The functional architecture of CP: a unified analysis of Brazilian Portuguese ‘lá’

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This paper investigates the following structures with ‘lá’ in Brazilian Portuguese (BP):

1. **Deictic:** (Lá) as pessoas (lá) comem (lá) muito sanduíche (lá). // (There) people (there) eat-3PL (there) much sandwich (there). // People usually eat a lot of sandwiches there.

2. **Rhetorical question:** Eu (lá) carrego (lá) desaforo pra casa? // I (lá) carry-1SG (lá) offense to my house. // Do I accept being offended by someone else?

3. **Imperative:** Calma lá! Você não pode me acusar assim. // Calm-IMPERATIVE lá! You not can me blame this way. // Hold on! You can not blame me for this.

4. **Inaccusative:** Lá vem a Maria. // There come-3SG the Maria. // Maria is coming there.

5. **Existential:** “lá tinha um trem lá” (BUTHERS, 2009, p. 76). // There had a train (‘train’ might mean ‘thing’ in this case) there. // There was a train (over) there.

6. **Emphatic assertion:** A: _A vida não tem sentido sem trabalho e fé. B: _Lá isso é verdade. // A: _Life is not worthy without work and faith. B: Lá this is true. // B: _This is definitely true.

7. a. **[- Realis]:** Ele lá ia fugir quando a polícia chegou. // [He lá go-past-3rd sing. run-INF away] // He was going to run away when the police arrived.

   b. **[+ Realis]:** “Embrulhados assim, os ovos têm proteção suficiente para aguentar os tranços que lá vão tomando na cangalha” (Globo Rural, 19th September, 2010). // [lá go-pres-3pl take-GER] // Packed that way, the eggs are properly protected against the jolts that they are going to take on the back of the horse.

As pointed out above, ‘lá’ can surface in many structures where it does not support locative meaning (2-3, 6-7). Furthermore, except for (1) where ‘lá’ is quite freely distributed, in (2-7), ‘lá’ shows rigid order. Following the Functional Specifier Theory (CINQUE, 1999) and the cartographic studies on CP (RIZZI, 1997), we hypothesize that this arises from the fact that ‘lá’ is directly merged in spec of different functional projections in the IP left periphery.

According to Rizzi (1997), the CP area, i.e., the high left periphery includes two systems. The first one, which is known as Force-Finiteness, expresses the clause type (interrogative, assertive, imperative, etc.). The second one, which is known as Topic-Focus, articulates topic-comment and focus-presupposition. When the latter is projected, it intersects the former (8).

8. \[
\text{[ForceP Force}^\circ \text{ [TopP Top}^\circ \text{ [FocusP Focus}^\circ \text{ [TopP Top}^\circ \text{ [FinP Fin}^\circ \text{ [IP ...]]]]]]}
\]

Among the available studies on ‘lá’, Martins (2010) claims that this item is merged in Spec,IP, due to its post-verbal position in European Portuguese (EP) (9). Then, verb and subject move, respectively, to Σ° and Spec,ΣP higher than IP. Besides, according to Martins (2010), ‘lá’ is a metalinguistic negation marker.

Nevertheless, in BP, (9) would be ungrammatical if it was not pronounced with interrogative intonation (2). In addition, in BP, ‘lá’ can surface in pre-verbal position (2); hence, ‘lá’ would be in a higher position than IP. We also highlight that ‘lá’ is not a negation marker in (2, 9). The negative effect is triggered by polarity inversion, which is a dedicated property of rhetorical questions (HAN, 1998). As a result, ‘lá’ can be even omitted without changing the negation effect in (2, 9).

Considering the facts above and the reasons below, we hypothesize that ‘lá’ is merged directly in CP functional projections: Spec,FocusP (2-3), Spec,TopP (4-5), Spec,ForceP (6) and Spec,FinP (7).

In (2), ‘lá’ is high pitch accented. Besides, although it can surface with topicalized items around it (10a), it is incompatible with focalized elements. Since rhetorical questions are aimed at denying given information, topicalization (10bC) of accessible information (9bA) is more likely than focalization (9bB) of new information. That is why “o João” in (10bC) can not be focus.

(10) a. (Carrego) lá (carrego) desaforo pra casa? // Do I accept being offended by someone else?
   B: _O PAI DO JOÃO comprou aquele carro (e não o João). // JOÃO’S FATHER bought that car (not João).
   C: _O João lá comprou aquele carro? Foi o pai dele. // Did João buy that car? It was his father that did it.

In (3), ‘lá’ is high pitch accented and post-verbal. This position results from V-raising to Force, as it is expected in imperatives (PLATZACK; ROSENGREN, 1998). Therefore, besides the rigid post-verbal order of ‘lá’ (11), the V-raising to Force is another difference between (2) and (3), where ‘lá’ is merged in the same position: Spec,FocusP.

(11) *Lá calma! // Lá calm-IMPERATIVE // Hold on!

In (4), we assume that ‘lá’ is the locative source of ‘vir’ (i.e., “A Maria vem (de) lá”. Maria is coming (from) there) in topic position. However, merged directly in Spec,TopP and without the preposition ‘de’, ‘lá’ loses its source content, but there still remains locative meaning on it.

An interesting speculation on source locative meaning is provided in (12) where ‘vem’ follows ‘em/im/ê/é’. These expletives are regional variations of the same phonetic bundle which is completely devoid of semantic content in contemporary BP. In spite of this lack of semantic content, they might be retentions of adverb ende (Old Portuguese) < ïnde (Latin), which, following Sanchéz Lancis (2001), used to express origin of movement (‘de lá’ = from there).

(12) Lá em/im/ê/é vem a Maria. // There em/im/ê/é come-3sing. the Maria. // Maria is coming there.

Just like in (4), ‘lá’ in (5) shows locative content in topic position as well. A striking evidence that arises from this fact is that ‘lá’ is compatible neither with ‘aqui’ nor with ‘ai’ (4a, 5a).

(4) a. Lá vem a Maria lá/*aqui/*ai. // There come-3sing the Maria there/*here/*there-2ndpers.
(5) a. Lá tinha um trem lá/*aqui/*ai. // There had a train there/*here/*there-2ndpers.

Accordingly, we disagree with Buthers (2009) who assumes that, in its double realization (5), the initial ‘lá’ is bleached in locative semantic content: “esvaziamento semântico” (BUTHERS, 2009, p. 93). Obviously, we also disagree with her analysis through which ‘lá’, in both (4) and (5), is considered an overt expletive merged in Spec,IP. As pointed out by Sheehan (2007, p. 254-255), even though “in some dialects of Romance overt ‘expletives’ are attested […] many of these overt expletives do not occupy a position in Spec,IP but rather are merged in the CP-periphery”.

In (6), from a discursive point of view, ‘lá’ emphasizes the assertive force of the clause. Moreover, from a syntactic point of view, ‘lá’ surfaces in initial position and it can also co-occur with a positive polarity.
item. When it happens, ‘lá’ must precede this item (13). That is why we suggest that ‘lá’ is merged in a higher position than PolP, probably, in Spec,ForceP.

(13) Lá isso sim (*lá) é verdade. // Lá this yes (*lá) is true. // Yes, this is definitely true.

Finally, in (7), ‘lá’ precedes the auxiliary ‘ir’ (‘to go’) which can be followed by non-finite verb (7a) or gerund (7b). Both structures are hypothetical accounts of an event which either was going to happen, but didn’t (7a), or is going to happen (7b). We argue that ‘lá’ is directly merged both in Spec,FinP [-realis], when ‘ir’ is followed by a non-finite verb, and in Spec,FinP [+realis], when ‘ir’ is followed by a verb in the gerund.

To sum up, we argue for an analysis of ‘lá’, from (2) to (7), as specifier of different functional projections in the IP left periphery. Similarly, this proposal seems to apply to other data in which ‘lá’ would make up the left peripheries of NP and v/VP.


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