

Theoretical Linguistics

Prepared by Stanley Whitley

Clitic Attachment in Brazilian Portuguese¹

Antônio R. M. Simões

University of Kansas

Abstract: Teaching and learning the placement of clitics in Brazilian Portuguese is a challenge, especially in written language, because of the many rules of clitic placement that characterize Portuguese normative grammars. These normative rules are applied more uniformly in Portugal than in Brazil because they were based originally on Peninsular Portuguese prosody. But regardless of how uniform they may be in Portugal, normative rules of clitic placement are a challenge to non-native speakers of Portuguese. The present study proposes a simplified approach to teaching normative rules to non-native students of Brazilian Portuguese, in the written and spoken language alike, based on a single rule of pronoun attachment.

Key Words: attachment, Brazilian Portuguese, clitic, object pronoun, Peninsular Portuguese, placement, pronoun, rhythm, schwa, unstressed pronoun

0. Introduction

Understanding and therefore mastering the normative rules of unstressed object pronoun² placement is associated with how one views the motivation behind these rules. In order to understand what motivates these rules (and the extent to which the rules are limited), we will discuss a number of issues related to the placement of clitics in Brazilian Portuguese (henceforth BP). We will not deal with all of them, but only the ones that are considered most important to this investigation, such as the absence of schwas in BP, prosodic patterns (especially rhythmic patterns) and pragmatics.

The normative rules for the placement of clitics in Portuguese are mainly derived from the rhythmic patterns of the language especially as it is spoken in Portugal. The author of the present article, a Brazilian, linguistically comprehends but does not “relate” to the rhythmic patterns of Peninsular Portuguese (henceforth PP) because PP prosody is not native to him. Consequently, he finds it difficult to remember the rules of clitic placement in Portuguese as these derive from PP rhythms. Given the confusion regarding the placement of clitic pronouns that made itself manifest among the respondents to the questionnaire that informs the present study, he concludes that Brazilians in general relate poorly to PP prosody, in part because as non-linguists they do not understand the motivation for the PP clitic-placement rules, in part because those rules often don’t describe the way that they themselves speak. Brazilians therefore do a poor job of remembering the rules of clitic placement as prescribed in normative grammars.

The prosodic patterns of BP are different from those of PP. This is evidenced in the effects of rhythm on the deletion of vowels or presence of schwas in PP. In BP there are normally no schwas, although BP does play host to a vowel reduction that is mainly brought about by the relatively lower amplitudes of its vowels. For example, the pronunciation of the word “Portugal” in PP and BP, in allegretto style, can be represented *phonetically* as follows:

Table 1

Peninsular Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese
[pɔrt.ɣal] CVCC.CVC or [pɔrt.ɣá] CCC.CVC	[pɔɾ.tu.ɣa*] CVC.CV.CV*
[g] is a voiced velar stop	[r] is a syllabic <i>r</i> ; voiced alveolar simple trill
[l] is a velarized voiced alveolar lateral	[t] is a voiceless dental or alveolar stop
[p] is a voiceless bilabial stop	[a] is a stressed low central vowel
[β] represents a voiced uvular fricative, though in this same post-nuclear position we find other variants, e.g., the voiceless velar fricative [x], the voiceless pharyngeal [ħ], the trill [r] and the less socially prestigious voiced retroflex [ɻ]	[aː] is a stressed low, mid-rising diphthong
[r] is a voiced alveolar multiple trill.	[ə] is a schwa
	[o] is a rounded back mid vowel
	[u] is a rounded back high vowel

As the preceding description seeks to show, in Portugal the word *Portugal* may be realized phonetically as a two-syllable word, with a schwa or a syllabic *r*. A different interpretation (Mateus and D'Andrade 1998) does not change the main point of the present study. In Mateus and D'Andrade's descriptions, PP does not have syllabic consonants, yet they do agree that PP does have phonetic sequences of three and even four consonants, a view that is consonant with the present study's primary thrust. In BP one can assume that *Portugal* will be pronounced with three syllables and normally an absence of schwa-like vowels. (In that sense the present study disagrees with Perini [2004], who claims that schwas abound in BP, especially in post-tonic position.)

Although other variants might surface phonetically, the differences above are noted to indicate the most likely effects of stress-timed rhythm in PP. While PP's rhythmic patterns are notoriously stress-timed, BP's rhythmic patterns are best described as a "hybrid" combination of stress- and syllable-timed characteristics. This alternation from stress-timed to syllable-timed rhythm can be better understood if we realize that Brazilians can comfortably read a text in prose or poetry with either stress- or syllable-timed rhythm. Native monolingual speakers of English and Spanish, however, are normally at ease only when they read with stress-timed rhythms or syllable-timed rhythms respectively.

Kenneth Pike illustrated how rhythm can affect similar changes in English. According to Pike (1945), the number of stresses reduces or extends the number of syllables, so the sentence (1) "If Tom will I will" retains a similar duration even when we expand it by two syllables: (2) "If Tom'll do it I will" because sentence (2) still has just two strong stresses. (The first sentence has two strong stresses or two syllable feet and five syllables, while the second sentence has the same two strong stresses or two syllable feet but contains seven syllables.) Thus the duration of an English utterance depends on the number of stresses it possesses. In Spanish, on the other hand, sentence duration depends on the number of syllables it has. A strong-stress-marked ten-syllabled Spanish sentence such as "Si Juan Valdéz tocára yó iría" is therefore of shorter duration than the sentence "Si Juaníto Valdéz tocára yó iría." Note that the second sentence has twelve syllables, because of the addition of the diminutive *-ito*. In BP, a similar sentence will be both longer in duration and the home to a greater number of rhythmic beats, thereby creating what was called—in the preceding paragraph—a hybrid combination of stress-timed and syllable-timed rhythm, thus:

- (i) Se o Tólm Jobím tocár eu váu. (If Tom Jobim will play, I will go)
- (ii) Se o Tólm Jóbim fór tocár eu váu. (If Tom Jobim is going to play, I will go)

There are other theoretical considerations that we will avoid here as they are not germane to the present discussion. What matters for the purposes of the current discussion is that though the verb *for* is not stressed as strongly as the other tonic words, it indeed is stressed and does not become reduced.

To my knowledge, the idea of a hybrid rhythm in BP has never been proposed. Although Abaurre (1981) describes BP and PP prosody as falling somewhere in between the prototypical rhythms of English and Spanish, she did not consider the possibility that BP could be seen as a language whose rhythmic patterns alternated, nor did she discuss vowel changes as the present investigation does.

1. The Interplay of Rhythm and Clitic Attachment

One way in which Brazilians speak a variety that is different from what is heard in Portugal is that they find it peculiar to attach clitics post-verbally to conjugated verb forms, as PP speakers do, thus:

- (i) O palestrante surpreendeu-lhes com tal afirmativa.
- (ii) As pessoas acharam-no ridículo.

Likewise, Brazilians typically do not understand the reason for the use of a hyphen indicating clitic attachment to the conjugated verb. Sentences (iii) and (iv) are written according to normative grammars that make sense to native speakers of PP:

- (iii) Quero-te pedir um favor. I want to ask you a favor.
- (iv) Tenho-lhe explicado isso. I have been explaining this to you/him/her.

In Brasil, as Câmara (1979, 254–55) has noted, the phonological units in (iii) and (iv) in Portugal would be divided into feet as follows—“querote,” “tenholhe”—while in Brazil the foot division would be “Quero | tepedir” and “Tenho | lheexplicado.”

So if normative rules of clitic attachment are already a challenge for native speakers of BP, one can only imagine how much more of a challenge they will be for non-native students of BP. (Spanish, famously cognate with Portuguese, has a much more regular set of rules for clitic placement, so it is especially the case that hispanophone students of BP will find its clitic attachment rules challenging and even discouraging.)

The single rule proposed here (see § 3 [1] below) has been used in the present author’s classroom since the mid-1990s at the Vitória (Brazil) Summer Language Institute in an attempt to make clitic placement rules more palatable for the non-native student. Brazilian linguists have long known of the tendency to place the clitics before the main verb—the lexical, not the auxiliary—at least in the *spoken* language (v. Câmara 1979 [1972]; Cunha 1985; Cunha and Cintra 1985; Perini 2003). A simplification of these rules in the *written* language, for the benefit of non-native students and in particular Spanish speakers, has also been attempted in Simões (1992). The present paper points out the details of how spoken language characteristics can be used to simplify the placement of clitics in the written language to help the non-native student—and even many native speakers of BP—understand and retain the rules for written-language clitic attachment.

2. A Pilot Experiment

In January of 2000, the questionnaire appearing below was sent by internet to a number of native speakers of BP in Brazil and in the United States; 42 of them responded; the experiment was designed to obtain supporting information for the present study. All respondents were undergraduate and graduate students, teachers and professionals; eight of them hold an American doctorate. The age of the group as a whole varied between 20 and 50 years old. There were 24 females and 18 males.

Their task was to indicate the sentences whose clitic placement they considered acceptable. The results were hardly surprising. Brazilians feel uncertain about normative rules of clitic

placement, regardless of their level of education and their formal study of these rules at school. The questionnaire sent out by web appears immediately below. The translation that follows of the instructions was not part of the original.

Questionnaire: Assinale com um "S" as orações que você considera aceitáveis. Indique com um "N" as orações não aceitáveis e com um "?" as que apresentam dúvida. Evite deixar-se influenciar pela gramática da escola. Usando seu próprio julgamento você terminará mais rápido. Se quiser indicar o que é melhor na língua falada ou escrita, também pode indicar logo depois da oração, na mesma linha, mas não é preciso. Obrigado por tudo.

(Indicate with an "S" the sentences that you consider acceptable. Indicate with an "N" the ones you consider unacceptable and with a "?" the ones that you are uncertain about. Avoid letting your judgments be influenced by the grammar rules that you have learned in school. By using your own judgment you will finish more quickly. If you want to indicate what is better in the spoken or written language, you may do so at the end of a sentence and on the same line, but this is not necessary. Thanks for everything.)

- () 1. Eu me calarei.
- () 2. Somente queria preveni-lo.
- () 3. Tenho lhe explicado sem êxito.
- () 4. Paulo vai levá-las.
- () 5. Pedrinho vai se levantar.
- () 6. Carlinhos está se levantando.
- () 7. Ana me conhece.
- () 8. Somente queria lhe explicar.
- () 9. Ele o queria prevenir.
- () 10. Meu pai as vai levar.
- () 11. Eu os levo.
- () 12. Lhe tenho explicado sem êxito.
- () 13. Tínhamos conhecido-as antes.
- () 14. Eu os vou mandar.
- () 15. Conheço-as.
- () 16. Somente queria explicar-lhe.
- () 17. Carlinhos está levantando-se.
- () 18. Nós as tínhamos conhecido antes.
- () 19. Eu vou os mandar.
- () 20. Eu vou mandá-los.
- () 21. Calar-me-ei.
- () 22. Somente lhe queria explicar.
- () 23. Quem deu-lhe um dólar?
- () 24. Ela falou que não está pronta para nos receber.
- () 25. Vocês não conhecem-me.
- () 26. Ana conhece-me.
- () 27. Tínhamos as conhecido antes.
- () 28. Tenho lhe explicado sem êxito.
- () 29. Ele queria o prevenir.
- () 30. As tínhamos conhecido antes.
- () 31. Lhe deu um dólar.
- () 32. Me calarei.
- () 33. Deu-lhe um dólar.
- () 34. Carlinhos se está levantando.
- () 35. Esse professor não me conhece.
- () 36. João está dizendo-lhe tudo.
- () 37. Tenho explicado-lhe sem êxito.
- () 38. João quer levar-me ao contro.
- () 39. Ele não está pronto para receber-nos.
- () 40. Os vou mandar logo.
- () 41. Ia se desenrolando a paisagem.
- () 42. Ia desenrolando-se a paisagem.
- () 43. Se ia desenrolando a paisagem.
- () 44. Me desculpe se falei demais.
- () 45. Desculpe-me se falei demais.
- () 46. Vi-a faz pouco tempo.
- () 47. A vi faz pouco tempo.
- () 48. Você diz essas coisas só para me irritar.

- () 49. Eu estou explicando-o porque alguém pediu.
- () 50. Eu o estou explicando porque alguém pediu.
- () 51. Eu estou o explicando porque alguém pediu.

The answers to such a questionnaire will clearly provide considerable data about the pronominal system of BP. But in the present study we will only explore a certain amount of this *richesse d'information*. Note that most sentences in the questionnaire are grammatically correct. Sentences 3 and 28 are identical; this was done on purpose as a way to verify the reliability of the answers. The sentences considered unacceptable by normative grammars of Portuguese (“*a norma culta*”) are numbers 12, 13, 19, 23, 25, 27 (though 27 would be acceptable as “*Tínhamolas*”), 29 through 32, and 37, 40, 43, 44, 47 and 51. The remaining 35 sentences are acceptable according to both PP and BP norms.

It is interesting to note that the respondents only expressed unanimous agreement on the acceptability of five of the 51 sentences. All 42 respondents agreed that the following five were acceptable:

- 1. Eu me calarei.
- 7. Ana me conhece.
- 24. Ela falou que não está pronta para nos receber.
- 35. Esse professor não me conhece.
- 48. Você diz essas coisas só para me irritar.

The respondents showed the greatest indecision when reacting to the following 10 sentences. Responses to them were either marked “?” or were in conflict with each other, in random fashion. Respondents neither accepted them nor found them unacceptable. In sum, they simply were not sure about these 10:

- 20. Eu vou mandá-los.
- 28. Tenho lhe explicado sem êxito.
- 32. Me calarei.
- 33. Deu-lhe um dólar.
- 38. João quer levar-me ao centro.
- 39. Ele não está pronto para receber-nos.
- 45. Desculpe-me se falei demais.
- 47. A vi faz pouco tempo.
- 50. Eu o estou explicando porque alguém pediu.

The other 37 sentences were checked as unacceptable by approximately 70% of the respondents. However, among these 37 sentences the 17 below were considered the most unacceptable (by 90.5% of all respondents) while sentence 51 was the only one checked as unacceptable by all 42 respondents. The most unacceptable sentences were:

- 10. Meu pai as vai levar.
- 12. Lhe tenho explicado sem êxito.
- 13. Tínhamos conhecido-as antes.
- 14. Eu os vou mandar.
- 17. Carlinhos está levantando-se.
- 19. Eu vou os mandar.
- 22. Somente lhe queria explicar.
- 23. Quem deu-lhe um dólar?
- 25. Vocês não conhecem-me.
- 26. Ana conhece-me.
- 27. Tínhamos as conhecido antes.
- 29. Ele queria o prevenir.
- 30. As tínhamos conhecido antes.
- 34. Carlinhos se está levantando.
- 40. Os vou mandar logo.
- 43. Se ia desenrolando a paisagem.

46. Vi-a faz pouco tempo.

49. Eu estou explicando-o porque alguém pediu.

51. Eu estou o explicando porque alguém pediu.

It is interesting to note that the preference for pronouns starting with a consonant is evident, as attested by the questionnaire's answer in which sentences 1, 7, 24, 35 and 48 (none of them containing a vowel-initial clitic pronoun) were considered acceptable by all respondents.

3. Clitic Attachment in Brazilian Portuguese

In very general terms, the following rule is true:

(1) In Brazilian Portuguese, clitic pronouns are placed *before the main (lexical) verb*.

In order to understand the implications of rule (1), it is necessary to take into consideration how speakers of BP actually view the pronominalization process. Doing so will help students of BP acquire native-like clitic placement competency.

Pronouns are typically viewed as replacing noun phrases. While other languages, e.g., Spanish and English, normally use object pronouns or noun phrases, BP has developed an interesting type of discourse whereby the object pronoun is avoided or isn't used at all in spoken and written language. Even the object noun phrase that could be replaced by a pronoun will not surface in many discourses. For instance, the characteristic lack of pronoun in the dialogue below is common in BP (\emptyset means a missing element in the sentence structure):

—Quem escreveu esse livro?

—Acho que foi o Rubem Fonseca que \emptyset escreveu.

or

—Quem escreveu esse livro?

—Acho que foi o Rubem Fonseca que escreveu *esse livro*.

The equivalent dialogues in Spanish and English will normally show a pronoun.

—¿Quién escribió ese libro?

—Creo que Rubem Fonseca (fue quien) *lo* escribió.

—Who wrote this book?

—I think (it was) Rubem Fonseca (who) wrote *it*.

Pronouns not only replace the noun phrase, but also help make discourse more precise. Speakers of BP are precise and use pronouns or noun phrases if necessary, though if the object noun or pronoun is absent, native-speaker *receptors* typically reconstruct the sentence by mentally adding the part that is missing. It is important to mention the matter of BP object pronoun suppression because it is related to the overall avoidance of pronouns in BP. Writers and composers have taken advantage of it to create mystery or simply to confuse censors during periods of military government (e.g., from 1964–1984). Another native intuition to take into account is the complete avoidance of vowel-like pronouns (*o, a, os, as*) in the spoken language. In the written language, natives make an effort to use vowel-like pronouns but avoid them in speaking because they sound pedantic or simply awkward. *When* native speakers use object pronouns, they prefer the forms that begin with consonants, namely *-lo, -la, -los* and *-las*. (This avoidance of pronouns and particularly of vowel-like pronouns is a topic for future investigation,

one that would involve the extent to which phonetics affects syntax. Any explanation as to why BP avoids the four direct object pronouns would also entail general considerations of phonology, semantics and pragmatics.)

By observing how BP discourse links words, we become aware of the extent to which the insertion of vowel-like pronouns can conflict with BP's preferred syllable structure and its prosody. BP prefers structures with a consonant (C) onset and a vowel (V) nucleus. Vowel-initial pronouns seem to conflict with BP's preference for CV sequences and words that end in open syllables, for when one word ends in a vowel and the next word begins with one, a synalephic link between the two is established, as in (v):

(v) Se você quiser, eu levo o titio. (If you want me to, I'll take Uncle.)

Synalephic processes in the bold-faced part of sentence (v) will cause the underlined unstressed *o*'s (/éu.lé.vu.ti.ti.u/) to contract, a common occurrence in BP. This type of linking strengthens BP's preference for CV syllables and reinforces its rhythmic patterns. On the other hand, sentences (vi) and (vii) conflict with both preference and patterns:

(vi) Se você quiser, o Paulo o leva. (If you want, Paulo takes him.)

Se você quiser, /u.páu.lu.u.lé.va/.

(vii) Eu levo-o. (I'll take him.)

/éu.lé.vu.u/.

Thus, the insertion of vowel-like pronouns in (vi) and (vii) would require that BP speakers make an extra effort, actually stressing unstressed pronouns: /u.páu.lu.ú.lé.va/. It is interesting to note that although BP does not insert a glottal stop as English can (e.g. *She only ate vegetables*), the articulatory effort required to insert a vowel-like pronoun will often remind one of English glottal stop insertion.

The underlined clitics in sentences (viii) and (ix) have consonant-initial pronouns and therefore sound natural for the reasons just mentioned:

(viii) Se você quiser, eu te levo. (If you want, I'll take you.)

Se você quiser, /éu.ti.lé.vu/.

(ix) Se você quiser, ela nos leva. (If you want, she'll take us.)

Se você quiser, /é.la.nus.léva/.

Among the multiple factors that put the use of vowel-like pronouns in conflict with the natural flow of words one can also cite *cacofonia*, a Portuguese term referring to the bad effect created by juxtaposing certain words—a different definition from the one that's typically assigned the English term *cacophony*. Brazilians are particularly picky about how adjacent words can create *cacofonia*, resulting in different meanings or awkwardness. For example, one of the sonnets of the greatest poet of the Portuguese language, Luíz Vaz de Camões (1524?–1580), starts with “Alma minha gentil, que te partiste” (“Oh gentle spirit of mine, you who have departed”) sounds funny when read by Brazilians because the two first words (“Alma minha”) remind us of the word “maminha” (*small mammary gland*). For a speaker of PP, however, the verse passes without incident. By the same token, Jânio Quadros, a late president (1962–1964) of Brazil who was also a teacher of Portuguese, was once asked why he did something that surprised everyone. His answer was ironic: “Fi-lo porque qui-lo” (“I did it because I wanted to”), a locution that Brazilians repeat when they seek to be witty, for while the sentence is grammatically correct, *fi-lo* sounds bizarre, and *qui-lo* reminds one of *quilo* (*kilogram*) and rhymes awkwardly with *fi-lo*. Examples of *cacofonia* are numerous in BP and sometimes involve vowel-like pronouns but not consonant initial pronouns.

Let us now reexamine the various ramifications of rule (1), including ways in which the rule is

altered, especially in the written and/or formal language. We will start by restating rule (1) in slightly simplified form:

(1) Place the clitic before the main (lexical) verb.

Examples:

Não a conheciam. Estavam lhe falando. Parece que ele queria lhes dizer alguma coisa.

The terms “before” and “main” are the key components of the slightly-simplified rule (1). By specifying “main verb” the rule seeks to include not only sentences whose verb-phrases’ verbs are simple but also those whose verbs are compound or periphrastic. Rules of clitic attachment in normative grammars are typically different, and depend on whether the phrase contains one verb or more (Cunha 1985; Cunha and Cintra 1985). Rule (1)’s virtue is that it constitutes a unitary statement that sums up what we need to know about clitic pronoun placement in the spoken and written language alike. Rule (1)’s choice of the word “before” is a good solution because it works with simple verbs, compound verbs or any other type of verbs. Normative grammars such as Cunha (1985) and Cunha and Cintra (1985), however, state that in the case of compound verbs, clitics should follow and be attached to the supporting (auxiliary) verb to reflect the PP-based rhythmic patterns of the language, as discussed in the introduction and illustrated in example sentences (iii) and (iv).

There follow several notes regarding formal style, both written and spoken.

- When using formal style, never start a sentence with an object pronoun:

- (x) *Lhe falei várias vezes.
- (xi) Eu lhe falei várias vezes.
- (xii). *Me diga uma coisa: o que houve?
- (xiii) Diga-me uma coisa: o que houve?

The clitic placements in (x) and (xii), although incorrect according to normative grammar, are very common in spoken and even written BP. For instance, the clitic placement in (xii) is more common than the one in (xiii), which follows the norm. In option (xi) the subject “Eu” is added as a practical solution to avoid conflict with the norm while still sounding natural to a Brazilian ear. The other alternative, less common in BP, is to follow the norm and place the clitic after the verb as in (xiii).

- When using a vowel-initial clitic pronoun (o, a, os, as) the following rules apply in formal style:

A: If there is *more than one verb* and the main (lexical) verb ends in *-do* or *-ndo* (past participle and gerund respectively), place the vowel-initial pronouns before the conjugated (auxiliary) verb:

- (xiv) Esses rapazes **as** tinham conhecido antes de você.
- (xv.a) Ela **o** está contratando agora.

Both direct and indirect object pronouns that start with a consonant will follow sub-rule A, sentence (xv.b), though post-auxiliary clitic placement is also possible, as sentences (xvi) and (xvii) make clear:

- (xv.b) Ela **me** está contratando agora.

- (xvi) Aquele menino já tinha lhe contado tudo.
 (xvii) Ninguém está lhes explicando essas coisas.

B: Vowel-initial clitics changing to consonant-initial clitics are placed after the *infinitive*, while the pronouns that start with a consonant are placed before:

- (xviii) Não tem nenhum interesse em conhecê-la.
 (xix) Não tem nenhum interesse em te conhecer.
 (xx) Ele gostaria de tirá-la daqui.
 (xxi) Ela só queria lhe fazer um favor.
 (xxii) Eu só vim aqui para lhe ajudar.
 (xxiii) Eu só vim aqui para ajudá-la.

• Here are some typical changes—orthographic and morpho-phonological—involving post-verbal direct objects:

– Word-final nasal sounds “spread” their nasality rightward, causing vowel-initial clitics to begin with /n/, thus: -no/-na/-nos/-nas. Examples are:

- (xxiv) *dão os a eles Dão-nos a eles.
 (xxv) *levaram a ao cinema Levaram-na ao cinema.

– Word-final -r, -s, -z + -o/-a/-os/-as change to -lo/-la/-los/-las:

- (xxvi) *prazer em conhecer as Prazer em conhecê-las.

Some native speakers of BP might avoid these constructions because they are ambiguous. For example, sentence (xxiv) is not only peculiar but also leaves unclear who the referent is; it is probably intended to mean “Give them to them,” but it could also mean “Give us to them.” This ambiguity is one of the many reasons why Brazilians avoid vowel-initial pronouns.

The transition from formal to informal poses no difficulty because pre-verbal clitic attachment in BP is already well rooted and widely accepted. The non-native student needs only to be reminded that vowel-initial pronouns should be avoided in spoken language and that it is preferable to use the noun instead of the pronoun or resort to other constructions such as the prepositional phrases *para ela* and *com vocês* which obviate the need for vowel-initial pronouns.

The basic rule (1) presented here (along with the accompanying commentary) is intended to be used in formal spoken and written language. But when the basic rule is presented in the classroom, students should be told that it actually functions as a *point of departure*. Once students become familiar with it, instructors should encourage them to develop stylistic preferences that are based on models they encounter in Brazilian literature and elsewhere.

4. Conclusion

This study has attempted to take advantage of the inevitable tendency of native speakers of Brazilian Portuguese to simplify the syntax of BP clitics and make of it a single rule of pre-verbal attachment, i.e., *próclise*, a widespread phenomenon in BP and one that is similar to the way that Spanish handles clitic pronouns. Doing so should facilitate the learning of BP by non-native speakers. It is likely that the same strategy will benefit native speakers of BP as well, given that clitic placement also causes great confusion, even among well-educated Brazilians.

Since the basic single rule does not cover all the linguistic possibilities that BP’s social and cultural traditions set forth, classrooms and textbooks should make it clear that the basic rule is a useful point of departure and not a mandate that allows for no exceptions. Once that point has

been made, more syntactic variations can be introduced as needed in combination with (and as complements to) appropriate readings from actual literary texts.

NOTES

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²The terms "clitic" and "unstressed object pronoun" or "unstressed pronoun" are used synonymously throughout the present article.

³This representation illustrates how PP can create phonetically a sequence of three consonants. It does not mean that at a more abstract level PP possesses a syllabic structure that allows three consonants to be juxtaposed in a single syllable's coda or elsewhere. In this example, although the /r/ surfaces as a syllabic nucleus it is still a consonant.

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