

# Third Person Accusative Clitic Pronouns as Object Agreement Marks in Brazilian Portuguese: Data from an Experimental Study

Os pronomes clíticos acusativos de terceira pessoa como marcas de concordância de objeto no português brasileiro: dados de um estudo experimental

Ronan Pereira 

Centro de Linguística da Universidade Nova de Lisboa (CLUNL). Lisboa, Portugal  
E-mail: a57730@campus.fcsh.unl.pt

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Ronan Pereira  
a57730@campus.fcsh.unl.pt

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## Abstract

Even though Brazilian Portuguese (BP) has replaced its third person accusative clitic pronouns (CIA3) with strong pronouns, they have not completely disappeared: although they are not acquired during the first years of linguistic development, they are a topic taught in Brazilian classrooms. However, they seem to behave differently from the other clitics (which occur in proclisis to the main verb). Nunes (2015) suggests that they have been reanalyzed as object agreement marks, given their tendency to be placed in post-verbal position of verb forms that can independently carry subject agreement marks, to occur in proclisis with verbs whose subject agreement mark is occupied, and not to occur next to verbs in the past participle or in the gerund, since they do not have a position for agreement. In order to control some linguistic and sociolinguistic variables, this study had the objective to gather experimental data regarding the idiosyncrasies the CIA3 have using a sentence rewriting task including the CIA3 “o” and the clitic “me”. There were differences between the use

of these two pronouns, having the clitic “me” followed the general tendency of BP, being placed, almost exclusively, in proclisis to the verb it is an argument of. Enclisis, on the other hand, was more productive with the CIA3, namely with non-inflected infinitive verbs. However, proclisis to the main verb was also a widely used option by the participants, including in contexts Nunes (2015) did not predict it to occur. It is concluded that, at first sight, Nunes’s (2015) hypothesis was not backed by the data obtained here. Nevertheless, the difference in the speakers’ behavior regarding the two pronouns used in this study cannot be disregarded, which suggests they are likely to have a different nature, although they do not seem to be object agreement marks.

### **Keywords:**

Brazilian Portuguese; Third Person Accusative Clitic Pronouns; Sociolinguistics; Experimental Linguistics.

### **Resumo**

Ainda que o português brasileiro (PB) tenha procedido à substituição dos pronomes clíticos acusativos de terceira pessoa (CIA3) por pronomes fortes, eles não desapareceram por completo: embora não sejam adquiridos durante os primeiros anos do desenvolvimento linguístico, são alvo de ensino na matriz curricular brasileira. Contudo, parecem comportar-se de maneira distinta aos restantes clíticos, os quais ocorrem em próclise ao verbo principal. Nunes (2015) sugere que tenham sido reanalisados como marcas de concordância de objeto, dada a tendência que esses CIA3 têm de se adjungirem em ênclise a formas verbais que independentemente podem levar marcas de concordância, de ocorrerem em próclise a verbos cuja posição para a concordância de sujeito esteja ocupada e de não ocorrerem adjungidos a verbos no participípio ou no gerúndio por estes não possuírem posição para a concordância de sujeito. De modo que se pudesse controlar determinadas variáveis linguísticas e sociolinguísticas, objetivou-se recolher dados experimentais relativamente às idiosincrasias dos CIA3 assumidas pelo referido autor por meio duma tarefa de reescrita de frases incluindo o CIA3 “o” e o clítico “me”. Observaram-se diferenças no uso desses dois pronomes, tendo o clítico “me” seguido a tendência geral do PB, surgindo, quase que exclusivamente, em próclise ao verbo de que é argumento. A ênclise foi mais produtiva com o CIA3, nomeadamente quando o verbo estava no infinitivo não flexionado. Todavia, a próclise ao verbo principal também foi uma opção amplamente utilizada pelos participantes, mesmo nos contextos em que Nunes (2015) não a previa. Conclui-se que, à primeira vista, a hipótese aventada por Nunes (2015) não encontrou respaldo nos dados aqui obtidos. Contudo, salienta-se a diferença no comportamento dos falantes concernente aos dois pronomes utilizados neste estudo, o que sugere que provavelmente são elementos de natureza distinta, embora não pareçam ser marcas de concordância de objeto.

## Palavras-chave:

Português Brasileiro; Pronomes Clíticos Acusativos de Terceira Pessoa; Sociolinguística; Linguística Experimental.

## Introduction

Brazilian Portuguese's (BP) clitic pronouns paradigm is reduced when compared, for example, with European Portuguese's (EP) (*cf.* Menuzzi; Lobo, 2016; Duarte, 2020). Whereas in this variety there is a clitic pronoun corresponding to each person/number, as well as to accusative, dative, and reflexive cases, BP has replaced, diachronically, its third person accusative clitics (CIA3) for strong pronouns, currently presenting a tendency to extend this substitution to other clitics (Galves; Moraes; Ribeiro, 2015; Luís; Kaiser, 2016; Duarte, 2020).

It is important to highlight, however, that BP's CIA3 have not disappeared entirely. Even though they are not present in native BP speakers' nuclear grammar (the grammar acquired during the first years of their language development) (*cf.* Kato, 2005, 2017), they are taught in Portuguese classes in Brazilian classrooms (Kato; Cyrino; Corrêa, 2009). As a result of this teaching, nevertheless, the CIA3 seem to behave differently from the other clitics, being placed, for instance, in post-verbal position with verbs in the infinitive, besides being more frequently used in written texts. Considering this fact regarding the CIA3 placement, Nunes (2015) suggests that these CIA3 have been reanalyzed as object agreement marks, given their tendency to occupy the position for inflectional morphology in verbs in the infinitive.

Thus, an experimental design is proposed to evaluate Nunes's (2015) assumptions regarding such a reanalysis BP CIA3 might have gone through, referring to the Variationist Sociolinguistics precepts (Labov, 2008 [1972]), since a more substantial analysis of variation and linguistic change must consider, as well, the social pressure speakers are exposed to (Coan; Freitag, 2010), which makes it possible to establish analogies between such social variables and their linguistic behavior (*cf.* Weinreich; Labov; Herzog, 2006). The next section will describe in detail the Portuguese clitics pronouns morphology, focusing on the CIA3 and their variants, to describe, in the following section, Nunes's (2015) ideas about them. After that, the sections present the objectives and then the methodology used in this study. The last sections comprehend the results, their discussion, and final remarks.

## Portuguese clitic pronouns morphology

One of the situations in which a relevant morphological difference between EP and BP can be seen involves their object pronouns. In EP these pronouns are realized as clitics and this variety has a complete accusative clitics paradigm comprising all persons, besides having dative and reflexive clitics, according to Table 1:

**Table 1.** European Portuguese object clitic pronouns

Case	Clitics Pronouns					
	Singular			Plural		
	1 <sup>st</sup> Person	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	1 <sup>st</sup> Person	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person
Accusative	<i>me</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>o/a</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>vos</i>	<i>os/as</i>
Dative	<i>me</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>lhe</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>vos</i>	<i>lhes</i>
Reflexive	<i>me</i>	<i>te</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>nos</i>	<i>vos</i>	<i>se</i>

**Source:** Adapted from Menuzzi & Lobo (2016).

BP, on the other hand, possesses a clitics system that can be considered defective when compared with EP due to the pronominal paradigm reduction resulting from the replacement of CLA3 with strong pronouns (*cf.* Galves; Moraes; Ribeiro, 2015). However, it still keeps some of them, namely *me*, *te*, *se*, *lhe*, and *nos*, with some specificities, such as the preference for prepositional forms instead of dative clitics *me*, *te*, *lhe*, and *nos*, and, even though more restrictively, the alternance of *me*, *te*, and *nos* with strong pronouns in the accusative case, which are morphologically identical to the subject pronouns they refer to (Luís; Kaiser, 2016). Note that this variation will depend on certain sociolinguistics factors, such as the speakers' geographical origin, education, and social class (*cf.* Menuzzi; Lobo, 2016). Table 2 summarizes the object pronouns in BP:

**Table 2.** BP object pronouns<sup>1</sup>

Case	Object Pronouns					
	Singular			Plural		
	1 <sup>st</sup> Person	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	1 <sup>st</sup> Person	2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	3 <sup>rd</sup> Person
Accusative	<i>me</i> [eu]	<i>te / lhe</i> [tu / você]	<i>[ele / ela]</i>	<i>nos</i> [nós / a gente]	<i>lhes</i> [vocês]	<i>[eles / elas]</i>
Dative	<i>me</i> [para mim]	<i>te / lhe</i> [para ti / para você]	<i>lhe</i> [para ele / para ela]	<i>nos</i> [para nós / para a gente]	<i>lhes</i> [para vocês]	<i>lhes</i> [para eles / para elas]
Reflexive	<i>me</i>	<i>te / se</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>nos / se</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>se</i>

**Source:** Adapted from Duarte (2020).

As it has already been mentioned, regarding the CIA3, they have virtually disappeared from spontaneous oral productions of BP natives, but EP maintains them:

- (1) A Rita não **o** ajudou com a tarefa.  
The Rita not him helped with the task.  
'Rita didn't help him with the task.'
- (2) Acho que a Rita **o** ajudará com a tarefa.  
I-think that the Rita him will-help with the task.  
'I think Rita will help him with the task.'
- (3) Já **o** ajudaram com a tarefa.  
Already him they-helped with the task.  
'They have already helped him with the task.'

The same sentences in BP will have the clitic pronoun replaced by a strong pronoun (*ele(s)/ela(s)*), whose position is always post-verbal<sup>2</sup>:

<sup>1</sup> Clitic pronouns appear free in the table, whereas strong pronouns or prepositional forms appear between brackets.

<sup>2</sup> Note that, besides the pronominal realization of verbs' direct complements, another alternative to its production in Portuguese is the null object (Othero *et al.*, 2018; Raposo, 2004). In the sentences below it is possible to recover the complement of pôr ('to put') with an object pronoun, which is, as it has been referred so far, tendentially clitic in EP (a) and strong in BP (b), or by its omission (c):

a. Tirei os óculos, da gaveta e pu-**los**, no bolso.

I-took the glasses out-of-the drawer and I-put-them in-the pocket.

- (4) A Rita não ajudou **ele** com a tarefa.  
The Rita not helped him with the task.  
'Rita didn't help him with the task.'
- (5) Acho que a Rita ajudará **ele** com a tarefa.  
'I think Rita will help him with the task.'  
I-think that the Rita will-help him with the task.
- (6) Já ajudaram **ele** com a tarefa.  
Already they-helped him with the task.  
'They have already helped him with the task.'

In fact, this change has been focused by several studies that aimed at observing the specific use of such clitics by speakers from different regions in Brazil. Despite small variations in the percentages of use they found, such a phenomenon does not seem to suffer an expressive diatopic variation in that country. For instance, Duarte (1986) refers 4.9% of CIA3 in oral data from inhabitants of São Paulo; Luíze (1997) finds only 1% of CIA3 in Florianópolis; Zanellato *et al.* (2021) observe only 0.5% of such pronouns in oral data in Vitória; and Omena (1978) did not find them in oral data from non-educated adults in Rio de Janeiro.

According to Kato, Cyrino & Corrêa (2009), despite the nuclear grammar of illiterates or preschoolers BP natives does not display CIA3, they are acquired via schooling. Such a fact is corroborated, for example, by Corrêa's (1991) study. The author shows that students only start producing CIA3 orally when they are in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade (at a 3.1% rate), culminating in 10.7% in university students' speeches. Alencar (1998), with data from educated speakers and collected in a formal setting, found only one occurrence of a strong pronoun in samples from São Paulo and Porto Alegre. It is important to highlight that, given her participants' sociolinguistic profile and the environment in which her data were collected, it might have forced a norm that does not resemble the linguistic behavior these people would have in other environments.

Notwithstanding, even though schooling introduces the CIA3 to BP speakers, their acquisition results in what seems to be a new register, since these pronouns end up being more productively used in formal situations or in the written modality

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- b. Tirei os óculos<sub>i</sub> da gaveta e pus **eles**<sub>i</sub> no bolso.  
I-took the glasses out-of-the drawer and I-put them in-the pocket.
- c. Tirei os óculos<sub>i</sub> da gaveta e pus  $\emptyset$ <sub>i</sub> no bolso.  
I-took the glasses out-of-the drawer and I-put in-the pocket.  
'I took the glasses out of the drawer, and I put them in my pocket.'
- Nevertheless, the null object as an alternative to CIA3 will not be covered in this study.

(Kato; Cyrino; Corrêa, 2009).<sup>3</sup> In fact, Corrêa (1991) showed that the CIA3 appear in the written form before they are used orally. Students as early as in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade produce them at 14.1% of time in written texts, whereas university students produce them at a 60% rate. Beyond the classroom, but still in formal registers, Othero & Schwanke (2018) found a percentage of 62.6% of CIA3 in newspapers articles. Othero *et al.* (2018) analyzing comic books for children found them at a 25% rate, whereas Zanellato *et al.* (2021), also with data from comic books, observed a percentage of 16.6% of CIA3. However, this behavior has been changing over years: Zanellato (2017) comments that, whilst in the 1970's the same comic book publication used, in average, 52.5% of CIA3, by the end of the first decade of the 2000's, this percentage goes down to 12.1%. Moreover, she mentions that there was no occurrence of strong pronouns as accusative complement in the 1970's, but in the second period, they can be found at a 13.9% rate.

In a more recent analysis, Nunes (2015) considers that these CIA3 have been reanalyzed as object agreement marks, given their tendency to occupy, in infinitive verbs, the canonical position for agreement morphology (*i.e.*, the enclitical position), among other reasons. The next section will detail the author's study.

## Nunes's (2015) study

In his article from 2015, Jairo Nunes investigated the theoretical status of BP CIA3 and reached the conclusion that they are not clitics any longer, but object agreement marks. To substantiate his analysis, the author starts his text reminding that, in the generality of Romance languages, the CIA3 originate from the Latin demonstratives *illum/illam/illud*. However, differently from what happened in other languages of this family, the Portuguese CIA3 only have a consonant in its syllabic onset in certain morphophonological contexts (in general, when the verb form ends by /r/ or /s/, post-verbal CIA3 are realized as *lo(s)/la(s)*, losing such phonemes; when the verb forms ends by a nasal diphthong, they are realized as *no(s)/na(s)*). This fact, allied to the general tendency for phonological cliticization from left to right in BP (*i.e.*, proclisis), created a difficult environment for these pronouns to be acquired (*cf.* Nunes, 1993).

In front of this scenario, the author explains that:

the syllable in the CIA3 *o(s)/a(s)* has an underspecified onset position and that, in Old Portuguese and modern EP, the licensing of this position happens by phonological cliticization from right to left, which might result in allomorphy. On the other hand, after BP

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<sup>3</sup> The authors consider that the access to the Universal Grammar must still be possible when this structure starts being taught, since speakers produce constructions that do not exist in BP (*e.g.*, clitic raising and interpolation), but that were possible in past moments of the Portuguese diachrony, including the variety spoken in Brazil.

assumed the inverse directionality (from left to right), this onset could not be legitimated anymore, which caused the CIA3 to disappear in modern BP. In other words, the change in directionality of phonological cliticization in BP made it impossible for the CIA3 to be acquired the same way as in EP. The allomorphs *lo(s)*, *la(s)*, *no(s)*, and *na(s)*, which are sensitive to the precedent context, did not allow the generation of children who had already acquired the phonological cliticization from left to right to consistently analyze the CIA3 as a whole. (Nunes, 2015, p. 64 *apud* Nunes, 1993, author's emphasis)<sup>4</sup>

Consequently, the CIA3 stopped being naturally acquired by native BP speakers. Furthermore, Nunes (1993) considers that it is from this non acquisition of the CIA3 that BP starts to allow other alternatives to them, namely the possibility of strong pronouns in object position and null objects, even in contexts of syntactic islands (*cf.* Corrêa, 1991; Raposo, 2004).

As it has been previously mentioned, Nunes (2015) also recognizes that the BP CIA3 have not disappeared entirely, because they are taught in school. Supported by the data obtained from the aforementioned study by Corrêa (1991), the author questions himself what is really learned at school. In his opinion, although formal education aims at presenting the CIA3 to the students in order for them to be part of their pronominal paradigm, similarly to what is seen in EP, this is not what happens in reality. This formal education process results in pronouns that “not only differ from the other clitics regarding when they are acquired and how they are acquired, but also regarding their syntactic distribution, what puts at stake their own analysis as clitics” (p. 65). The author also points out: “schooling does not have as effect simply adding more items to the set of clitics in the BP nuclear grammar. It seems to be the case of adding elements of a different nature” (p. 73). Whilst the generality of BP clitics pronouns occur pre-verbally to the verb they are complement of (7a, b c, d, e), the CIA3 can also occur in post-verbal position, namely in those cases in which a verb is in the non-inflected infinitive (8a) or in the syncretic future subjunctive<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This quotation and any other quotation in this text which were originally written in Portuguese have been translated by the author of this paper.

<sup>5</sup> The verbal forms in the 1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person of future subjunctive of regular verbs coincide with non-inflected infinitive forms:

- a. Não quero **chegar** tarde ao cinema.  
Not I-want to-arrive late at-the movies  
'I don't want to arrive late at the movies.'
- b. Se eu **chegar** tarde ao cinema, vou perder os melhores lugares.  
If I arrive late at-the movies, I-go to-miss the best seats  
'If I arrive late at the movies, I'll miss the best seats.'

However, in case of irregular verbs, BP presents a tendency to regularize them:

(8b). Proclisis with these elements is therefore restricted to sentences with only one inflected verb (9a) or in verbal periphrases with the main verb in past participle (9b) or gerund (9c), and in these two last cases proclisis happens to the auxiliary verbs and not to the main verb:

- (7) a. O João quer **me** cumprimentar.  
The John wants me to-greet  
'John wants to greet me.'
- b. Se ele **me** encontrar, então podemos ir juntos.  
If he me meets, then we-can to-go together  
'If he meets me, then we can go together.'
- c. A Rita **me** viu no centro ontem  
The Rita me saw in-the downtown yesterday  
'Rita saw me downtown yesterday.'
- d. O João já tinha **me** visto com aquela roupa.  
The John already had me seen with that outfit  
'John had already seen me in that outfit.'
- e. O João está **me** ajudando a estudar para a prova de geografia.  
The John is me helping to study for the test of geography  
'John is helping me study for the geography test.'
- (8) a. O João quer cumprimentá-**lo**.  
The John wants to-greet-him  
'John wants to greet him.'
- b. Se eu encontrá-**lo**, então podemos ir juntos.  
If I meet-him, then we-can to-go together  
'If I meet him, then we can go together.'
- (9) a. A Rita **o** viu no centro ontem.  
The Rita him saw in-the downtown yesterday.  
'Rita saw him downtown yesterday.'
- b. O João já **o** tinha visto com aquela roupa.  
The John already him had seen with that outfit

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- c. A polícia tem de **deter** os ladrões com mais rapidez.  
The police has to detain the thieves with more speed  
'The police have to arrest thieves faster.'
- d. Quando a polícia **detiver/deter** os ladrões, isso vai ser novidade.  
When the police detain(IRR)/detain(REG) the thieves, this goes to-be news  
'When the police arrest the thieves, it'll be something new.'

‘John had already seen him in that outfit.’

- c. O João **o** está ajudando a estudar para a prova de geografia.  
The John him is helping to study for the test of geography  
‘John is helping him study for the geography test.’

Thus, based on the aforementioned characteristics regarding the CIA3, the author develops his theoretical analysis claiming that the BP CIA3 can be considered object agreement marks, similarly to what Ormazabal & Romero (2013) did concerning the Spanish CIA3. Firstly, the author affirms that, in order for the BP CIA3 to be considered agreement marks, it is needed that “the nucleus to which these elements attach to can independently have agreement inflection” (p. 75), which can be seen in examples (8a) and (8b). According to the author, the past participle and the gerund are not inflected in BP, in other words, they do not independently admit agreement. Therefore, clitic pronouns must move to attach to the verbal form that admits it, that is, the auxiliary verb in the periphrasis<sup>6</sup>, such as in (8d) and (8e). In the case of periphrases with the main verb in the infinitive (8a), the CIA3 are placed in enclisis to this verb form, because the infinitive “does not repeal the agreement mark realized as *lo*” (p. 76, his emphasis), since, in Portuguese, infinitives can be inflected:

- (10) Não é difícil **sermos** pontuais.  
Not is difficult we-to-be punctual  
‘It isn’t difficult for us to be punctual.’

The author reminds that, in BP, subject agreement marks are verbal suffixes. From this point of view, if the CIA3 are also agreement marks (but object ones), their canonical position should be the same, except in the cases where the subject agreement mark is already occupying this position. Therefore, in periphrases with a verb in the infinitive, the subject agreement mark is in the inflected verb, and the infinitive verb agreement position is free to be occupied by the CIA3 (11a). In the case of periphrases with main verbs in the past participle (11b) or in the gerund (11c), as it has been previously mentioned, these verbal forms do not carry morphological positions for agreement in Portuguese and the CIA3 must attach to the auxiliary verb as a last resort. However, since the auxiliary verb is inflected (*i.e.*, it already has its agreement position occupied by the subject agreement suffix), the CIA3 needs to be in pre-verbal position:

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<sup>6</sup> Remember that Kato, Cyrino, & Corrêa (2009) observed cases of clitic rising in production of children (*cf.* Footnote 3). Inasmuch as the authors accredit this fact to the continuity of access to the Universal Grammar during the developmental process, following Nunes’s (2015) arguments, it is possible that children acquire the CIA3 as object agreement marks very early in their developmental path.

- (11) a. Eu vou cumprimentá-**lo** mais tarde.  
I go to-greet-him more late  
'I'll greet him later.'
- b. Eu **o** tinha cumprimentado no início da reunião.  
I him had greeted at-the beginning of-the meeting  
'I had greeted him at the beginning of the meeting.'
- c. Ele **o** está cumprimentando neste exato momento.  
He him is greeting in-this exact moment  
'He's greeting him in this exact moment.'

Beyond the cases with verbal periphrases, in the previously mentioned contexts in which infinitive verbs are inflected (with visible agreement marks<sup>7</sup>) or in the irregular future subjunctive form, only proclisis emerges (12a, b); on the other hand, both positions are licensed in the case of regular (or regularized) verbs (12c, d) without visible agreement marks, depending on the interpretation of the verbal form (*cf.* Footnote 7). In fact, if the verb irregularity in the future subjunctive is maintained, only proclisis is possible, independently of person and number – if there is no syncretism, its interpretation as a non-inflected infinitive is not possible and, therefore, the agreement position is properly occupied (12e):

- (12) a. Não seria adequado nós **o** recomendarmos para o cargo.  
Not would-be appropriate we him to-recommend-we for the position  
'It wouldn't be appropriate if we recommended him for the position.'
- b. Se nós **o** recomendarmos para o cargo, vai parecer inadequado.  
If we him to-recommend-we for the position, it-goes to-seem inappropriate  
'If we recommend him for the position, it'll seem inappropriate.'
- c. Se ele **o** recomendar/recomendá-**lo** para o cargo, vai parecer inadequado.  
If he him recommends/recommends-him for the position, it-goes to-seem inappropriate

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<sup>7</sup> Note that inflected infinitive verbs in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person are identical in form to the non-inflected infinitive. The author mentions that in such cases it is possible for the CIA3 to occupy either the pre-verbal or post-verbal position depending on how the speakers analyze those verb forms. In the cases they are considered an inflected infinitive (whose agreement position is occupied by a  $\emptyset$  morpheme), proclisis emerges. But, given BP's inflectional morphology weakening, this verb, alternatively, can "be analyzed as a default form, without an agreement morpheme" (Nunes, 2015, p. 78), and so its agreement position is free. The author also underlines that, since enclisis is the preferred placement in these morphologically ambiguous contexts, it is very likely that the interpretation that these verbs are non-inflected infinitives is becoming the canonical analysis for BP speakers.

‘If he recommends him for the position, it’ll seem inappropriate.’

- d. Se você **o** ver/vê-**lo**, me avise.  
If you him see/see-him, me tell  
‘If you see him, let me know.’
- e. Se você **o** vir, me avise.  
If you him see, me tell.  
‘If you see him, let me know.’

Considering BP CIA3 object agreement marks also seems to justify the impossibility of their fusion with dative clitics, which is possible in EP:

- (13) Quanto ao contrato, envie-**mo** por e-mail.  
Regarding to-the contract, send-me-it by email  
‘Regarding the contract, send it to me by email.’

In this case, the impossibility is caused by the different nature of the elements. However, even if a fusion does not happen, the CIA3 cannot follow a dative clitic:

- (14) \*Quanto ao contrato, **me o** envie por e-mail.  
Regarding to-the contract, me it send by email  
‘Regarding the contract, send it to me by email.’

The author mentions that such a fact can be explained by the occurrence of a CIA3 after  $\phi$ -features<sup>8</sup> (present in dative clitics). Likewise, the impossibility of enclisis with finite verbs can be explained by the occurrence of a CIA3 after the same group of  $\phi$ -features (present in the subject agreement mark<sup>9</sup>):

- (15) \*A Rita viu-**o** no centro ontem.  
The Rita saw-him in-the downtown yesterday.  
‘Rita saw him downtown yesterday.’

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<sup>8</sup> Note that, nevertheless, the CIA3 can come after a subject pronoun, which also contains  $\phi$ -features (e.g., Examples 11b and 11c), so the presence of such features does not seem to be enough for the non-occurrence of fusion. However, the supposed distinct morphological nature of the two elements can justify the impossibility of fusion or of their co-occurrence if it is considered that interpolation, that is, the presence of an element between the clitic pronoun and the verb is not allowed in Portuguese (Martins, 2013, p. 2233). Thus, considering the CIA3 non-clitic elements, they will not be able to occur between the dative (a proper clitic) and the verb.

<sup>9</sup> Also, the presence of a subject agreement mark in the inflected verb should repel the clitic pronoun.

Apart from that, the author comments that dative clitics and CIA3 can occur, as long as they are not in adjacent positions, which would be another argument in favor of their different morphological nature<sup>10</sup>:

- (16) Quanto ao contrato, pode **me** enviá-**lo** por e-mail.  
Regarding to-the contract, you-can me send-it by email.  
'Regarding the contract, you can send it to me by email.'

Finally, the author concludes that BP CIA3 do not have the same syntactic distribution the other clitics do (or EP CIA3, for that matter), although formal education considers them as such. However, given the result of this education in the speakers' inner grammar, it is possible to see "a nice example of the argument for the poverty of stimulus in which language acquisition is concerned, because there is a gap between what school teaches about *o(s)/a(s)* and what is [...] internalized by the speakers who acquire them" (p. 82, his emphasis).

Thus, Nunes's (2015) analysis regarding BP CIA3's status can be summarized as follows: these pronouns are, in fact, object agreement marks. Such a fact is supported by the sole possibility for *o(s)/a(s)* to attach in enclisis to verbal forms that can independently carry agreement marks and by the competition between these CIA3 and subject agreement marks, which block their realization in enclisis and proclisis is its last resort. Table 3 summarizes these characteristics and compare them with the other BP clitics.

Having Nunes's (2015) study been described, the next section will detail this study's research questions and hypotheses.

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<sup>10</sup> Nunes (2015, p.79) highlights that, since the CIA3 only occur in post-verbal position to non-inflected infinitive verbs (or, at least, interpreted this way), sentences such as (a) are not possible; nonetheless, if instead of the CIA3 a strong pronoun is used (tendency in BP), the sentence is possible, such as in (b):

- a. \*A Maria me recomendou-o.  
The Mary me recommended-it  
b. A Maria me recomendou ele.  
The Mary me recommended him  
'Mary recommended it to me.'

For him, this fact is another evidence of the different morphological nature between the CIA3 and the other clitics in BP.

**Table 3.** Comparison between clitic pronouns placement in BP

<b>Context</b>	<b>BP CIA3</b>	<b>Other BP clitics</b>
Finite sentences with an inflected verb	Proclisis to the inflected verb	Proclisis to the inflected verb
Verbal periphrases (main verb in the non-inflected infinitive)	Enclisis to the non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the non-inflected infinitive
Verbal periphrases (main verb in the past participle or in the gerund)	Proclisis to the auxiliary verb	Proclisis to the main verb
Verbs in the non-inflected infinitive	Enclisis to the non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the non-inflected infinitive
Verbs in the inflected infinitive	Without agreement marks: enclisis With agreement marks: proclisis	Proclisis to the inflected infinitive
Regular (or regularized) verbs in the future subjunctive	Enclisis (preferable) or proclisis to the verb in the future subjunctive	Proclisis to the verb in the future subjunctive
Irregular verbs in the future subjunctive	Proclisis to the verb in the future subjunctive	Proclisis to the verb in the future subjunctive

## Research questions and hypotheses

Aligned with the rich scientific production about Portuguese clitic pronouns, this study proposed to bring data from an experimental study tackling the idiosyncrasies BP CIA3 present, since Nunes (2015) does not explicit the origin of the data which stimulated his study. In this regard, in order to control some linguistic and sociolinguistic variables, an experimental study can bring to light data which complement or refine formal theories.

The following research question were stipulated:

*Question 1:* Do schooled BP native speakers distinguish the CIA3 *o* from the clitic *me*, assigning them different syntactic distributions in the contexts considered in this study?

*Question 2:* Are there sociolinguistic factors (namely, gender, age, and level of education) which influence the results?

To which the following hypotheses were formulated:

*Hypothesis 1:* The CIA3 *o* behaves as object agreement mark, being, therefore, different from the clitic *me*.

Meeting Nunes's (2015) ideas, Hypothesis 1 will be confirmed by the preference the speakers will show for the post-verbal placement of the CIA3 *o* when the verb they are argument of is in the non-inflected infinitive and for the pre-verbal placement of that pronoun when the verb they are argument of is in the inflected infinitive. At the same time, the clitic *me* shall occupy the pre-verbal position in both cases. Regarding verbal periphrases, enclisis with the CIA3 will be seen in cases where the main verb is in the non-inflected infinitive, whilst proclisis will be preferred when it is in the past participle. Note that in this case proclisis will occur to the auxiliary verb and not to the main verb. In the case of the clitic *me*, again, it shall be placed in pre-verbal position to the main verb in both contexts. Table 4 summarizes the expected results:

**Table 4.** Summary of expected results by context and pronoun

Context	CIA3 <i>o</i>	Clitic <i>me</i>
Infinitive clauses with verbs in the non-inflected infinitive	Enclisis to the non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the non-inflected infinitive
Infinitive clauses with verbs in the inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the inflected infinitive
Verbal periphrases with the main verb in the non-inflected infinitive	Enclisis to the non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis to the non-inflected infinitive
Verbal periphrases with the main verb in the past participle	Proclisis to the auxiliary verb	Proclisis to the past participle

*Hypothesis 2:* Sociolinguistic factors are not expected to influence the results.

Since the CIA3 are acquired during the Brazilian Primary School (*Ensino Fundamental*), the age of acquisition should be transversal to all participants; therefore, even if they continued studying (*i.e.*, university degree) after concluding the Brazilian Secondary School (*Ensino Médio*), those elements would have already been acquired and these variables would not influence the results. Regarding the participants' gender, it is known that women stick to variants of more prestige (*cf.* Labov 2008 [1972]). In this case, there is no indication that a certain placement would be regarded as more or less prestigious. Besides that, Pereira (2023) mentions that he did not find influence of his participants' gender in his study on the pronominal placement in BP. Thus, this sociolinguistic variable is not expected to influence this study's result as well.

The methodology used to reach the objectives will be described next.

## Methodology

In total, 51 individuals collaborated in this research. Out of these, three were excluded for having lived more than one year in another country whose official language was Portuguese apart from Brazil, minimizing, thus, effects of interference originated from the exposure to other Portuguese varieties. Therefore, the sample for this study was composed by 48 (41 females) adult BP natives<sup>11</sup> who had completed, at least, Secondary School. Since there is no evidence for diatopic variation of the phenomenon studied, there were no restrictions regarding the participants' origin; however, most of them (31 participants – 64.6% of the sample) were from the South. Table 5 summarizes the data obtained by means of the sociolinguistic questionnaire:

**Table 5.** Participants' sociolinguistic profile

<i>N</i>	<b>48</b>	
Average age (interval)	36;10 (20 – 60) <sup>12</sup>	
Age Group	20 to 27 years old = 10 (21.3%)	41 to 47 years old = 11 (23.4%)
	30 to 38 years old = 19 (40.4%)	50 to 60 years old = 7 (14.9%)
Gender	Female = 41 (85.4%)	Male = 7 (14.6%)
Level of Education	Secondary School = 12 (25%)	
	Bachelor's Degree = 16 (33.3%)	
	Post-Graduation = 20 (41.7%)	
Origin	Center-West = 1 (2.1%)	Southeast = 10 (20.8%)
	North = 6 (12.5%)	South = 31 (64.6%)
L2	No = 6 (12.5%)	English = 39 (81.4%)
	German = 4 (8.3%)	Italian = 5 (10.5%)
	Spanish = 17 (35.4%)	Japanese = 2 (4.2%)
	French = 8 (16.7%)	Russian = 1 (2.1%)

This study used Google Forms for its execution. All participants, in a first moment, read and accepted the conditions for this research. Next, they completed the sociolinguistic questionnaire whose data were presented in the previous Table. Afterwards, the task started.

<sup>11</sup> One participant indicated he/she was also a native speaker of German. This participant was kept in the sample because German does not have object clitics.

<sup>12</sup> One participant did not mention his/her age; thus, his/her age is not considered neither for the average nor for the total of participants by age group.

The sentences rewriting task consisted in rewriting 40 incomplete sentences using a word provided between parentheses at the end of the sentences. Out of these 40 sentences, 16 were test items and 24 were distractors. The test items contained between parentheses one of the pronouns used in this study (*o* or *me*), distributed in four contexts, with two items per pronoun and context, as seen in Table 6:

**Table 6.** Quantity of items per context and pronoun

<b>Context</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>Me<sup>13</sup></b>
Infinitive clauses with verbs in the non-inflected infinitive	2	2
Infinitive clauses with verbs in the inflected infinitive	2	2
Verbal periphrases with the main verb in the non-inflected infinitive	2	2
Verbal periphrases with the main verb in the past participle	2	2

The infinitive clauses, either with a non-inflected or an inflected verb, were introduced by prepositions (*para*, *em*, or *de*). With verbs in the inflected infinitive, they were always in the third person plural, since it is more productive in BP (cf. Graciosa, 1991; Scherre; Naro, 1997). The periphrases used were the periphrastic future tense (whose main verb is in the non-inflected infinitive) and the composed pluperfect past tense (whose main verb is in the past participle), and their auxiliary verbs were always conjugated in the singular. Regarding the distractors, they contained between parentheses words that were not pronouns. To prevent that only the pronouns used in this study repeated throughout the task, some words between parentheses also occurred more than once, namely the adverbs *não* ‘not’, *sempre* ‘always’, and *ainda* ‘still/yet’, the last two with different possible placements in the sentences, which was considered important in order to raise the participants’ attention during the task.

The items were randomized each time the form was accessed, and they were organized in four pages, with, in each one of them, four test items whose relation context/pronoun did not overlap.<sup>14</sup> The test items did not include ambiguities, namely with the CIA3 *o*, which can be interpreted as the definite article *o*. Also, these items always had lexical material in pre-verbal position to prevent the clitics from happening at the very beginning of the sentence, which is, in general, a usually highlighted topic when clitics are taught at school (vd. Cereja; Dias-Vianna; Damien, 2016).

<sup>13</sup> This pronoun was chosen because it is, among BP clitics, the one that suffers less dialectal variation, making a broader study regarding the territorial coverage possible.

<sup>14</sup> This means that, if on the first page, for example, an item with an infinitive clause with the verb in the non-inflected infinitive had to be rewritten using the clitic *o*, the item with an infinitive clause with the verb in the inflected infinitive would have to be compulsorily completed with the pronoun *me* on that page. On the following page, therefore, the situation is reversed. The same is valid for the contexts with verbal periphrases.

Before the task started, the participants had the opportunity to practice with some items. This step was extremely important, because it was at that moment that they learned that they should only include the word between parentheses; they could not exclude words from the original sentence. They also learned that, in certain cases, some morphological modification was necessary. For instance, if the CIA3 *o* happens in post-verbal position to a non-inflected infinitive verb, the verbal termination must be adapted to accommodate the clitic pronoun:

- (17) a. Eu vou ver semana que vem. (o)  
I go to-see week that comes (him)  
'I'm going to see next week. (him)'  
b. Eu vou vê-**lo** semana que vem.

To exemplify such a change, but without using the target structure of this study, during the practice items, some of them contained contractions between prepositions and articles (18) and compound nouns united by a hyphen (19), being one of the elements of the contraction or the composition between parentheses:

- (18) a. A Camila mora a Bahia. (em)  
The Camila lives the Bahia (in)  
A Camila mora **na** Bahia.  
'Camila lives in Bahia.'  
(19) a. A flor é o meu vegetal favorito. (couve)  
The flower is the my vegetable favorite (cauli)  
A **couve-flor** é o meu vegetal favorito.  
'The cauliflower is my favorite vegetable.'

## Results

In total, 96 answers were collected by context/pronoun. In the context of infinitive clauses with a verb in the non-inflected infinitive to be completed with the CIA3 *o*, 53 of them had it in enclisis (20a), 36 in proclisis (20b) and seven presented other answers.<sup>15</sup> In the context of infinitive clauses with a non-inflected infinitive with the clitic *me*, four had it in enclisis (21a), 91 in proclisis (21b), and one presented a

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<sup>15</sup> The answers classified as "others" included the use of another pronoun (*te, lhe, ele*) instead of those that were asked to be used, not using the pronoun between parentheses at all, the use of the pronoun in a position other than next to a verb, verb tense/mode change, or cases where the clitic pronoun is doubled (used at the same time in post and pre-verbal position).

different answer. In the context of infinitive clauses with an inflected infinitive with the CIA3 *o*, four had it in enclisis (22a), 84 in proclisis (22b), and eight presented another answer. In the context of infinitive clauses with an inflected infinitive with the clitic *me*, 95 had it in proclisis (23) and one presented another answer.

- (20) a. Estamos felizes em recebê-**lo**.  
we-are happy in receive-him
- b. Estamos feliz em **o** receber.  
we-are happy in him receive  
'We are happy to have him over.'
- (21) a. Eles não estão animados em ajudar-**me**.  
they not are excited in help-me
- b. Eles não estão animados em **me** ajudar.  
they not are excited in me help  
'They are not excited to help me.'
- (22) a. Eu pedi a elas para auxiliarem-**no**.  
I asked to them to help-him
- b. Eu pedi a elas para **o** auxiliarem.  
'I asked them to help him.'
- (23) Para **me** convencerem, têm de ser mais espertos.  
to me convince they-have of to-be more smart  
'To convince me, they have to be smarter.'

Concerning the contexts of verbal periphrases, in the periphrastic future tense with the CIA3 *o*, there were 11 occurrences of proclisis to the auxiliary verb (24a), 35 of proclisis to the main verb (24b), 40 of enclisis to the main verb (24c), and ten other answers. With the clitic *me*, there were 94 occurrences of thus clitic in proclisis to the main verb (25a) and two in enclisis to that verb (25b). In the context of the compound pluperfect past tense, the CIA3 was placed in proclisis to the auxiliary verb in 32 cases (26a), once in enclisis to the auxiliary verb (26b), 45 times in proclisis to the main verb (26c), and eight times in enclisis to the main verb (26d), besides ten other answers. Finally, with the clitic *me*, proclisis to the main verb happened 95 times (27a), whereas enclisis happened once (27b).

- (24) a. A Sara **o** vai encontrar esta tarde.  
The Sara him goes to-meet this afternoon
- b. A Sara vai **o** encontrar esta tarde.  
The Sara goes him to-meet this afternoon
- c. A Sara vai encontrá-**lo** esta tarde.  
The Sara goes to-meet-him this afternoon  
'Sara is going to meet him this afternoon.'
- (25) a. Ele não vai **me** enganar com esse papo.  
He not goes me fool with that nonsense
- b. Ele não vai enganar-**me** com esse papo.  
He not goes fool-me with that nonsense  
'He is not going to fool me with that nonsense.'
- (26) a. A Raquel **o** tinha visto pelo centro faz uns dias.  
The Raquel him had seen for-the downtown makes some days
- b. A Raquel tinha-**o** visto pelo centro faz uns dias.  
The Raquel had-him seen for-the downtown makes some days
- c. A Raquel tinha **o** visto pelo centro faz uns dias.  
The Raquel had him seen for-the downtown makes some days
- d. A Raquel tinha visto-**o** pelo centro faz uns dias.  
The Raquel had seen-him for-the downtown makes some days  
'Raquel had seen him around downtown some days ago.'
- (27) a. O Leandro tinha **me** aceitado no grupo antes de toda a confusão.  
The Leandro had me accepted in-the group before of all the mess
- b. O Leandro tinha aceitado-**me** no grupo antes de toda a confusão.  
The Leandro had accepted-me in-the group before of all the mess  
'Leandro had accepted me in the group before all the mess.'

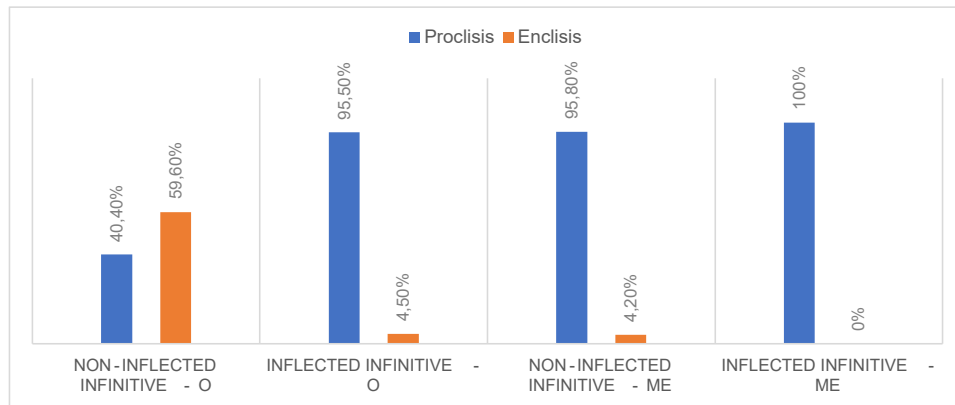
Table 7 summarizes the aforementioned data:

**Table 7.** Total occurrences of pronominal placement by context and pronoun.

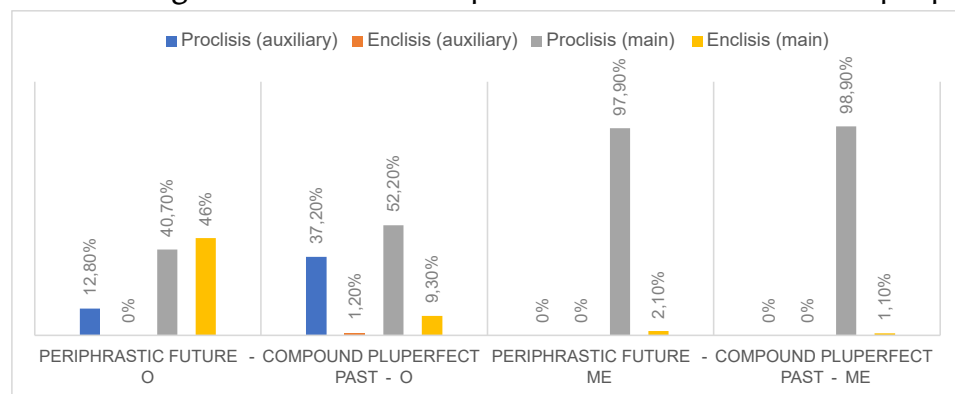
	Non-inflected infinitive		Inflected infinitive			Periphrastic future		Compound pluperfect past	
	<i>O</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Me</i>		<i>O</i>	<i>Me</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>Me</i>
Proclisis	36	91	84	95	To the auxiliary verb	11	0	32	0
					To the main verb	35	94	45	94
Enclisis	53	4	4	0	To the auxiliary verb	0	0	1	0
					To the main verb	40	2	8	1
Other	7	1	8	1		10	0	10	1
Total	96	96	96	96		96	96	96	96

Since only the cases in which the pronouns were properly used are relevant, Graphs 1 and 2 present the rates of use of proclisis and enclisis for each one of them by context, disregarding, therefore, other answers:

**Graph 1.** Percentage of use of *o* and *me* in proclisis and in enclisis in infinitive clauses.



**Graph 2.** Percentage of use of *o* and *me* in proclisis and in enclisis in verbal periphrases.



Concerning the sociolinguistic variable “gender”, women and men differed in the sense that the former tended to place the CIA3 in enclisis to a non-inflected infinitive verb (both in infinitive clauses, at a 64.5% rate, and in the periphrastic future tense, at a 53.4% rate). They also used the CIA3 in proclisis to the auxiliary verb in the periphrastic future tense (15.1%). Men, on the other hand, preferred proclisis with non-inflected infinitives (69.2% in infinitive clauses and 92.3% in the periphrastic future). Hypercorrection (in this specific case, the use of enclisis in contexts the norm does not preconize it, such as with the inflected infinitive and with the past participle) were mostly observed with women (5.4% with the inflected infinitive and 8.2% with the past participle, totaling ten occurrences), with only two cases in the men’s group with the past participle (which, due to the low number of men in the sample, represent 15.4% of answers in that context for that group).

With respect to the participants’ level of education, it was observed that participants with a bachelor’s degree or a post-graduation showed a tendency to place the CIA3 in proclisis to the auxiliary verb in verbal periphrases, which was more evident in the compound pluperfect past tense (42.3% and 47.5%, respectively). Cases of hypercorrection were identified in the group who only had a Secondary School diploma, two cases with the inflected infinitive (9.1%) and one with the past participle (5%), and with the post-graduates, two cases with the inflected infinitive (5.3%) and seven with the past participle (17.5%)

The stratification by age group showed the first age group (from 20 to 27 years old) prefers proclisis to the verb the CIA3 is a complement of in all contexts (in infinitive clauses, 66.7% with a non-inflected infinitive and 88.9% with an inflected infinitive, and, in verbal periphrases, 61.1% in the periphrastic future, and 88.2% in the compound pluperfect past tense). Participants from the fourth age group (from 50 to 60 years old) are the only ones who prefer the pre-verbal placement to the auxiliary in the compound pluperfect past tense (69.2%). The intermediate age groups had a similar behavior that, globally, resembles the older group, notwithstanding a slight preference for the pre-verbal placement of the CIA3 to the main verb in periphrases (41.2% in the periphrastic future and 51.4% in the compound pluperfect past tense) within the second age group (from 30 to 38 years old).

Regarding the clitic *me*, as previously mentioned, the proclitic placement to the verb it is a complement of was almost categorical. The seven deviant cases were made mostly by participants of the second age group, all post-graduated.<sup>16</sup> The segregation of data of both pronouns by gender, age group, and level of education is in Table 8:

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<sup>16</sup> There was also one case of hypercorrection, namely with *me* placed post-verbally to the past participle, made a by a post-graduated female participant from the fourth age group.

**Table 8.** Results by gender, age group, and level of education

		Gender				Age Group				Level of Education										
		FM		ML		1A		2A		3A		4A		SS		BD		PG		
		N	% <sup>17</sup>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
CIA3 O	Non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis	27	35.5	9	69.2	12	66.7	14	38.9	5	25	5	38.5	10	45.5	9	32.1	17	43.6
		Enclisis	49	64.5	4	30.8	6	33.3	22	61.1	15	75	8	61.5	12	54.5	19	67.9	22	56.4
		Other	6		1		2		2		2		1		2		4		1	
	Inflected infinitive	Proclisis	70	94.6	14	100	16	88.9	36	100	16	88.9	14	100	20	90.9	28	100	36	94.7
		Enclisis	4	5.4	0	0	2	11.1	0	0	2	11.1	0	0	2	9.1	0	0	2	5.3
		Other	8		0		2		2		4		0		2		4		2	
	Periphrastic future	Proclisis (auxiliary)	11	15.1	0	0	1	5.6	7	20.6	2	10	1	8.3	1	4.5	2	8.4	8	20
		Enclisis (auxiliary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Proclisis (main)	23	31.5	12	92.3	11	61.1	14	41.2	5	25	5	41.7	11	50	11	45.8	13	32.5
		Enclisis (main)	39	53.4	1	7.7	6	33.3	13	38.2	13	65	6	50	10	45.5	11	45.8	19	47.5
		Other	9		1		2		4		2		2		2		8		0	
		Compound pluperfect past tense	Proclisis (auxiliary)	28	38.4	4	30.8	1	5.9	14	40	7	36.8	9	69.2	2	10	11	42.3	19
	Enclisis (auxiliary)	1	1.4	0	0	0	0	1	2.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2.5	
	Proclisis (main)	38	52.1	7	53.8	15	88.2	18	51.4	8	42.1	4	30.8	17	85	15	57.7	13	32.5	
	Enclisis (main)	6	8.2	2	15.4	1	5.9	2	5.7	4	21.1	0	0	1	5	0	0	7	17.5	
	Other	1		0		3		3		3		1		4		6		0		

<sup>17</sup>“Other” has not been considered for the percentages.

**Table 8.** Cont.

		Gender				Age Group				Level of Education										
		FM		ML		1A		2A		3A		4A		SS		BD		PG		
		N	% <sup>17</sup>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Non-inflected infinitive	Proclisis	79	97.5	12	85.7	19	100	35	92.1	22	100	13	92.9	23	100	32	100	36	90	
	Enclisis	2	2.5	2	14.3	0	0	3	7.9	0	0	1	7.1	0	0	0	0	4	10	
	Other	1		0		1		0		0		0		1		0		0		
Inflected infinitive	Proclisis	82	100	13	100	19	100	38	100	22	100	14	100	24	100	31	100	40	100	
	Enclisis	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Other	1		0		1		0		0		0		0		1		0		
Clitic <i>Me</i>	Periphrastic future	Proclisis (auxiliary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Enclisis (auxiliary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Proclisis (main)	82	100	12	85.7	20	100	36	94.7	22	100	14	100	24	100	32	100	38	95
	Enclisis (main)	0	0	2	14.3	0	0	2	5.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	5	
	Other	0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		0		
	Compound pluperfect past tense	Proclisis (auxiliary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
		Enclisis (auxiliary)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Proclisis (main)		81	98.8	13	100	19	100	38	100	22	100	13	92.9	24	100	31	100	39	97.5	
Enclisis (main)		1	1.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	7.1	0	0	0	0	1	2.5	
Other	0		1	1	0		0		0		0		0		1		0			

**Note:** FM = female; ML = male; 1A = 20 to 27 years old; 2A = 30 to 38 years old; 3A = 41 to 47 years old; 4A = 50 to 60 years old; SS = Secondary School; BD = bachelor's degree; PG = post-graduation.

## Discussion

As it has been exposed, BP CIA3 are not acquired by the normal acquisition path any longer, having been replaced by strong pronouns (Galves; Moraes; Ribeiro, 2015; Luís; Kaiser, 2016; Duarte, 2020), and school ends up being responsible for their introduction (*cf.* Kato, 2005, 2017; Kato; Cyrino; Corrêa, 2009). The result of this education, however, seems to make the CIA3 behave differently from the other clitics in BP. Nunes (2015) suggests they have been reanalyzed as object agreement marks. Such statement is supported by their tendency to attach to verbal forms that can independently carry agreement marks (*e.g.*, non-inflected infinitive verbs), the fact that they appear in pre-verbal position attached to verbs whose subject agreement mark is occupied (*e.g.*, inflected infinitive verbs), and the fact they do not attach to verbs in the gerund or past participle, since they do not carry a position for subject agreement.

According to what the referred author proposed, considering the pronouns used in this study, whilst the clitic *me* would behave like a traditional BP clitic pronoun, appearing in pre-verbal position to the verb it is a complement of, the CIA3 would present a distinct behavior, appearing in pre-verbal position to verbs in the inflected infinitive and to auxiliary verbs in the compound pluperfect past tense, and in post-verbal position to verbs in the non-inflected infinitive, whether in infinitive clauses or in the periphrastic future (*cf.* Table 4). Nonetheless, the data obtained in this study do not seem to support Nunes's (2015) theory. What was seen was that the pre-verbal placement to the main verb is a generalized tendency, even with the CIA3. Although enclisis as a main option only happens in infinitive clauses with non-inflected verbs, even so, the pre-verbal placement has expressive productions (*cf.* Graphs 1 e 2).

It is important to point out that one thing the author does not cover in his theory and seems to be relevant to this analysis is the fact that, in Portuguese, agreement marks always happen in suffixal position (Rio-Torto, 2002). Such a detail is relevant if the CIA3 are considered object agreement marks, since, if they cannot occur in enclisis (that is, occupying the position destined for inflectional morphology), they must occur in proclisis, and then they would not be in the canonical position for agreement marks. Indeed, still considering this aspect, the author is not clear on the reasons why, being the CIA3 object agreement marks, they could not co-occur with subject agreement marks. Supposedly, these marks should occupy different functional positions in the sentence structure, so their co-occurrence should not be discarded. Finally, it is highlighted that EP CIA3 (just like other clitics in this variety) can come either in proclisis or enclisis and this complementary distribution they have does not attribute them different morphological statuses according to their placement.

Nevertheless, it is undeniable the evident distinct behavior the CIA3 *o* and the clitic *me* display. In fact, it is important to point out that Question 1 (*Do schooled BP native speakers distinguish the CIA3 o from the clitic me, assigning them different*

*syntactic distributions in the contexts considered in this study?*) can be answered affirmatively. The results show that, in those contexts Nunes (2015) expected a different behavior between the CIA3 and the other BP clitics, there are differences in the rates of proclisis and enclisis between the pronouns used in this study, besides differences in which verb they attach to in the case of verbal periphrases. However, opposing what Hypothesis 1 predicted, it does not seem to be the case that BP CIA3 have been reanalyzed as object agreement marks, because they were also placed in the canonical position for BP clitics at high rates.<sup>18</sup> This seems to evince that these pronouns have different natures, although it is not possible to determine, from the data here obtained, the morphosyntactic status of these pronouns within the BP pronominal system.

Concerning Question 2 (*Are there sociolinguistic factors (namely, gender, age, and level of education) which influence the results?*), there were differences between certain groups. For instance, women preferred to place the CIA3 in enclisis to non-inflected verbs (either in infinitive clauses or in the periphrastic future), indicating that such a placement can be associated to prestigious varieties (*cf.* Labov, 2008 [1972]). However, given the fact men were only 14.6% of the sample, the analysis must have been impaired.

By analyzing the participants' level of education, it is seen that those with a bachelor's degree or a post-graduation tended to place the CIA3 in proclisis to the auxiliary verb in periphrases in the compound pluperfect past tense. As per the last section, there were cases of hypercorrection involving enclisis, in the sense that participants with Secondary School education only and post-graduates used enclisis with the inflected infinitive and with the past participle, a placement which is not approved by the norm. Moreover, hypercorrection was also detected with one participant of the post-graduation group concerning the clitic *me*, which might indicate that they perceive enclisis as a more formal placement, since it is also acquired via schooling<sup>19</sup> (*cf.* Lobo, 2002), and it might emerge due to the context data collection happened (an academical study), a tendency much more evident in the post-graduate group,

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<sup>18</sup> About the context of infinitive clauses with a non-inflected infinitive verb specifically, unexpected high rates of proclisis in this context could be claimed to result from the fact that the participants analyzed those verb forms as inflected infinitives, since these verb forms in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular have the same morphology as non-inflected infinitives (*cf.* Footnote 7). Nevertheless, during the development of the experimental design, such items were carefully designed in order to reduce ambiguity. Moreover, in the context of periphrases in the future, the same behavior was seen, and, in such contexts, an inflected infinitive is not possible to occur. Therefore, the analysis of those verb forms as inflected infinitives is unlikely.

<sup>19</sup> In fact, Pereira (2023) studied the acceptability of both proclisis and enclisis by educated native BP speakers and he found out that both placements are considered acceptable by the speakers. Although the author did not consider if any traits of formality are associated to enclisis, given the context of acquisition of the pronominal placement, it might be possible that the participants associate it to more formal contexts or, at least, to the written modality (which was used in the present study).

given the higher contact with formal situations of language use they probably experience on a daily basis.

Lastly, in the stratification by age group, it was seen that the youngest participants (from 20 to 27 years old) preferred the CIA3 in proclisis to the verb they are complement of in all contexts. On the other hand, those between 50 and 60 years old are the only ones who prefer the pre-verbal placement to the auxiliary verb in the compound pluperfect tense. In fact, this group is the one that, overall, had a closer behavior to what Nunes (2015) predicted, although not categorically. Notwithstanding, it is important to point out the association between age group and level of education: most speakers from the first age group only had a secondary education diploma, whereas most older speakers had a post-graduation diploma. Remember that the CIA3 are acquired during Primary School. Since the sample was composed by speakers who had completed at least Secondary School, it can be assumed they all acquired the CIA3 around the same age.

Thus, Hypothesis 2 predicted that neither level of education nor age group would affect the results, which does not seem to be correct. Nevertheless, although at first sight some sort of language change concerning the CIA3 can be suggested, in the sense that younger speakers consider them typical BP clitics (evinced by their tendency to place them in pre-verbal position in all contexts, just like it happens with the clitic *me*) and the older speakers consider them different elements, it cannot be concluded, from these data, if the main factor interfering with the results is the participants' age or their level of education, an approach that future studies can have.

## Final remarks

At first sight, Nunes's (2015) theory does not seem to have been verified by the data here obtained. However, the difference in behavior between the two pronouns used in this study cannot be disregarded, what seems to indicate that they are elements of different nature. Although it is not possible to anticipate the CIA3's nature, they do not seem to be object agreement marks, being such assumptions supported by the results of this study, by the fact that in Portuguese there are no occurrences of agreement marks other than in suffixal position (and so their pre-verbal placement, in the case of the CIA3 occurring in proclisis, would be odd), and by the fact that the subject agreement marks and the object agreement marks should occupy different functional positions in the sentence (which would not prevent their co-occurrence).

At the same time, a conclusion regarding the weight of sociolinguistic variables "gender", "age", and "level of education" on this apparent difference remains pending. For that reason, new studies are necessary in order to obtain more determining answers in relation to the current morphosyntactic status of BP CIA3 and their interaction

with sociolinguistic variables, as well as in relation to the impact of schooling on the acquisition of these pronouns.

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