subject. This, explains Kunzmann-Müller (2008: 18), is common with verbs which denote a physical or mental state. However, she argues that according to what has been established as the definition of the grammatical subject in syntax, we cannot name this phenomenon as a grammatical subject but relate it to its semantic role as the experiencer. (Kunzmann-Müller 2008: 18) She also adds that, for this reason, some linguists consider this type of dative subjects to be pseudo-subjects.

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<sup>9</sup> In Croatian: stilski obilježen red riječi.

## 7 Subjects in English

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We have already mentioned the definition of subject according to Aarts (1997). He states that in order to find the subject in a sentence there are two questions that need to be answered - “Who or what carried out the action denoted by the verb?” and “Who or what is the sentence about?” (Aarts 1997: 8) He furthermore explains the types of subjects and differentiates the subjects which precede stative predicates<sup>10</sup> and those which precede dynamic predicates. (Aarts 1997: 8) A subject which precedes a stative predicate can be found in the sentence – *This room smells*. In this sentence the question “Who or what carried out the action denoted by the verb?” is not valid because the room cannot perform the action of *smelling* and this is therefore considered to be the subject that precedes the stative predicate. According to Aarts (1997), there are six criteria to define whether a noun phrase is a subject in English or not. They are the following:

- 1 It has to be a noun phrase.
- 2 It is the first noun phrase in the sentence.
- 3 It is obligatory and cannot be omitted.
- 4 It has to agree with the verb.
- 5 When forming a question, the subject swaps the place with the inserted verb *do* in the appropriate person, number and tense.
- 6 When using tag questions, the tag question has to have a pronoun that refers to the subject. (Aarts 1997: 13)

Another type of subject in English that we have already mentioned is the expletive subject. Svenonius (2002) explains that “three types of expletive subject are recognized in traditional grammars of English: extraposition *it*, weather *it*, and impersonal *there*.” (Subjects, Expletives and the EPP 5) When it comes to the topic of expletive subjects, Aarts (1997) mentions this type of subject as one that has no meaning – an empty subject. He divides the types of expletive subjects into the non-referential *it* and the existential *there*. (Aarts 1997: 10)

The non-referential *it* owes its name to the fact that it does not refer to anything in the sentence. The example of this type of subject can be found in (14):

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<sup>10</sup> A stative predicates “refer to mental states, attitudes/emotions, perceptions or other states of existence” (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2008: 460) while dynamic predicates “express action or events.” (Biber, Conrad and Leech 2008: 456)

(14) ***It*** is snowing heavily.

The fact that the pronoun *it* is necessary in this sentence can be compared to the example (6) where it was shown that, in Croatian, there is no need for the expletive pronoun *it* and the sentences are subjectless.

The subject can also be expressed with the pronoun *there* and it is called existential *there* (Aarts 1997: 10) since it only defines the existence of something e.g. *There was a man in the room*. In this sentence, the existential *there* implies the existence of the man in the room.

Aarts (1997: 10) concludes that “non-referential *it* and existential *there* are said to be meaningless because all they seem to be doing in the sentences in which they occur is fill the subject slot.”

When it comes to the position of subject in an English sentence, the word order is fixed, which means that

‘English generally consistently uses position (along with what case and agreement it has) to mark the thematically most prominent argument (lexical selection and voice are commonly used to ensure that the resultant subject is topical).’ (Svenonius 2002: 4)

Davis (1968: 460) explains that the SVO word order in English “merely states the giving of the object” like in the sentence in the example (15) where the word order clarifies which Peter was the one who gave the book to me.

(15) ***Peter*** gave me the book.

In the sentence (15) it may be so but in simple English SVO sentences a change in the word order will change the meaning as well. For example:

(16) ***Martin*** hit Peter.

(17) ***Peter*** hit Martin.

In the sentences (16) and (17) the meaning changes while on the other hand, if we did the same thing in Croatian, the meaning of the sentence would remain the same because of the existence of cases.

As one of the ways to determine a subject in a sentence, Burton-Roberts (2011: 26) mentions the Question Test for Subjects. With this test he shows how to find the subject in the sentence by asking a *yes/no* question and the word or phrase which changes its position in a question is the subject. We can conclude that in English, the subjects change their position in

*yes/no* questions. For example, in the sentence *Martin saw Lucy.*, according to the rule, the subject is the one word which changes its position when a *yes/no* question is formed, in this case – *Did Martin see Lucy?* which suggests that *Martin* is the subject.

## 8 Subjects in Portuguese

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The subject in Portuguese, as in many other Romance languages, agrees with the verb in number and person, and can be substituted by a pronoun. All but impersonal verbs require a subject in Portuguese. (Azevedo 2004: 107) This phenomenon is called the null subject parameter and it will be discussed later.

According to Mateus et al. (2003: 282) the syntactic and semantic importance of the subject is manifested in the word order because, in basic sentences, the subject is usually positioned in the first position.

The subject and the predicate in Portuguese correspond to the noun phrase and the verb phrase which are the main constituents of the sentence. (Paiva Raposo, Bacelar do Nascimento and Coelho da Mota 2013: 353) Usually, the noun phrase which acts as a subject occupies the pre-verbal position in a sentence and linguists like Azevedo (2004: 143), or Ambar (in Costa 2004: 19) and Duarte (in Costa 2004: 19) agree that the unmarked or canonical word order for the Portuguese language is SVO.

### 8.1 The History of the Position of the Subject in Portuguese

The Portuguese language evolved from the Vulgar Latin and therefore, the position of the subject can be explored through the diachronical stages of Portuguese. In her research, Priscilla Mouta Marques (2009: 94), connects Latin and old Portuguese taking the position of the subject into consideration. She detects that SVO was the most common word order in old Portuguese, but OSV was also used regularly, especially in relative clauses, since the final position of the verb was obligatory in Latin. She adds that the verb influenced the position of the subject so when there was a copular verb, the sentence structure would be SVO, the same as in Latin. The reason for this structure can be found in the tendency to avoid ambiguity that would arise from two noun phrases in post-verbal position. Furthermore, Mouta Marques (2009: 94) explains that the *dicendi*<sup>11</sup> verbs elicit the position of the subject to be post-verbal since the information that they are expressing is already known.

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<sup>11</sup> Reporting verbs such as *falar* ‘to talk’, *dizer* ‘to say’, *ordenar* ‘to order’, *mandar* ‘to tell’, *contar* ‘to tell’, etc.



The research of Mouta Marques (2009: 248) can be backed up by Georg A. Kaiser's (1999) research, where he investigated the subject-verb position in Old Portuguese. His initial statement was that Old Portuguese was a language, similar to German or Dutch, in which the verb was always positioned in the second place in the sentence, no matter which constituent preceded it. However, Kaiser (1999: 249) adds that the order VS was also common, especially in literature, and compares it to the French word order which, according to the linguists of the time, was the obligatory word order. On the other hand, 14<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese had a tendency to put the verb in the first place in the sentence, while sentences with the verb in the third place were quite rare. (Kaiser 1999: 252) When it comes to the subject, Kaiser (1999: 253) mentions that Portuguese showed the characteristics of a null subject language because in declarative and imperative elliptical sentences the subject would be omitted.

With the disappearance of Latin declension, the word order in Romance languages became more fixed. Cases were, the same as in English, determined mostly by prepositions.

Brazilian Portuguese, on the other hand, had other influences. The Portuguese came to Brazil in 1500 and from that time their culture and language started merging with those of the natives as well as with the languages and customs of the African slaves.

## 8.2 European Portuguese

In Portuguese, the subject and the verb agree in person and number. As Costa and Figueiredo (2004: 19) state, they agree “independently of the position of the subject” and this can be shown in the examples (18), (19) and (20).

(18) *Os **meninos** comeram o doce.* (SVO)

‘The children ate the candy.’

(19) *Comeram **os **meninos**** o doce.* (VSO)

‘\*Ate the children the candy.’

(20) *Comeram o doce **os **meninos****.* (VOS)

‘\*Ate the candy the children.’

(Costa and Figueiredo 2004:19)

In all of these sentences, the verbal ending *–eram* (the Past Preterite, 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural) indicates that the subject is the noun in plural (*os meninos*) rather than in singular (*o doce*).

Portuguese is, as most linguists agree, a SVO language. SVO is the unmarked order in Portuguese. However, other word orders can be possible and they are considered to be stylistically or grammatically marked. The authors of *Gramática do português* claim that in Portuguese the subject is typically placed before the verb but, unlike in other languages (eg. English), the order of these two elements can sometimes be altered. (Paiva Raposo, Bacelar do Nascimento and Coelho da Mota 2013: 353) According to Costa (2004: 1), five word orders, out of six that are logically possible, are grammatically correct in European Portuguese and those are the following: SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS and OSV. He exemplifies this theory in the following sentences in (21).

- (21) SVO     **O Paulo** comeu a sopa.  
      ?\*SOV   **\*O Paulo** a sopa comeu.  
      VSO     Comeu **o Paulo** a sopa.  
      OSV     A sopa, **o Paulo** comeu.  
      OVS     A sopa, comeu **o Paulo**. (Costa 2004: 1)

As we have mentioned, one of the main characteristics of the shift between Latin and modern Romance languages was the loss of cases. Mattoso Camara Jr. (1972: 209) states that the elimination of the case distinctions led to the “systematic adoption of the accusative as the unique case.” Nowadays, the same as in English, only the pronouns have the accusative case. With transitive verbs there has to be an object following and while in Croatian it is expressed by a word in a specific case (usually accusative, dative or genitive, but locative and instrumental are also possible), in English and Portuguese there is no such distinction. With the loss of cases, the distinction between the subject and the object in a sentence with a transitive verb can be quite problematic and therefore the word order becomes helpful.

Mattoso Camara Jr. (1972: 224) states that the “basic pattern required the subject to be pre-posed” and that is quite essential when it comes to transitive verbs because, as it was already said, the meaning can be changed due to the lack of distinction between the subject and the object. Thus in this case, the subject and the object are usually placed at different sides of the verb as in (22). If the word order is changed into OVS (*O lobo viu o menino.*) it would not be clear if the wolf saw the boy or vice versa since the verbal inflection is the same for the third person singular.

- (22) **O menino** viu o lobo. (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 224)

‘The boy saw the wolf.’

Also it is considered that intransitive verbs can both have the VS and the SV word order like in the sentence (23) and there is no difference.

(23) *Chegaram os viajantes.* (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 224)

‘\*Came the travellers.’

***Os viajantes*** *chegaram.*

‘The travellers came.’

Post-verbal subjects on the other hand, are possible in the embedded sentences like in (24).

(24) *O Paulo disse que comeu a Maria a sopa.*

‘Paulo said that ate Mary the soup.’ (Costa 2004: 26)

Parkinson (1997) specifies some other cases in which the position of the subject changes in Portuguese. As before mentioned in the example (23), intransitive verbs can have both the SV and the VS order but Parkinson (1997: 157) states that those intransitive verbs that have “temporal or locative content” would more likely be found in the VS order. Therefore, verbs like *chegar* ‘to come’ or *aparecer* ‘to appear’ would most likely adopt VS over SV word order like in examples (25) and (26). This rule coincides with the one mentioned by Vilela (1995) who says that the word order in Portuguese is relatively free, but with some verbs such as the ones meaning ‘to enter on a stage’<sup>12</sup> and ‘to happen’<sup>13</sup> the subject has to be post-verbal if it hasn’t been mentioned before.

(25) *Chegou o domingo.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

‘\*Came Sunday.’

(26) *Apareceu um homem no jardim.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

‘\*Appeared a man in the garden.’

Furthermore, reflexive verbs also elicit a VS word order according to Parkinson (1997: 157). Reflexive verbs in Portuguese are made by adding a reflexive pronoun *-se* (e.g. *levantar-se* ‘to stand up’) to the verb, which is similar to the Croatian formation of reflexive verbs where the same pronoun *se* is added (e.g. *ustati se* ‘to stand up’). Another difference between Portuguese

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<sup>12</sup> In Portuguese: verbos de entrada em cena (Vilela 1995)

<sup>13</sup> In Portuguese: verbos de acontecer (Vilela 1995)

and Croatian reflexive verbs is that the Portuguese reflexive pronoun changes with the person of the verb as shown in example (27) similarly to the reflexive pronouns in English (*myself, yourself, himself, etc.*), while the Croatian stays the same (*se*) for all the persons.

(27) Present Indicative tense of the verb *levantar-se* ‘to stand up’

<i>Levanto-me</i>	<i>Levantamo-nos</i>
‘I stand up’	‘We stand up’
<i>Levantas-te</i>	<i>(levantais-vos)</i>
‘You stand up’	‘You stand up’
<i>Levanta-se</i>	<i>Levantam-se</i>
‘He/she stands up’	‘They stand up’

Therefore, as Parkinson (1997) states, reflexive verbs have a tendency to adopt a VS order like in example (28).

(28) *Libertaram-se os escravos.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

‘\*Freed themselves the slaves.’

Parkinson (1997: 157) adds that the sentences with heavy subject phrases will usually have a VS word order as shown in example (29).

(29) *Entraram dois homens gordos e um rapaz loiro.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

‘\*Came in two fat men and a blonde boy.’

Another case in which we can find a VS word order, according to Parkinson (1997: 157), are sentences which have the existential *haver* ‘to have’ as in the example (30). However, Mateus et al. (2003: 302) state that the existential verb *haver* ‘to have’ in the third person singular always has an internal argument which is a direct object and not a subject. Parkinson (1997: 157) also agrees that it is questionable if the subject that comes after the existential *haver* is in fact its subject since it does not have to agree in number with the noun. This is depicted in example (31) in which *caracóis* ‘snails’ should also be considered to be an object instead of a subject.

(30) *Houve uma reunião.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

‘\*Took place a meeting.’

(31) - *Há caracóis?* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

- *Não os há.*

‘- Are there snails?’

‘- No, there aren’t.’

### 8.3 Brazilian Portuguese

In the same way as European Portuguese developed from Latin, the Brazilian Portuguese developed from the European variety. It was influenced by African languages because of the great number of slaves that were transported to Brazil, and also by the languages of natives who had lived there prior to the arrival of the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Since the distance between Portugal and Brazil is enormous, there wasn’t any contact between the speakers of the language, so both varieties developed independently. Brazilian Portuguese developed under the influence of the afore mentioned African languages and the languages of the natives while the European variety was being standardised at the time. The differences between the two can mainly be seen in the phonology and vocabulary, but there are also significant syntactic dissimilarities.

Rocha Lima (2003: 290) states that there are two word orders in Brazilian Portuguese - a direct and inverse order.<sup>14</sup> The direct word order would be the one in which the subject comes in the first place, followed by the verb and its complements i.e. SVO. The inverse word order is frequently used in Brazilian Portuguese since there is freedom of movement of these constituents. (Rocha Lima 2003: 390)

Verbal agreement is quite weak in Brazilian Portuguese. Through the years, Brazilian Portuguese has lost some of the verbal inflections. Consequently, the verbal inflection paradigm for the verb *falar* ‘to talk’ in Brazilian Portuguese is given in table 1:

**Table 1: The inflection paradigm of the verb *falar* ‘to talk’**

<i>Eu</i> ‘I’	falo
<i>Você</i> ‘you’	
<i>Ele/ela</i> ‘he/she’	fala
<i>A gente</i> ‘people’	

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<sup>14</sup> In Portuguese: ordem directa e inversa

<i>Nós</i> ‘we’	falamos
<i>Vocês</i> ‘you pl.’ <i>Eles/elas</i> ‘they masc./fem.’	falam

While both the European and the Brazilian standardized varieties do not use the inflection for second person plural *vós* ‘you pl.’<sup>15</sup>, the second person singular *tu* ‘you’ has a tendency not to be used in the Brazilian variety and is frequently replaced by the pronoun *você* ‘you pl.’ *Você* comes from *Vossa Mercê* ‘Your Mercy’ which is an old way of addressing people and it “combines with the unmarked third person singular verb morphology.” (Cavalcante and Duarte 2008: 55) This pronoun has different usage in European and Brazilian Portuguese. In the European variety it is considered to be semi-formal, while in the Brazilian variety, in most regions, it is considered to be quite informal, partly replacing the pronoun *tu* for the second person singular. The same happened in the plural with the pronoun *vocês*.

According to Costa and Galves (2002: 3) there are three main differences between the subject position in European and Brazilian Portuguese, and these are connected to pronominal doubling, topic orientation and VSO word order. Pronominal doubling is a phenomenon specific to the Brazilian variety, in which the subject is followed by the appropriate pronoun, as in the following example:

(32) ***O Pedro***, *ele telefonou*. (Costa and Galves 2002: 4)

‘Peter, he phoned.’

Perini (2005: 233) discusses the matter of the subject position in Brazilian Portuguese and concludes that the subject cannot be put in the post-verbal position if there is a direct object in the sentence. Therefore, according to this rule, the word order VOS in the following sentence (33) is ungrammatical in Brazilian Portuguese as is in English.

(33) \**Comeu uma pizza Sônia*. (Perini 2005: 233)

\*‘Ate a pizza Sonia.’

However, sentences which do not contain a direct object can have the subject in post-verbal position, as exemplified in sentence (34).

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<sup>15</sup> However, the personal pronoun for the 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural is frequently found in dialectal language as well as literature, liturgy and legal vocabulary.

(34) *Ontem chegou Sônia.* (Perini 2005: 233)

‘\*Yesterday came Sonia.’

As we have already mentioned, the case of changing the position of the subject with *yes/no* questions in English, the position of the subject in Portuguese interrogative sentences changes as well. However, the shift doesn't occur only in *yes/no* questions in Portuguese but in *wh-questions*. Therefore, if the question word is in the first place in the sentence, the subject can only move into the post-verbal position. (Perini 2005: 233) This rule can be exemplified with the sentence (35).

(35) *Onde está Sônia?* (Perini 2005:233)

‘Where is Sonia?’

However, the author states that this rule is not applicable to all the verbs and says that with some verbs like *trabalhar* ‘to work’ the post-verbal position of the subject is not acceptable. (Perini 2005: 233)

Another possibility, when it comes to questions, is to put the interrogative pronoun at the end of the sentence but this requires the subject to precede the verb as is shown in (36). This also occurs in the European Portuguese.

(36) *Sônia comeu o que?* (Perini 2005: 233)

‘Sonia ate what?’

## 9 Null Subject in Portuguese

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Portuguese, as we have already mentioned, is a null subject language. This means that the subject, for instance a personal pronoun, can be omitted when the verb provides enough morphological information about it, e.g. inflection signalling person and number agreement. In Portuguese this means that there is no need for a personal pronoun for the first, second and third person. The exception could occur, as Mateus et al. (2003: 442) explain, in those sentences in which the verb is identical in the first and the third person singular. This is common in the imperfect tense of many verbs as shown in example (37).

(37) *Corria por montes e vales.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 442)

‘(I/he/she/it) ran over mountains and valleys.’

For example, the pronouns *eu/ele/ela* could be omitted in the example (37) but the verb *correr* ‘to run’ has the same form in the first and the third person singular of the imperfect tense and the usage of the pronouns makes the sentence less ambiguous.

Nevertheless, Portuguese is considered to be a null subject language like most Romance languages (except French) because it displays the following properties characteristic of null subject languages (Barbosa, Duarte and Kato 2005: 12):

1 phonologically null subjects

2 SV, VS order alternations (so-called “free-inversion”)

3 lack of *that*-trace effects: extraction is from post-verbal position

The examples for these properties can be found in sentences (38), (39) and (40).

(38) *Telefonaram.* (Barbosa, Duarte and Kato 2005: 12)

‘(They/You) phoned.’

In (38) the subject *eles* ‘they’ or *vocês* ‘you pl.’ can be omitted because there is no need for it, the suffix explains the subject of the sentence.

(39) *Telefonou o João./O João telefonou.* . (Barbosa, Duarte and Kato 2005: 12)

‘Phoned John./John phoned.’

In simple sentences such as (39) the subject can be either pre-verbal or post-verbal.

(40) *Que aluno disseste que comprou um computador?*



‘\*Which student did you say that bought a computer?’

(Barbosa, Duarte and Kato 2005: 12)

In (40) the subject cannot be extracted in the pre-verbal position because of lack of *that*-trace effects.

Mateus et al. (2003: 282) divide null subjects in Portuguese in three categories – argumental, undetermined and expletive.<sup>16</sup> Argumental subjects are those which can be phonetically null such as in (41). This type of subjects has no lexical realization but it can be inferred through the deictic and anaphoric mechanisms in the sentence. (De Pina 2010: 22)

(41) *Soube que passaste no exame. Parabéns!* (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

‘(I) knew that (you) passed the exam. Congratulations!’

For example, in the sentence (41) the forms *soube* of the verb *saber* ‘to know’ and *passaste* of the verb *passar* ‘to pass’ show that the subject is the first and second person singular and the subject can be omitted since the inflections of the verbs are the ones carrying the meaning.

Undetermined null subjects, according to Mateus et al. (2003), can be expressed in three ways in Portuguese – with a clitic *-se* accompanied by a verb in the third person singular such as in the example (42), with a verb in the third person plural without a subject as in (43) or with a verb in the second person singular in sentences which have a generic meaning like in (44).

(42) *Diz-se que o leite vai faltar.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

‘It is said that there will be a lack of milk.’

(43) *Dizem que o leite vai faltar.*

‘They say there will be a lack of milk.’ (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

(44) *Ajudas sempre os amigos e apesar disso eles criticam-te.*

‘One helps one’s friends and they still criticize you.’ (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

Furthermore, Mateus et al. (2003) present expletive subjects which, in other languages such as English, are always lexically expressed with impersonal verbs like in (45), with linking verbs<sup>17</sup> in (46), with subjects that are extraposed such as in (47) and in existential constructions

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<sup>16</sup> Sujeitos nulos argumentais, indeterminados (interpretação arbitrária) e expletivos.

<sup>17</sup> Verbos de elevação

shown in (48). De Pina (2010: 23) says that these subjects do not correspond to any external argument.

(45) *Chove torrencialmente.*

‘It rains cats and dogs. (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

(46) *Parece que o João chegou.*

‘It seems John has already arrived.’ (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

(47) *Surpreende-me que o João tenha chegado atrasado.*

‘It surprises me that John came late

(48) *Há três janelas na sala.*

‘There are three windows in the room.’ (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

With expletive subjects impersonal verbs such as *fazer* ‘to do’, *haver* ‘to have’ and *ter* ‘to have’ are quite often. As is shown in the sentence (49), the verb *fazer* is an impersonal verb which denotes the elapsing time.

(49) *Faz hoje dois anos que regressei a Lisboa.* (Miguel 2006: 12)

‘It has been two years since I returned to Lisbon.’

The verb *haver* can have the same meaning, but in some sentences it can also be found in existential constructions. In Brazilian Portuguese this will be expressed more frequently with the verb *ter*. These two can be compared to the English *there is/are*. (Azevedo 2004: 118) This is depicted in the example (50).

(50) *Havia vários bancos livres na praça.* (Azevedo 2004: 119)

‘There were several free benches on the square.’

Another common type of the expletive null subject is found in sentences that contain weather verbs. However, these omissions occur only when the verb is in the third person singular. This can be shown in the example (51).

(51) - *Nvou na serra?*

- *Não, mas trovejou e choveu muito.* (Azevedo 2004: 118)

‘- Did it snow in the mountains?’

‘- No, but it thundered and rained heavily.’

Mateus et al. (2003) state that these three types of null subject are always omitted. However, there is an exception in some of the dialects of European Portuguese. In some regions, there is a possibility to use the pronoun *ele* ‘he’ as an expletive subject which can be compared to the dummy subject *It* in English. This can be seen in the example (52).

(52) *Ele choveu toda a noite.* (Mateus 2003: 283)

‘\*He was raining all night.’

According to Carrilho (2012: 2), in an impersonal construction such as (52), “*ele* is an element that is devoid of argumental/referential content and homophonous to pronoun (3 sg, masc, nominative).”

When it comes to the question of the null subject, there is a difference between the European and the Brazilian variety. The European one is considered to be a null subject language, while the Brazilian variety “is losing the properties associated with the null subject parameter.” (Barbosa, Duarte and Kato 2005: 11) This change is happening because of the loss of the pro-drop parameter. (Peixoto Gravina 2008: 1) Therefore the Brazilian variety is considered to be a semi-pro-drop language. (Tavares Silva 2011: 15) With that there is a tendency in Brazilian Portuguese, which is now also becoming more popular with the speakers of the European variety, to fill the pre-verbal position with a full subject<sup>18</sup> since there is no verbal inflection for some of the persons to make the subject clearer. For example, the expression *a gente* ‘people/we’ would frequently be used in both European and Brazilian variety, instead of *nós* ‘we’. However, Vasconellos de Paiva Sória (2013: 46) explains how in the Brazilian variety it will agree with the verb in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and not in the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural as shown in the sentence (53). On the other hand, in the European variety, *a gente*, could be found agreeing with both the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular and the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, but also with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural which is shown in the example (54). (Vasconellos de Paiva Sória 2013: 49) If the subject was omitted in this sentence, it wouldn’t be understood who the subject is since there are several possibilities according to the verbal inflection.

(53) *A gente vai.* (Vasconellos de Paiva Sória 2013: 46)

‘We are going.’

(54) *A gente vai.*

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<sup>18</sup> In Portuguese: sujeito pleno

*A gente vamos.*

*A gente vão.* (Vasconcellos de Paiva Sória 2013: 50)

‘We are going.’

## 10 Subject in Semantics

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Dik (1978: 13) said about semantic functions that they “specify the roles which the referents of the terms involved play within the ‘state of affairs’ designated by the predication in which they occur.” In other words, syntactic functions are closely related to the semantic functions because they show the relations that are established between the constituents and the group that they belong to.

When the speaker is processing what they are going to say, they organise the information in the way that their communicative intentions or the message that they are trying to send is clear. As we have already mentioned, the subject in some languages changes its position according to its topic. For example in Croatian, if the subject is already known it has a tendency to move closer to the beginning of the sentence. (Vojvoda 1982: 394) This word order is considered to be neutral while all the others are considered to be stylistically marked.

Vilela (1999: 423) mentions how word order can be an indicator of the more recent information i.e. the speaker is trying to surprise the listener by presenting newer information at the beginning of the sentence. Mattoso Camara Jr. (1972: 222) adds that the last utterance in a sentence has the greatest information content which can be seen in the following examples:

(55) ***Eu** saio às três horas.* (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 222)

‘I am leaving at three o'clock.’

(56) *Às três horas **eu** saio.* (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 222)

‘\*At three o'clock I am leaving.’

(57) *Às três horas saio **eu.*** (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 222)

‘\*At three o'clock am leaving I.’

In example (55), according to Mattoso Camara's (1972) theory, the prepositional phrase of time *às três horas* is emphasised as the new and more important information in the sentence while in the examples (56) and (57) the emphasis is on the verb (*saió* – the bus departs, not arrives) and on the subject (*eu* – I, not you).

The subject also suffers from the restrictions imposed by the verb i.e. the verb dictates the semantic function of the subject. Raposo et al. (2013: 353) state that the alteration of the position of the subject and the predicate is connected to the semantic phenomena of topicalization. Topicalization is characterised by the movement of certain constituents of the phrase to the left of the sentence thus the SVO word order can become OVS when the object is topicalized. This is shown in the example (58) in which the object of the sentence, *o exame*, was topicalized and now it occupies the initial position in the sentence while the subject is in the final position in the sentence.

(58) *Entregou o exame o Pedro.* (Paiva Raposo, Bacelar do Nascimento and Coelho da Mota 2013: 353)

SVO sentence: *O Pedro entregou o exame.*

‘\*The exam submitted Pedro.’ (SVO sentence: ‘Pedro submitted the exam.’)

Topicalization of the subject, besides the regular SVO word order, can be done, and is really frequent in Brazilian Portuguese, by repeating the subject in a form of a pronoun like in the sentence (59).

(59) *Os livros, eles estão em cima da mesa.* (Da Silva 2012: 9)

‘The books, they are on the table.’

In Portuguese, the subject can have several semantic functions. According to Mateus et al. (in Miguel 2006: 16) the semantic roles which a subject can have are agent, source, experiencer, theme, recipient and location.<sup>19</sup> As an agent the subject acts as a controlling entity in a situation which is usually represented by animate nouns or pronouns referring to them as shown in the example (60).

(60) *Dois ladrões assaltaram este banco.* (Miguel 2006: 16)

‘Two thieves robbed this bank.’

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<sup>19</sup> Agente, fonte, experienciador, tema, alvo, locativo

In the role of the source, the subject acts as an entity which is the origin of a certain situation and it has no control over it. Forces of nature are most frequently represented by this type of semantic functions as can be seen in the sentence (61).

(61) *O furacão Katrina destruiu toda a cidade de Nova Orleães.* (Miguel 2006: 16)

‘Hurricane Katrina destroyed the whole city of New Orleans.’

Subject as an experiencer is an entity which goes through an emotional or physical experience such as depicted in the example (62).

(62) *Todos os pais amam os seus filhos.* (Miguel 2006: 17)

‘All parents love their children.’

As we have previously mentioned, a subject can also have a semantic role of a theme which means that it is an entity which is moved by the verb and changes its state or location. This is demonstrated in the sentence in the example (63).

(63) *Um bombeiro caiu na água, ao tentar salvar um náufrago.* (Miguel 2006: 17)

‘A firefighter fell into the water while trying to save a castaway.’

In the role of the recipient, the subject is an entity which was transferred somewhere else such as depicted in example (64).

(64) *O Carlos herdou uma quinta do avô.* (Miguel 2006: 17)

‘Carl inherited an estate from his grandfather.’

The last semantic role is the location by which the subject expresses the location of a certain entity as shown in (65).

(65) *O camião contém fardos de palha.* (Miguel 2006: 17)

‘The truck contains bales of straw.’

Sometimes the position of the subject depends on whether the subject is a topic or a focus but also on the type of verb. Therefore Bick (2000: 98) states

that “intransitive verbs with agent subjects like *dormir* ‘to sleep’ or *trabalhar* ‘to work’, usually place topic subjects to the left and focus subjects to the right.”

(66) *O hipopótamo dormia.* (Bick 2000: 98)

‘The hippo was sleeping.’

(67) *Na beira do rio, dormia **um hipopótamo**.* (Bick 2000: 98)

‘\*On the bank of the river was sleeping a hippo.’

Therefore, in a sentence like (66) the subject *o hipopótamo* is supposed to be already familiar, while in a sentence such as (67) the subject is focused and thus positioned in a post-verbal position. When it comes to “ergative verbs<sup>20</sup> with experiencer subjects such as *cair* ‘to fall’ or *morrer* ‘to die’, they allow both topic-less focus constituents and topic subjects to the right” of the verb. (Bick 2000: 98) Accordingly, the sentence (68) and (69) do not differ semantically.

(68) ***O pássaro** morreu.* (Bick 2000: 98)

‘The bird died.’

(69) *Morreu **o pássaro**.* (Bick 2000: 98)

‘\*Died the bird.’

Finally, he adds that “focus constituents left of the verb, without a syntactic topic, sound awkward in all cases” (Bick 2000: 98), as seen in example (70), so in Portuguese as well as English, cleft sentences are used in order to make them sound more natural like in (71).

(70) *?**Um pássaro** dormia.* (Bick 2000: 98)

‘?A bird was sleeping.’

(71) *Era **um pássaro** que dormia.* (Bick 2000: 99)

‘It was a bird that was sleeping.’

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<sup>20</sup> Ergative verbs are those verbs that can be both transitive and intransitive such as *finish*. In a sentence like *She finished the book*, the verb is transitive since it has an object whereas in *The movie has finished*, it is intransitive.

## 11 Study

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The research consist of two parts – a corpus study and a questionnaire. Corpus study was done in order to see whether the theories that have been presented in the previous chapters coincide with the practice, i.e. the written corpus of the Portuguese language.

The questionnaire was conducted with the purpose of comparing the theoretical part, corpus findings and actual usage of the Portuguese native speakers.

### 11.1 Corpus study

In this study the corpus used was the Corpus of the Portuguese language<sup>21</sup> developed by Mark Davies (BYU) and Michael J. Ferreira (Georgetown University). It contains 45,000,000 words from almost 57,000 Portuguese texts between 1300s and 1900s. The corpus offers a possibility of choosing a dialect (European or Brazilian Portuguese), the historical period (1300s, 1400s, 1500s ...1900s) and the register of the language (spoken, fictional, journalistic and academic language).

The corpus study was executed in two sections – the first part consisted of verifying the subject – verb order according to nouns and pronouns while the other part was determining the subject – verb order according to the verb type. The study was conducted in a way that the words which were chosen were processed in the corpus (the European dialect and the 20<sup>th</sup> century vocabulary was chosen) and then the word order was manually determined from the first 200 results. The sentences in which the chosen word had a different function (for example, not a subject or verb but an object) as well as subjectless sentences were disregarded. The preview of the corpus for the word *mãe* ‘mother’ is shown in table 2.

Table 2: Corpus preview.

a	19Or:Pt: Cordial	coisa, (..) eu é que ia sempre levar o tabuleiro à minha <b>mãe</b> . Agarrava no tabuleiro.. INQ O tabuleiro era quantos pães? INF1 Bem,	/
b	19Or:Pt: Cordial	uma coisa manual. Eu (..) nunca vi aquilo, mas a minha <b>mãe</b> falava-me nisso. Chama-se uma zangarilha, era. INQ E, mas essa,	SV
c	19Or:Pt: Cordial	forças quase há um ano inteiro "? ptCord_AAL54## INF E depois, morreu a <b>mãe</b> . Morrendo a mãe, ficaram os dois, um que estava a casa do	VS

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.corpusdoportugues.org/>



The first column contains the information about the texts in which the examples were found. Therefore, the text belong to the 20<sup>th</sup> century Portuguese text. Sentence **a** was disregarded due to the fact that the chosen word functioned as the object and not the subject. In sentence **b** there is a coordinating sentence *mas a minha mãe falava-me nisso* ‘but my mother was speaking to me about it’ in which the subject is *a minha mãe* ‘my mother’ and it precedes the verb of the sentence *falava-me* ‘was speaking (to me)’. In sentence **c** the subject *a mãe* ‘the mother’ follows the verb *morreu* ‘died’.

### 11.1.1 Nouns

In the first part of the study, the most common nouns and pronouns were picked and processed in the corpus. Both animate and inanimate nouns were researched in order to see whether there is any difference in word order. The animate nouns used were *mãe* ‘mother’, *professor* ‘teacher’, *menino* ‘boy’ and *homem* ‘man’. The inanimate nouns processed in the corpus were *saudade* ‘longing, yearning’, *amor* ‘love’, *futebol* ‘football’ and *coisa* ‘thing’.

#### ***Mãe* ‘mother’**

As can be seen in table 3, the word mother functioned as a subject in 104 sentences out of 200. The majority of the time (in 95 sentences) the order was subject-verb, while in 9 sentences the order was reversed. The sentences in which the VS word order appeared had verbs like *morror* ‘to die’ (*morreu a mãe* ‘\*died the mother’) which is an intransitive verb. As it was mentioned before in example (24), with intransitive verbs both the VS and the SV word orders can occur and there is no difference in meaning. More examples of the VS order occurred with the verbs *chegar* ‘to come’ (*chegou a mãe* ‘\*came the mother’), which can be considered as a verb with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’, and *ir* ‘to go’ (*depois lá ia a minha mãe* ‘\*later there went my mother’) and therefore the subject is more likely to be post-verbal.

**Table 3: Word order of nouns, pronouns and verbs in corpus**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Total (out of 200)</b>	<b>SV</b>	<b>VS</b>
<i>Mãe</i> ‘mother’	104	95	9
<i>Professor</i> ‘teacher’	76	62	14
<i>Menino</i> ‘boy’	49	35	14
<i>Homem</i> ‘man’	74	59	15
<i>Saudade</i> ‘longing, yearning’	52	36	12
<i>Amor</i> ‘love’	21	20	1
<i>Futebol</i> ‘football’	34	30	4
<i>Coisa</i> ‘thing’	66	52	14
<i>Eu</i> ‘I’	192	185	7
<i>Ele</i> ‘he’	156	153	3
<i>Ela</i> ‘she’	152	140	12
<i>Morrer</i> ‘to die’	113	80	33
<i>Cair</i> ‘to fall’	96	68	28
<i>Chegar</i> ‘to come’	86	61	25
<i>Aparecer</i> ‘to appear’	145	70	75
<i>Acontecer</i> ‘to happen’	88	57	31
<i>Ocorrer</i> ‘to occur’	141	101	40
<i>Sentar-se</i> ‘to sit’	63	62	1
<i>Levantar-se</i> ‘to get up’	92	83	9

### ***Professor* ‘teacher’**

The statistics for the word *professor* ‘teacher’ can be seen in table 3. From the total of 200 sentences, in 76 sentences the chosen word was found to function as the subject. Subject-verb order was found in 62 sentences while the word order was reversed in 14.

The verbs which were found in VS sentences were *dizer* ‘to say’, *concordar* ‘to agree’, *perguntar* ‘to ask’ and *estar* ‘to be’. *Dizer*, *concordar* and *perguntar* all belong to the so-called *dicendi* verbs, which have a tendency to postpone the subject. (Mouta Marques 2009: 94) This characteristic has its roots in Old Portuguese. In the corpus, these verbs were found in sentences taken mostly from fiction and in them the person who was speaking, asking a question or agreeing with somebody else was introduced by these verbs as shown in examples (72) and (73).

(72) ‘...*como dizia um professor desta casa...*’

...\*like would say a teacher from this house ...

(73) ‘“...” *perguntou-lhe o professor.*’

“...” \*asked her the teacher.

### ***Menino* ‘boy’**

The word *menino* ‘boy’ occurred as as the subject in only 49 sentences out of 200, out of which 35 times it preceded the verb while 14 times the verb preceded the subject (see table 3). The low number of subjects can be attributed to the fact that the Portuguese frequently use this word in vocative phrase such as *O menino* ‘hey boy’ or *Olha menino* ‘look here boy’, which weren’t considered as subjects of the sentences.

Verbs such as *nascer* ‘to be born’, *interrogar* ‘to question’, *haver* ‘to have’ and *dormir* ‘to sleep’ were found to come before the subject. *Nascer* can be considered as the verb with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ and thus the subject is post-verbal. *Interrogar* belongs to *dicendi* verbs which were explained in the examples (64) and (65). *Haver* was also mentioned as the verb that prefers the VS order (see example (30)) and in the corpus it was found in the sentence (74). However, as we have mentioned, in grammar books the verb *haver* is described as a verb which doesn’t take a subject but an object (Mateus et al. 2003: 302), but in sentences which were found in spoken language *haver* comes with a subject.

(74) *Isso haverá algum menino...*

‘\*That will have some boy’

### ***Homem* ‘man’**

As can be seen in table 3, the word *homem* occurred as the subject in 74 sentences, out of which 59 were positioned before the verb. In the remaining 15 it came after the verb. The obstacle that we have encountered, as in the previous case with the word *menino*, was the extensive use of vocative phrases (*O homem* ‘oh man’) and the object function quite frequently in the first 200 corpus results.

The verbs that forced the movement of the word *homem* to post-verbal position in the corpus study were *ir* ‘to go’, *haver* ‘to have’ and *caber* ‘to fit’. The verb *ir* in the example (75) from the corpus represents a verb with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ and therefore precedes the subject.

(75) *Mas ia um homem sozinho...*

‘\*But went a man by himself...’

Existential *haver*, which we have mentioned in examples (30) and (74), was again found with the subject in post-verbal position (example (76)).

(76) *Mas houvia cá um homem...*

‘\*But was here a man...’

### ***Saudade* ‘longing, yearning’**

The table 3 shows that out of 200 sentences, the word *saudade* as the subject was found 52 times, out of which 36 times the word order in the sentence was SV while in other 16 it was reversed. The reason for a relatively small total number could be that it mostly appeared as the object because, generally speaking, verbs which collocate with the word *saudade* most frequently, like *ter* ‘to have’ and *sentir* ‘to feel’, take it as the object in the sentence.

However, concerning the VS word order, there were no specific verbs used in the sentences except for *ser* ‘to be’ and *pesar* ‘to weigh’. Most of the sentences were from literary texts in which the authors presumably used a lot of inversion to emphasize a certain idea.

### ***Amor* ‘love’**

This turned out to be yet another word that had a low number of sentences in which it functioned as the subject because in its most frequent collocations, with verbs such as *sentir* ‘to feel’ and *fazer* ‘to make’, it comes as the object. Out of 200 sentences, the word *amor* was a subject in only 21 sentences. In 20 of these, the word order was SV and in the remaining 1 it was VS. (see table 3)

The only verb that preceded the subject in the first 200 sentences of the corpus was the verb *nascer* ‘to be born’ which, as we have already mentioned, could be considered as a verb with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ and therefore, according to Vilela (1995) elicits a VS word order.

### ***Futebol* ‘football’**

As can be seen in table 3, the word *futebol* ‘football’ occurs as the subject in 34 sentences and the word order is SV in 30 sentences. In only 4 sentences the word order is VS.

Again the problem with the small number of sentences in which this word was the subject can be ascribed to the high frequency of the verb-noun collocations, such as *jogar futebol* ‘to play football’, in which the word *futebol* functions as an object. The verbs with which the word order changed were *existir* ‘to exist’, *acabar* ‘to finish’, *haver* ‘to have’ and *ser* ‘to be’. In examples (77) and (78), which were found in the corpus, *haver* and *existir* both have an existential meaning and elicit a VS word order.

(77) *É um clube do Sul do Brasil, onde existe um **futebol** mais em força, como aqui em Portugal.*

‘\*It is a club in the south of Brazil, where exists a stronger football, like here in Portugal.’

(78) *Há **futebol** feminino, mas não há equipas mistas.*

‘There is female football, but there aren’t mixed teams.’

### ***Coisa* ‘thing’**

The results weren't very different with the last inanimate noun *coisa* ‘thing’ – again there was a low number of sentences in which it acted as the subject (66/200), out of which 52 sentences had SV order and 14 had VS word order. (see table 3)

However, there was a wider variety of verbs that provoked the shift of the position of the subject such as *haver* ‘to have’, *faltar* ‘to miss’, *acontecer* ‘to happen’, *mudar* ‘to change’ and *passar* ‘to pass’.

#### 11.1.2 Pronouns

The pronouns used in this study were personal pronouns for the first and third person singular – *eu* ‘I’ and *ele/ela* ‘he/she’. The pronoun for the second person singular, which could be considered to be the most common in some languages, was not used since in Portuguese it is seldom used and has mostly lost its function in the spoken language.

With pronouns the results were interesting. There was a high number of sentences that contained these pronouns as subjects. This was probably due to the fact that whenever a subject is expressed in a sentence, the most frequent entity that expresses it is a pronoun. However, the number of SV word order was quite high, while the number of VS occurrences was very low.

### ***Eu* ‘I’**

As the most frequent pronoun, *eu* ‘I’ occurred as the subject in 192 out of the first 200 sentences of the corpus and in 185 of them it preceded the verb while in only 7 of them it came after the verb. (see table 3)

The pronoun *eu*, as the subject, came after the verbs like *acrescentar* ‘to emphasise’, *crer* ‘to believe’ and *supor* ‘to suppose’. All of these can be considered to belong to the *dicendi* verbs and therefore prefer the VS word order over SV.

### ***Ele* ‘he’**

The Portuguese pronoun for the third person singular masculine was, as can be seen in table 3, found in 156 sentences in which it functioned as the subject. In 153 of those sentences, the word order was SV and in the remaining 3 it was VS.

The only verb that came in the VS sentences was *ser* ‘to be’ and the reason for that word order could be the emphasis on a particular part of the sentence. In example (79) the emphasis is on the pronoun *ele* which means that ‘he’ is against school, not somebody else. This coincides with the theory of Mattoso Camara Jr. (1972: 222) by which the last utterance carries the most significant information.

(79) *Contra a escola é ele.*

‘\*Against school is he.’

### ***Ela* ‘she’**

The pronoun for the third person singular feminine was found to function as the subject in 152 sentences, out of which 149 had SV order and 12 VS word order. (see table 3)

The most frequent verb that preceded the pronoun *ela* was the verb *dizer* ‘to say’. The others were *pensar* ‘to think’, *ir* ‘to go’ and *ser* ‘to be’.

### 11.1.3 Verbs

The second part of the corpus research was conducted with verbs. The verbs were not chosen according to the frequency but according to type of verbs. Therefore, intransitive verbs, verbs meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ and ‘to happen’, and reflexive verbs had all been looked into. Transitive verbs were not considered in this study since we have already mentioned that the sentences with transitive verbs tend to have an SVO word order so that the meaning remains clear in the example (22). Research into transitive verbs could be done on sentences in which only the subject agrees with the verb, as in examples (18), (19) and (20) but the number of these examples in the corpus was too small to reach any conclusions. The verbs researched were: *morrer* ‘to die’ and *cair* ‘to fall’ as intransitive verbs, *chegar* ‘to come’ and *aparecer* ‘to appear’ as verbs with the meaning ‘to enter a stage’, *acontecer* ‘to happen’ and *ocorrer* ‘to occur’ as verbs with the meaning to ‘happen’ and verbs *sentar-se* ‘to sit’ and *levantar-se* ‘to get up’

representing reflexive verbs. All of the verbs were first put into the third person singular of the Past Preterite since it is one of the most used tenses especially in narration. The verbs were then processed through the corpus and the word order was manually determined.

### **Intransitive verbs - *morrer* ‘to die’ and *cair* ‘to fall’**

The corpus study showed that out of 113 sentences with the verb *morrer* 80 still had SV word order. This demonstrated that intransitive verbs such as *morrer* have a tendency to appear in SV word order. In the other 33 cases the word order was VS (see table 3).

*Cair*, on the other hand, was found functioning as the verb in only 96 sentences, 68 of which were again post-positioned to the subject while 28 preceded, it as shown in table 3.

The majority of sentences with the VS word order with both of these verbs could easily be reversed into SV and the meaning would remain the same, as the example (80) from the corpus shows.

(80) *E depois, morreu a mãe.*

‘\*And later, died the mother.’

*E depois, a mãe morreu.*

‘And later, the mother died.’

### **Verbs with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ - *chegar* ‘to come’ and *aparecer* ‘to appear’**

Vilela (1995) states that verbs *chegar* and *aparecer*, i.e. the verbs with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’, would come before the subject. While this cannot be said to be true for the verb *chegar* - the word order was VS in only 25 sentences - the verb *aparecer* gave us different results. As it can be seen in table 3, there were more sentences in which the word order was VS than those with SV word order.

The reason for such a small amount of VS sentences with the verb *chegar* could be that adverbs of place or time were frequently used, which influenced the SVA word order, as exemplified by sentence (81) from the corpus.

(81) *A resposta chegou ao fim de três meses.*

‘The answer came by the end of the three months.’



### **Verbs with the meaning ‘to happen’ - *acontecer* ‘to happen’ and *ocorrer* ‘to occur’**

With the verb *acontecer* there was a relatively small number of sentences in which the subject was expressed, probably because the third person singular of the Past Preterite of the verb was used and while it is one of the most commonly used tenses, it is also the person for which the subject is frequently omitted. Therefore, table 3 shows that the verb *acontecer* was found in the SV position 57 times out of 88 and in 31 sentences it was VS. With the verb *ocorrer* more subjects were expressed but the SV word order was prevalent as can be seen in table 3.

### **Reflexive verbs - *sentar-se* ‘to sit’ and *levantar-se* ‘to get up’**

With both of the reflexive verbs there was a low number of sentences in which the subject was expressed, again, as mentioned with the verb *acontecer*, probably because of the Past Preterite that was used in the corpus. With the verb *sentar-se* there was only one sentence, example (82), in which the word order was VS (see table 3). This example from the corpus was taken from fiction, which could explain the inverse word order.

(82) *Ao fim de um tempo curto sentou-se ela.*

‘\*After a short period of time sat down she.’

With the verb *levantar-se* it seems that the VS word order was mostly found in sentences which contained some of the following words as subject: *lua* ‘the moon’, *noite de luar* ‘moonlit night’, *claridade* ‘clarity’, *zaragata* ‘rumpus’, *vento* ‘wind’, etc. All of these nouns are nouns frequently used in poetic language, which could explain the inverted word order.

We can conclude that Portuguese is an SVO language and with all the nouns and pronouns used in this study the preferred word order was SV. It was expected that inanimate nouns such as *amor* and *saudade* would occur in VS word order since they can often be found in literary texts and poetry but the results have, firstly, given us a small number of sentences in which those words functioned as subjects and, secondly, an even smaller number of sentences with VS word order (with *amor* there was only one sentence with VS word order). With some other nouns as *homem* and *menino* there was also a low number of sentences in which they functioned as subjects primarily because these words are frequently used in vocative phrases and those sentences were automatically dismissed. The pronouns were mostly found in SV word order except for several cases in which they were usually preceded by *dicendi* verbs.

All of the verbs showed their inclination towards the SV word order, except for the verb *aparecer* ‘to appear’. However in this case there were only 5 examples more in which the word order was VS so we cannot claim that reflexive verbs such as *aparecer* elicit the VS word order. Perhaps the problem with the research into verbs was that we have chosen the person and the tense which can be found in many subjectless sentences. Maybe some other tense and person should have been used to get better results.

## 11.2 Questionnaire study

### **Aim**

The questionnaire study was done in order to see whether the theory and the corpus findings align with the actual usage of native speakers of the Portuguese language.

### **Sample**

The questionnaire was given to 65 native speakers of Portuguese. Since the European variant of Portuguese was researched in the corpus part of the research, all of the respondents were from Portugal. Their age ranged from 20 to 71 years of age and 34 respondents were male and 31 female.

### **Instrument and procedure**

Ten sentences that occurred in the corpus with the VS word order were put into the questionnaire as well as their SV counterparts. The respondents were asked to choose the sentence which seems to be more natural to them between the two possibilities. The sentences contained verbs that are considered to be “controversial” when it comes to the position of subject – intransitive, reflexive, those with the meanings ‘to enter on a stage’ and ‘to happen’. One of the questions was also associated with heavy subject phrases that Parkinson (1997: 157) mentions to be frequently found in VS word order as shown in example (29). Another sentence dealt with intransitive verbs but in a simple sentence, which can either have a SV or a VS word order. We included it in the questionnaire to see the actual preferences of native speakers of Portuguese.

The questionnaire was made in Google Docs and put on Facebook where the Portuguese people were asked to fill it in.

## Results

In the first question the respondents were asked to choose between two simple sentences, that consisted of only the subject and the verb, with the intransitive verb *correr* ‘to run’, out of which one had a SV word order and the other a VS word order.

Table 4: Results of the questionnaire study

Type of verb/subject/sentence	SV (out of 65)	VS (out of 65)
Simple sentence with an intransitive verb	65	0
Intransitive – <i>morrer</i> ‘to die’	61	4
Intransitive – <i>cair</i> ‘to fall’	0	65
With the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ – <i>chegar</i> ‘to come’	30	35
With the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ – <i>aparecer</i> ‘to appear’	64	1
Reflexive – <i>levantar-se</i> ‘to get up’	53	12
Reflexive – <i>sentar-se</i> ‘to sit’	63	2
With the meaning ‘to happen’ – <i>ocorrer</i> ‘to occur’	4	61
With the meaning ‘to happen’ – <i>acontecer</i> ‘to happen’	1	64
Heavy subject phrase	15	50

The results showed (see table 4) that all of the respondents chose the SV word as the more natural one, which could suggest that in simple sentences like the one in example (80), the word order tends to be SV. However, as we have mentioned, there is no difference between the SV and VS word order in such sentences.

Another intransitive verb that was also researched in the corpus study, as well as in the questionnaire, was the verb *morrer*. The results show that the respondents felt the SV word order was more natural when it comes to this sentence and the majority of them decided to go with the SV word order.

With the verb *cair*, which is also an intransitive verb, all the respondents found the VS word order to be better. This could be because of the adverbial of place (see example (83)) which was positioned initially in the sentence and therefore the AVS word order, with the adverbial and the subject on each side of the verb rather than both preceding it, could feel to be a better option for the respondents.

(83) *Na Alemanha caiu imensa chuva.*

‘\*In Germany fell a huge amount of rain.’

When it comes to verbs with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’, like *chegar* ‘to come’, the results showed that the respondents equally chose SV and VS word order, although VS word order had 5 responses more in its favour, which can be seen in table 4. The explanation can be found again in example (23) where it was stated that with intransitive verbs, especially in simple sentences, both word orders are possible without any changes in meaning.

The other verb with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ which was used in the research, *aparecer*, has shown different results. All of the respondents except one chose the SV word order over the VS order, which is contrary to the results of the corpus study in which the verb *aparecer* was the only verb which was found in more VS than SV sentences.

The reflexive verb *levantar-se* was thought to be more natural in SV word order by 53 respondents, while the other 12 thought it to fit better in a VS sentence. The similar situation was found with the other reflexive verb, *sentar-se*, which was considered to fit better in a SV sentence by 63 respondents while only two positioned it before the subject. However, it is curious why most of the respondents chose the SV word order in this sentence (example (82) was used in it) since this sentence also consisted of an adverbial of time which came in initial position in the sentence, the same as in example (83) in which all of them decided to go with the VS word order.

With both verbs meaning ‘to happen’, *ocorrer* and *acontecer*, the majority of the respondents chose the VS word order. Again, this could be due to the adverbial of time, *à meia noite* ‘at midnight’, that came in initial position in the sentence, as shown in examples (84) and (85).

(84) *À meia noite o embate ocorreu.*

‘At midnight the crash happened.’

(85) *À meia noite ocorreu o embate.*

‘\*At midnight happened the crash.’

In the sentence with the heavy subject phrase (example (29)), most of the respondents chose the VS word order, while only 15 of them decided that SV would be better, which could lead to the conclusion that generally the VS word order would be a better solution for this kind of subject.

## 12 Conclusion

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Since ancient history linguists have tried to define the term ‘subject’ since it is considered to be, besides the verb, the most important part of the sentence. From Aristotle who established the terms *onoma* and *rhema* to modern linguists who struggle with the complexity of the subject since it encompasses several linguistic fields like syntax, semantics and pragmatics. Therefore it is considered to be “a cluster concept” or a “multifactor concept”. (Keenan 1976: 312) Its relation to the verb is crucial since the subject actually shows us who is performing the action expressed by the verb in the sentence. Through comparison of three languages, English, Portuguese and Croatian, we tried to establish the differences and similarities with regard to subject position. The overview is given in table 5:

**Table 5: Comparison of English, Portuguese and Croatian**

<b>Language</b>	<b>Nominal inflections - yes/no</b>	<b>Unmarked word order</b>	<b>Null subject language - yes/no</b>
Croatian	Yes	SVO	Yes
English	No	SVO	No
Portuguese	No	SVO	Yes

As can be seen in table 5, Croatian is the only language of the three that has nominal inflections and, as we have mentioned in chapter 6, this fact influences its word order, which is relatively free. A noun or a pronoun in the nominative case usually marks the subject of the sentence. The subject must agree with the verb in gender, number and person. That is one of the reasons why in Croatian all six possible word orders can be used. These characteristics are unfamiliar to English and Portuguese, since neither of them are inflective languages nor do they possess cases. Consequently the word order in these languages is more fixed and the meaning is sensitive to the change of the position of elements in a sentence, especially when the verbal inflection of transitive verbs is the same for both the subject and the object (examples (16), (17) and (22)).

The unmarked word order of all three languages is SVO. However, they differ quite significantly in that area. All six possible word orders can be used in Croatian (example (8)) but they would be considered to be stylistically marked and used more often in the language of literature or when a certain element needs to be stressed (such as those in examples (10), (11),

etc.). Portuguese is a little bit stricter than Croatian since five out of six word orders can be used in Portuguese sentences (example (21)). However, with certain verbs some word orders are more frequent than others. For example, with verbs with the meaning ‘to enter on a stage’ or ‘to happen’ the subject has to be post-verbal if it is mentioned for the first time in the sentence. (Vilela 1995) Also, reflexive verbs are known to be found more often in the pre-subject position according to Parkinson (1997) such as the one in example (28). The position of the subject doesn’t always depend on the type of verb but also on the type of subject, so a heavy subject phrase will have a tendency to come after the verb as it was shown in example (29) by Parkinson (1997: 157). English, on the other hand, has a fixed word order which is SVO in declarative sentences. It “states the giving of the object” (Davis 1968: 460) but in sentences with transitive verbs it clearly explains the subject of the sentence because it is positioned before the verb while the object will be found after the as in examples (16) and (17).

When it comes to the question of null-subject languages, i.e. languages in which the subject doesn’t have to be overtly expressed, Portuguese and Croatian, unlike English, fall in this category. English, on the other hand, has to use an expletive subject or a dummy subject such as *it* or *there*. While the standardised variety of Portuguese omits expletive subjects, they are used in some dialects and also Brazilian variety, so sentences such as example (52) are quite frequent. There is, however, a difference between the European and Brazilian variety of Portuguese. While the European variety is a true null-subject language, the Brazilian one is leaning towards becoming a non-null subject language and is now considered to be a semi-drop language. (Tavares Silva 2011) This is happening due to the loss of verbal dissidence and therefore there are no clear markers for the subject in the sentence, which therefore has to be expressed.

In our two studies we have shown that according to both the corpus data and native speakers of the Portuguese language, SVO word order is the most frequently used one and the one that seems most natural to use. In the results of the corpus study it was evident that even those several types of verbs (reflexive, with the meaning ‘to happen’ and ‘to enter on a stage’, etc.) which were considered to prefer the VS word order, still occurred in the SV word order more frequently than in VS. Unfortunately, the part of the corpus study which involved research into nouns and pronouns didn’t show that much insight into the existence of rules which could condition the word order in Portuguese.

The questionnaire part of the study has shown that with some of the verbs that were mentioned in the theoretical part as the ones that prefer the VS word order, the native speakers

would more often choose the *SV* word order or vice versa. There were also several examples in which the grammarians claimed that the *VS* order would be better but 90% of the respondents said otherwise. This could be due to the fact that only one sentence with a particular verb was presented in the questionnaire. If there were more examples perhaps the results would have been different.

Therefore, there is room for improvement in research on this topic. One of the possibilities could be to look into the effect the adverbial has on the position of the subject and the verb since we came across several sentences that contained an adverbial at the beginning of the sentence and in some of them the word order was *VS* while in others it was *SV*.



## 13 Summary in Portuguese

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Nesta tese nos vamos fazer uma descrição da posição do sujeito em três línguas diferentes – inglês, português e croata. Depois da teoria sobre o sujeito nestas línguas, vamos apresentar duas pesquisas – uma do corpus da língua portuguesa e o inquérito aos falantes do português.

O sujeito gramatical, com o predicado, é um dos constituintes mais importantes na oração. As características do sujeito foram investigadas por linguistas desde o tempo de Aristóteles. Não é possível fazer uma definição universal do sujeito porque em todas as línguas este termo tem implicações diferentes. Em algumas línguas o sujeito fica no caso nominativo enquanto noutras línguas os casos não existem. O sujeito, em algumas línguas, fica só na posição inicial da frase ou em outras línguas não tem de ser mencionado na oração. Por causa disso, o sujeito é considerado como um conceito multifatorial. (Keenan 1976: 312) Em geral o sujeito é definido como o constituinte que diz o que está a fazer a ação denotada pelo verbo e sobre o que é a frase. (Aarts 1997: 8) Mateus et al. (2003: 161) definem o sujeito como a “relação gramatical sintática do constituinte que ocorre como argumento externo do predicador, i.e., do argumento que ocupa uma posição externa à projeção máxima definida pelo predicador.” Na *Gramática do português*, o sujeito é determinado como a expressão que introduz a entidade sobre o qual o emissor está a falar. (Paiva Raposo, Bacelar do Nascimento e Coelho da Mota 2013: 352)

Quando falamos sobre os tipos de sujeito, podemos distinguir, segundo Svenonius (2002: 3), *grammatical/formal subject* e *logical/notional subject*. A diferença entre os dois termos pode ser exprimida no exemplo em inglês:

*It was **Martin** who broke the window.*

Neste exemplo, o sujeito gramatical seria a palavra *it* porque a sua função é simplesmente preencher a posição típica do sujeito mas a palavra *Martin* é o sujeito lógico porque ele é a pessoa que está a fazer a ação.

Outro tipo de sujeitos, que são especialmente importantes em inglês, mas também são usados em português, são sujeitos expletivos. Eles não têm conteúdo semântico só uma função de marcar a posição onde o sujeito devia estar.

Como a maioria das línguas no mundo, estas línguas todas são línguas SVO (com a ordem sujeito-verbo-objeto) mas este é a única semelhança entre elas. O croata é entre as três, a língua que apresenta nas suas orações uma ordem das palavras mais livre. O croata pertence ao grupo das línguas muito flexíveis com um sistema morfológico muito rico. (Seljan 2004: 3) Isto significa que o croata é uma língua com casos que são sintaticamente significativos e cada um tem a sua função. O sujeito em croata geralmente fica no nominativo. Ele também mostra a concordância com os verbos em género, número e pessoa e com adjetivos em género, número e caso. (Barić, Lončarić and Malić 1997: 421) Os substantivos ou alguma palavra nominal pode ser o sujeito em croata.

O croata é uma língua de sujeito nulo que significa que o sujeito não precisa de ser exprimido quando o verbo está na primeira ou segunda pessoa porque o sujeito é oculto como no exemplo:

*Odlazim.*

‘Vou.’

Neste exemplo, o verbo fica na primeira pessoa do singular e o pronome *ja* ‘eu’ não deve ser exprimido.

As frases sem sujeito são muito frequentes em croata e português, especialmente com os verbos impessoais como os verbos que denotam as condições do tempo como chover, nevar, trovejar, etc. Em inglês, estes verbos precisam de um sujeito expletivo para a frase ser gramatical.

As categorias morfológicas são responsáveis pela flexibilidade da ordem das palavras em croata. A ordem mais comum e não marcada em croata é a ordem SVO. (Seljan 2004: 3) De seis ordens das palavras possíveis todas são gramaticais no croata, a única diferença pode ser encontrada na marcação estilística. Então, um falante do croata vai usar mais umas ordens do que outros. Por exemplo, as ordens SVO e VSO são mais usadas do que SOV, OVS, OSV e VOS. Nos quatro casos seguintes, o destaque fica no objeto. Segundo Vojvoda (1982: 394), a

posição do sujeito é condicionada pelo seu tópico. Se o sujeito é considerado como informação nova, vai ter tendência para aproximar-se ao início da frase.

Em inglês, segundo Aarts (1997: 13), existem seis regras que definem se a frase nominal é o sujeito ou não e elas são:

1. Tem que ser uma expressão nominal.
2. É a primeira expressão nominal na frase.
3. É obrigatória e não pode ser omitida.
4. Deve estar em concordância com o verbo.
5. Nas questões, o sujeito muda de lugar com o verbo inserido *do* em apropriada pessoa, número e tempo.
6. Com *tag questions*, o *tag question* deve ser o pronome que refere ao sujeito.

Os sujeitos expletivos são muito importantes para o inglês e em inglês existem três tipos destes sujeitos *extraposition it*, *weather it* e *impersonal it*. (Svenonius 2002: 5) Os sujeitos expletivos não têm significado nenhum e não se referem a coisa nenhuma na frase. Em inglês, estes sujeitos expletivos podem ser expressos com os pronomes *it* existencial ou *there* não-referencial. (Aarts 1997: 10)

A ordem dos constituintes nas frases em inglês é mais ou menos fixa porque a mudança, por exemplo, da posição do sujeito e objeto pode causar uma mudança no significado como na frase:

*Martin hit Peter.*

*Peter hit Martin.*

Depois da mudança das posições não temos a certeza se o *Martin* é o sujeito ou o objeto e não sabemos que menino bateu no outro.

A língua portuguesa evoluiu do Latim vulgar e a posição do sujeito pode ser explorada através de etapas diacrónicas do português. Em português arcaico a ordem mais usada foi SVO, mas a ordem OSV foi também usada por causa da influência do Latim em que a posição final do verbo era obrigatória. (Mouta Marques 2009: 94) Também, em português arcaico com os

verbos *dicendi* como *falar, dizer, ordenar, mandar, contar*, etc. o sujeito era pós-verbal porque a informação que é expressa seria familiar.

Com o desaparecimento da declinação do Latim, a ordem das palavras em português tornou-se mais rígida e os casos, como em inglês, foram determinados pelas preposições.

O português do Brasil, por outro lado, teve outras influências. Os portugueses chegaram ao Brasil em 1500 e a partir desse momento a sua cultura e língua começou a misturar-se com as culturas e línguas dos nativos e escravos africanos.

O português é a língua que fica no meio entre o croata e o inglês porque é mais flexível na questão da ordem das palavras nas frases mas não tão flexível como croata. O sujeito em português concorda com o verbo em número e pessoa e pode ser substituído por um pronome. Todos os verbos exceto verbos impessoais precisam do sujeito na língua portuguesa. Segundo Mateus et al. (2003:282) a importância sintática e semântica do sujeito manifesta-se na ordem das palavras porque, nas frases simples, geralmente o sujeito fica na primeira posição. Linguistas como Azevedo (2004: 143), Ambar (em Costa 2004: 19) e Duarte (in Costa 2004: 19) todos concordam que a ordem canônica do português é SVO.

Como já dissemos, em português o sujeito e verbo concordam em número e pessoa. Segundo Costa e Figueiredo (2004: 19), o sujeito e o verbo concordam independentemente da posição do sujeito e isto é mostrado nos exemplos seguintes:

*Os meninos comeram o doce.* (SVO)

*Comeram os meninos o doce.* (VSO)

*Comeram o doce os meninos.* (VOS)

Em todas estas frases a desinência verbal *-eram* mostra que o sujeito é o substantivo no plural (*os meninos*) e não no singular (*o doce*).

Nós mencionámos que o português é uma língua SVO e que esta ordem é a ordem não marcada. Porém, outras ordens das palavras são possíveis e estas são consideradas como estilisticamente ou gramaticalmente marcadas. Segundo Costa (2004: 1), de seis ordens que são logicamente possíveis cinco ordens das palavras são corretas em português europeu – SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS e OSV.

- SVO     **O Paulo** comeu a sopa.
- ?\*SOV   \***O Paulo** a sopa comeu.
- VSO     Comeu **o Paulo** a sopa.
- OSV     A sopa, **o Paulo** comeu.
- OVS     A sopa, comeu **o Paulo**. (Costa 2004: 1)

Como em inglês, a ordem das palavras é essencial com os verbos transitivos porque, se o sujeito e o objeto ambos estão no singular não sabemos qual é a palavra que funciona como sujeito e a que funciona como objeto. Isto é mostrado no exemplo seguinte:

*O menino viu o lobo.* (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 224)

Também é considerado que os verbos intransitivos podem estar na ordem SV e VS e não há diferença entre os dois significados como no exemplo:

*Chegaram os viajantes.* (Mattoso Camara Jr. 1972: 224)

*Os viajantes chegaram.*

Os sujeitos pré-verbais, por outro lado, são possíveis nas frases incorporadas como no exemplo seguinte:

*O Paulo disse que comeu a Maria a sopa.* (Costa 2004: 26)

Parkinson (1997) dá alguns exemplos mais nos quais a posição do sujeito muda em português. Por exemplo, os verbos intransitivos com o significado temporal ou locativo vão frequentemente ser encontrados na ordem VS. (Parkinson 1997: 157) E verbos como *chegar* e *aparecer* provavelmente vão estar na ordem VS mais do que na ordem SV também como os verbos com o significado de ‘entrada na cena’ e ‘ocorrer’ com os quais o sujeito precisa de ser pós-verbal se não foi mencionado antes. (Vilela 1995)

Os verbos reflexivos, segundo Parkinson (1997: 157), também precisam da ordem das palavras VS como no exemplo:

*Libertaram-se os escravos.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

As orações com as frases do sujeito fortes vão frequentemente ter a ordem VS como no exemplo seguinte:

*Entraram dois homens gordos e um rapaz loiro.* (Parkinson 1997: 157)

Entre português europeu e português do Brasil, cujas origens não são só de Latim mas também de população indígena e escrava, há muitas diferenças na fonologia, vocabulário e diferenças importantes na área da sintaxe. Rocha Lima (2003: 290) diz que o português brasileiro tem duas ordens de palavras – a ordem direta e inversa. A ordem direta é esta em que o sujeito fica antes do verbo e dos complementos (SVO), enquanto a ordem inversa é usada frequentemente em português do Brasil por causa da liberdade do movimento dos constituintes. (Rocha Lima 2003: 390)

Existem três diferenças principais entre as posições do sujeito em português europeu e brasileiro e estas são ligadas com a duplicação pronominal, orientação do tópico e VSO ordem das palavras. (Costa e Galves 2002: 3) A duplicação pronominal é o fenómeno específico para a variação do Brasil segundo o qual o sujeito é seguido pelo pronome apropriado como no exemplo seguinte:

*O Pedro, ele telefonou.* (Costa and Galves 2002: 4)

Perini (2005: 233) fala sobre a posição do sujeito e diz que em português brasileiro o sujeito não pode estar na posição pós-verbal quando nesta frase há um objeto. Então, conforme esta regra, a ordem VOS não é gramatical em português do Brasil como no exemplo:

*\*Comeu uma pizza Sônia.* (Perini 2005: 233)

Mas, as frases que não têm o objeto direto podem posicionar o sujeito na posição pós-verbal como na frase seguinte:

*Ontem chegou Sônia.* (Perini 2005: 233)

Como já dissemos, o português e o croata são línguas de sujeito nulo, e o inglês não é. Isto significa que o sujeito, por exemplo um pronome, pode ser omitido na frase quando o verbo nos dá suficiente informação morfológica sobre o sujeito, e.g. inflexão verbal que sinaliza a concordância pessoal e numeral. Em português isto significa que os pronomes para a primeira, segunda e terceira pessoas podem ser omitidos. A exceção pode ocorrer nas frases com os verbos que são idênticos nas primeiras e terceiras pessoas do singular. (Mateus et al. 2003: 442)

Mateus et al. (2003: 282) dividem os sujeitos nulos em português em três categorias – sujeitos nulos argumentais, indeterminados e expletivos. Os sujeitos nulos argumentais são aqueles que podem ser foneticamente nulos i.e. não têm realização lexical mas segundo os mecanismos dêiticos e anafóricos podem ser inferidos. (De Pina 2010: 22) Isto é mostrado no exemplo:

*Soube que passaste no exame. Parabéns!* (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

Os sujeitos nulos indeterminados, segundo Mateus et al. (2003) podem ser expressidos em três maneiras – com o clítico *-se* acompanhado pelo verbo na terceira pessoa do singular, com o verbo na terceira pessoa do plural sem o sujeito ou com o verbo na segunda pessoa singular em orações os quais têm o significado genérico. Todas as possibilidades são apresentadas aqui:

*Diz-se que o leite vai faltar.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

*Dizem que o leite vai faltar.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

*Ajudas sempre os amigos e apesar disso eles criticam-te.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

E o último tipo de sujeitos nulos, segundo Mateus et al. (2003), são sujeitos nulos expletivos que, em outras línguas como o inglês, são sempre expressos lexicalmente com os verbos impessoais, verbos de elevação e em construções existenciais como nas frases seguintes:

*Chove torrencialmente.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

*Parece que o João chegou.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 282)

*Há três janelas na sala.* (Mateus et al. 2003: 283)

Mateus et al. (2003) dizem que estes três tipos de sujeitos nulos são sempre omitidos. Mas existe uma exceção em alguns dialetos do português europeu. Em algumas regiões, existe a possibilidade de usar o pronome *ele* como sujeito nulo expletivo que pode ser comparado com o sujeito expletivo *it* em inglês. Aqui está o exemplo deste:

*Ele choveu toda a noite.* (Mateus 2003: 283)

Quando falamos sobre o sujeito nulo, existem diferenças entre a variedade europeia e brasileira. A variedade europeia é considerada como língua de sujeito nulo, enquanto a variedade brasileira está a perder as propriedades associadas com o parâmetro de sujeito nulo. (Barbosa, Duarte and

Kato 2005: 11) Esta mudança está a ocorrer por causa da perda do pro-drop parâmetro. (Peixoto Gravina 2008: 1) E por isso, a variedade brasileira é considerada como uma língua *semi-pro-drop*. (Tavares Silva 2011: 15)

Nesta tese fizemos duas pesquisas – uma do corpus da língua portuguesa e o inquérito aos falantes do português. A primeira, pesquisa do corpus da língua portuguesa, foi feita para comparar a teoria com a prática escrita. Nesta pesquisa foi usado o Corpus do português (<http://www.corpusdoportugues.org/>) desenvolvido pelos Mark Davies (BYU) e Michael J. Ferreira (Georgetown University). Este corpus contém 45,000,000 de palavras de cerca de 57,000 textos portugueses desde 1300 até 1900. A pesquisa foi feita em duas etapas – a primeira foi verificar a ordem dos sujeitos e verbos segundo os substantivos (ambos animados e inanimados) e pronomes e outra parte foi determinar a ordem dos sujeitos e verbos segundo o tipo de verbos. As palavras escolhidas foram postas no corpus e os primeiros 200 resultados foram tirados. Depois, a ordem das palavras foi manualmente determinada nestes resultados. As frases em que as palavras tinham uma função diferente ou que não tinham o sujeito não foram consideradas.

Depois desta pesquisa concluímos que o português é uma língua SVO como todos os linguistas dizem. Com todos os substantivos e pronomes a ordem preferida foi SV. Com substantivos inanimados (como *saudade* e *amor*) nós imaginamos que a maioria dos exemplos ia ser com a ordem VS porque estes substantivos são usados principalmente na linguagem literária e poética mas os resultados foram diferentes. Em primeiro lugar, nós recebemos uma quantidade pequena de resultados nos quais estes substantivos funcionaram como sujeitos e a menor número destas frases tinha a ordem VS (com *amor* tivemos só uma frase com a ordem VS). Com outros substantivos como *homem* e *menino* o número de frases onde estas palavras funcionaram como sujeitos também foi baixo porque estas palavras são frequentemente usadas nas frases de vocativo (*O menino!*) e estas frases foram imediatamente desconsideradas. Os pronomes, na maioria dos casos, foram encontrados em frases com a ordem SV além de alguns casos onde verbos *dicendi* foram usados. Todos os verbos mostraram a sua inclinação para a ordem SV exceto o verbo *aparecer*. O problema com os resultados da pesquisa com os verbos foi que nós recebemos uma pequena quantidade de resultados nos quais estes verbos tinham o sujeito



expresso. Talvez se tivéssemos escolhido outro tempo verbal e pessoa (e não PPT e terceira pessoa de singular) teríamos obtido resultados melhores.

A segunda pesquisa foi o inquérito do público-alvo para compararmos a teoria, os resultados do corpus e prática dos falantes nativos. O inquérito foi dado a 65 falantes de português europeu dos 20 aos 71 anos de idade. Dez frases com a ordem VS que foram encontradas no corpus foram tiradas e apresentadas no inquérito com os seus SV contrapartidas. Os inquiridos precisaram escolher a frase que parecia mais natural para eles.

As frases continham os verbos que foram mencionados nas regras sobre a ordem do sujeito em português – intransitivos, reflexivos, com o significado de ‘entrada na cena’ e ‘ocorrer’. Uma das perguntas foi associada com a frase do sujeito forte que Parkinson (1997: 157) diz que vai escolher a ordem VS mais frequentemente da ordem SV. Outra pergunta foi associada com os verbos intransitivos mas nas frases simples que, segundo a regra, pode ter a ordem SV e VS e isto não vai mudar o significado da frase. Os inquiridos escolheram a ordem SV em frases com verbo intransitivo (frase simples), com o verbo intransitivo (*morrer*), com o verbo com o significado de ‘entrada a cena’ (*aparecer*) e com os verbos reflexivos (*levantar-se* e *sentar-se*). Nas outras perguntas os inquiridos escolheram a opção com a ordem VS – verbo intransitivo (*cair*), verbo com o significado ‘ocorrer’ (*ocorrer* e *acontecer*) e na frase com a frase do sujeito forte. Com o verbo *chegar*, os inquiridos não podiam escolher a melhor opção e os resultados foram mais ou menos idênticos (SV = 30, VS = 35). Tivemos algumas discrepâncias nos resultados especialmente nas frases com os adverbiais de tempo posicionados no início da frase como no exemplo:

*Na Alemanha caiu imensa chuva.*

Nesta pergunta todos os inquiridos escolheram a opção VS como mais natural e nós achamos que isto é por causa deste adverbial de tempo que fica no início da frase. Achamos que por este adverbial estar no início seria melhor que o sujeito ficasse do outro lado do verbo. Mas noutra pergunta tivemos este exemplo:

*Ao fim de um tempo curto sentou-se ela.*

E a maioria dos inquiridos escolheu a ordem SV (*Ao fim de um tempo curto ela sentou-se.*), apesar de terem novamente o adverbial de tempo.

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## 15 Appendix A

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### Inquérito

Escolham a opção que parece mais natural para vocês. Obrigada a todos!

1.

- O homem correu. ('A man ran.')
- Correu o homem.

2.

- Com 90 anos ela morreu. (\*With 90 years she died.)
- Com 90 anos morreu ela.

3.

- Os viajantes chegaram. ('The travellers came.')
- Chegaram os viajantes.

4.

- Na Alemanha imensa chuva caiu. ('In Germany a huge amount of rain fell.')
- Na Alemanha caiu imensa chuva.

5.

- Os meninos apareceram no quarto. ('The boys appeared in the room.')
- Apareceram os meninos no quarto.

6.

- Ao fim de um tempo curto ela sentou-se. ('Shortly after she sat down.')
- Ao fim de um tempo curto sentou-se ela.

7.

- Os homens mais velhos levantaram-se. ('The oldest men stood up.')
- Levantaram-se os homens mais velhos.

8.

- À meia noite o embate ocorreu. ('At midnight the crash happened.')
- À meia noite ocorreu o embate.

9.

- Ontem uma coisa muito engraçada aconteceu. ('Yesterday a funny thing happened.')
- Ontem aconteceu uma coisa muito engraçada.

10.

- Entraram dois homens gordos e um rapaz loiro. ('\*Came in two fat men and a blonde boy.')
- Dois homens gordos e um rapaz loiro entraram.