

Linguistica sine finibus

Estudis dedicats a Montserrat Batllori Dillet

Elisabeth Gibert-Sotelo, Isabel Pujol Payet,
Assumpció Rost Bagudanch, Teresa de Jesús Tro Morató
(eds.)

LINGUISTICA SINE FINIBUS

ESTUDIS DEDICATS A MONTSERRAT BATLLORI DILLET



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PRONOMINAL INNOVATION AND AGREEMENT PATTERNS IN EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE DIALECTS

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Palavras chave

a gente, vocês, traços- ϕ , subespecificação, padrões de concordância

Abstract

The Portuguese pronominal system includes the pronouns *a gente* ('we') and *vocês* ('you_[plural]'), which resulted from the grammaticalization of (full) nominal phrases. In this paper, it is proposed that these pronouns are (generally, the former; dialectally, the later) morphologically underspecified (i.e. their person or person and number features have no specified values) and this lies behind the variation in verbal/predicate agreement patterns they exhibit. It is shown that an underspecification approach accounts better for the set of data (and their geolinguistic distribution) offered by the *Syntax-oriented corpus of Portuguese dialects* (CORDIAL-SIN) than the analyses that assume feature-mismatch between semantic and morphological features for the pronouns *a gente* and *vocês*.

Resumo

O sistema pronominal do português inclui os pronomes *a gente* e *vocês*, que resultaram da gramaticalização de sintagmas nominais (plenos). Neste artigo, propõe-se que esses pronomes são (vocês, apenas dialetalmente) morfologicamente subespecificados (ou seja, os seus traços de pessoa ou pessoa e número não têm especificação de valores) e isso está por trás da variação nos padrões de concordância verbal/predicativa que exibem. Mostra-se que uma abordagem em termos de subespecificação explica melhor o conjunto de dados e sua distribuição geolinguística no *Corpus dialetal para o estudo da sintaxe* (CORDIAL-SIN) do que as análises que assumem valores diferentes para os traços semânticos e os traços morfológicos dos pronomes *a gente* e *vocês*.

1. INTRODUCTION: VARIATION IN AGREEMENT PATTERNS ASSOCIATED WITH NEW PERSONAL PRONOUNS

The Portuguese pronoun *a gente* ‘we’, which is spread throughout the Portuguese territory, is the diachronic outcome of the grammaticalization of the nominal expression ‘the people’, and coexists with the earlier, Latin-based pronoun *nós* ‘we’ (see Lopes 1999, Lopes and Brocardo 2016, among others).

Traditionally, the pronoun *a gente* is said to display ϕ -feature mismatch between morphological and semantic specifications, being morphologically third person singular and semantically first person plural. This mismatch would be behind the variable patterns of subject-verb and secondary predication agreement that emerge with nominative *a gente*, as illustrated in (1)-(2).

- (1) a. *A gente* trabalhava muito.
we worked much
b. *A gente* trabalhávamos muito.
we worked.1PL much
- (2) a. *A gente* estava cansado/cansada.
we be.PAST tired.MASC/tired.FEM
b. *A gente* estava cansados/cansadas.
we be.PAST tired.MASC.PL/tired.FEM.PL
c. *A gente* estávamos cansados/cansadas.
we be.PAST.1PL tired.MASC.PL/tired.FEM.PL

Departing from this traditional perspective, Martins and Nunes (2021) offer a characterization of the Brazilian and European Portuguese pronominal systems that eliminates mismatches between semantic and morphological specifications. Under their analysis the pronoun *a gente* has no values for the morphological features person and number; apparent mismatches in subject-verb agreement (see (2a) above, for example, where the verb seems to be inflected in third person singular) correspond to the expression of morphological underspecification as default agreement (see

section 4.1). The morphological ϕ -feature underspecification of *a gente* explains why it is the only subject pronoun in European Portuguese that does not allow a null counterpart, although European Portuguese is a consistent Null Subject Language.

This paper will discuss how Martins and Nunes' (2021) proposal accounts for the agreement patterns in (1)-(2), besides other patterns that the CORDIAL-SIN (*Syntax-oriented Corpus of Portuguese Dialects*) uncovered (see section 2 for the identification and geolinguistic distribution of the different patterns). It will compare Martins and Nunes' (mismatch-free) approach with the phase-based (and mismatch-based) approach put forward by Costa and Pereira (2013) to account for verb/predicate agreement with *a gente* (see sections 3-4), and will eventually extend the proposed analysis to another case of variable agreement patterns featuring the pronoun *vocês* 'you (plural)' (see section 5), whose singular form originated in the nominal expression *Vossa Mercê* ('Your Mercy') (see Lara Bermejo 2015, Lopes and Brocardo 2016, among others). In the Portuguese dialects that preserve second person plural verbal inflection, subject-verb agreement with *vocês* may surface in what seems to be third person plural – but under Martins and Nunes' (2021) analysis is just plural – or second person plural. A conclusion arising from the discussion along the paper is that morphological underspecification may feed semantic agreement (subject to dialectal variation), but default agreement is always an available option. Section 6 concludes the paper summarizing its main points and proposals.

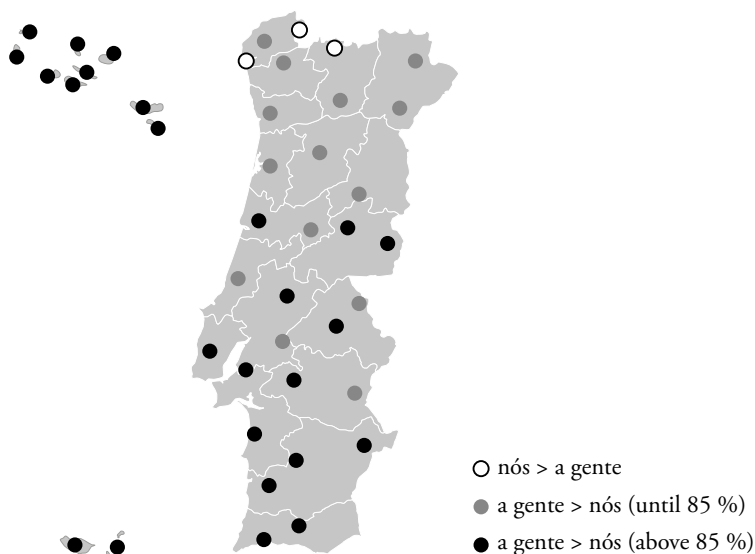
2. SUBJECT-VERB AND SECONDARY PREDICATE AGREEMENT WITH A GENTE IN THE EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE DIALECTS

The pronominal innovation *a gente* did not replace the pronoun *nós*. The two first person plural pronouns coexist in European Portuguese, with the latter being the standard form but the former being extensively used throughout the Portuguese territory. The geolinguistic spread of the pronoun *a gente* (§2.1), the patterns of subject-verb agreement (§2.2) and secondary predicate agreement it triggers (§2.3) will be described in the current section.

2.1. The geolinguistic distribution of the two competing first person plural pronouns: *a gente* and *nós*

As Map 1 shows the pronoun *a gente* is attested in all the 42 net-points of CORDIAL-SIN. Besides, only in the three northwestern points represented by the white circles *nós* has a higher number of occurrences than *a gente*.

Map 1. Distribution and relative frequency of *a gente* compared to *nós* in CORDIAL-SIN



Map 1 also shows that the rates of occurrence of *a gente* are especially high in the islands of Azores and Madeira, and in the south of mainland Portugal. The frequency of occurrence of *a gente* decreases towards the north (though maintaining high percentages compared to *nós*), which suggests that the first person plural pronoun *a gente* is a southern innovation that spread north and to the archipelagos of Madeira and Azores. Four net-points of CORDIAL-SIN display 100 % occurrences of *a gente* (PST – Porto Santo, Madeira; FLF – Flores, Azores; CBV – Cabeço de Vide, Alto Alentejo; ALC – Alcochete, Lisbon Metropolitan Area).

2.2. Three patterns of subject-verb agreement with *a gente*

Three patterns of subject-verb agreement with *a gente* emerge in CORDIAL-SIN, as illustrated in (3), which completes the paradigm in (1) above. In (3a) there is no overt agreement morphology on the verb; traditionally this is thought to represent third person singular agreement (which is considered the standard option). Due to the nominal origin of *a gente*, it would still be morphologically third person singular, though semantically first person plural. In (3b) there is overt agreement morphology on the verb; the morpheme **-mos** represents first person plural, hence in consonance with the semantic specification of *a gente*. The third pattern, in (3c), has not been usually referred in the literature; its existence was revealed by the CORDIAL-SIN corpus. The morpheme **-m** on the verb is traditionally thought to be the overt manifestation of third person plural agreement (but see section 4.1 for a different approach).

- (3) a. *A gente trabalhava* muito.
 b. *A gente trabalhávamos* muito.
 c. *A gente trabalham* muito.

The three agreement patterns can be found in the same dialect and the speech of the same person, as exemplified in (4a-c) with sentences produced by a woman handloom weaver from São Miguel, Azores.

- (4) a. *A gente trabalhavam* muito pelas terras, (CORDIAL-SIN, MIG45)
 mas a minha mãe sempre nos deixou
 apreender aquilo que *a gente desejavam!*
 Tanto eu como as minhas irmãs.
 b. *A gente*, primeiro, *a gente temos* uma (CORDIAL-SIN, MIG45)
 urdideira donde *a gente levam...*
 c. *A gente* quando *temos* aqui a manta (CORDIAL-SIN, MIG44)
 já muito para cima, *a gente tem* que tirar
 uma tirada. *A gente vem* aqui, *a gente tiram...*
 Oh, agora está baixinho, *a gente tiram* um
 fio só...

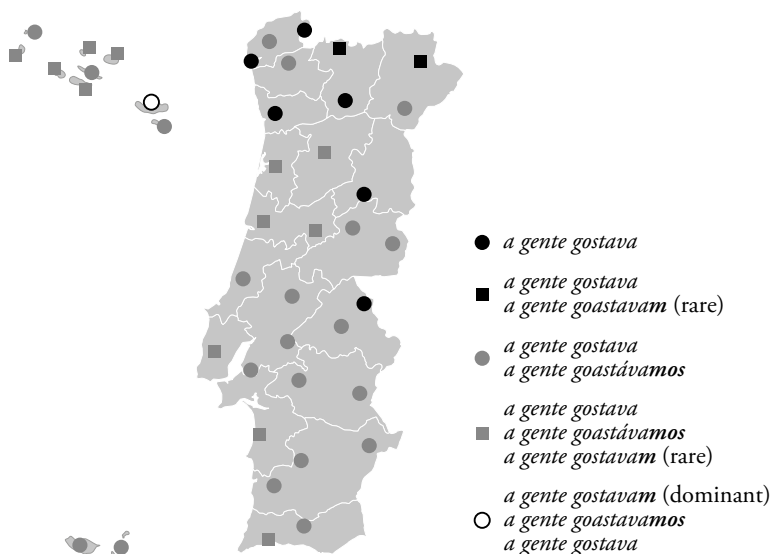
The geolinguistic distribution of the three patterns in the Portuguese territory is as shown in Map 2. The pattern with no overt agreement morphology is everywhere. The net-points marked with the darker symbols either display only this pattern or show some few occurrences of agreement overtly expressed by the morpheme **-m**. The net-points marked with grey circles display first person plural overt agreement morphology (morpheme **-mos**),

besides the general (and standard) pattern. The other symbols, identify the places where all the three patterns occur. The *-m* pattern is in most places a rare option, but in the dialect of São Miguel (in the Azores archipelago), it occurs with higher frequency than the other patterns.

Map 2 suggests that overt agreement in first person plural with *a gente* is a southern innovation that spread towards the north (where a northeastern, mainly inland, area still resists the innovation) and the islands of Azores and Madeira. Thus, with respect to *a gente* cluster of innovations, Map 1 and Map 2 agree in displaying a relatively more conservative north area (with variable limits) in comparison to the south and insular areas.

The *-m* pattern innovation is attested in the archipelago of Azores and western mainland coastal areas (besides two inland points contiguous to coastal ones). But, except for São Miguel (Azores), the *-m* pattern of agreement has few occurrences in CORDIAL_SIN (192/319 occurrences in São Miguel; 1 to 5 in each of the other net-points). Nevertheless, its clear areal distribution strengthens its significance in dialectal terms: wherever it started, it seems to have the potential to spread, and even become dominant.

Map 2. Agreement between *a gente* and the verb in CORDIAL_SIN



2.3. Patterns of secondary predicate agreement with *a gente*

In syntactic configurations of secondary predication, subject-verb agreement and agreement between *a gente* and the adjective or past participle may display a similar pattern or not (see (5a) and (6a) for the former case; and (5b), for the later, with plural agreement surfacing only on the secondary predicate). Overt manifestation of plural agreement restricted to the finite verb is disallowed (see (6b)) – a matter on which corpus data, native speakers' intuitions and the literature converge. The different combinations of verbal and secondary predicate agreement patterns exemplified in (5)-(6) are summarized in Table 1.

No overt verbal agreement

- (5) a. A gente fica cansada/cansado.
 we stay tired.FEM/tired.MASC
 b. A gente fica cansadas/cansados.
 we stay tired.FEM.PL/MASC.PL

Verb inflected in plural

- (6) a. A gente **ficamos/ficam** cansadas/cansados.
 we stay 1PL/stay.PL tired.FEM.PL/MASC.PL
 b. *A gente **ficamos/ficam** cansadas/cansados.
 we stay 1PL/stay.PL tired.FEM.PL/MASC.PL

Table 1. Agreement patterns with *a gente* (subject verb and secondary predicate)

agreement morphology on main verb	agreement morphology on secondary predicate	grammatical status
∅	∅	ok
∅	PL	ok
PL	PL	ok
PL	∅	*

CORDIAL-SIN does not provide enough data of secondary predication agreement with *a gente* to allow drawing a Map showing the geolinguistic distribution of the different agreement patterns. The available data suggest, however, that the patterns exemplified in (5a-b) might be widespread in the Portuguese territory, whereas the pattern in (6a) is of course restricted

to the dialectal areas where overt plural agreement between *a gente* and the verb is attested.

3. COSTA AND PEREIRA'S (2013) ACCOUNT OF AGREEMENT VARIATION WITH A *GENTE*

Costa and Pereira (2013) put forward a locality/phase-based account (see Chomsky 2001) for one of the agreement combinations shown on Table 1. They assume that the small clause (SC) domain of the secondary predicate (see (7)) constitutes a phase and propose that similarly to what Menuzzi (2000) showed for binding configurations, morphological features are accessible for the establishment of local agreement relations (subject-verb third person singular agreement in their analysis), but not across phase boundaries. When morphological agreement fails, semantic agreement emerges, which is overtly marked as plural on the secondary predicate. This accounts for the \emptyset -PL agreement pattern of Table 1 and example (5b).

- (7) $[_{IP} \text{Subj I } [_{VP} \text{V } [_{SC} \text{t}_{\text{Subj}} \textit{predicate}]]]$
 (adapted from Costa and Pereira 2013: 176)

To explain the PL-PL pattern of Table 1 and example (6a), Costa and Pereira (2013) propose that *a gente* can be either a DP with singular features, as in (8a) (which derives the \emptyset -PL pattern), or an apposition to an empty pronoun with first person plural features (see (8b); and Taylor (2009), whose analysis Costa and Pereira (2013) partially adopt). Under this perspective, what appears to be subject-verb agreement in first person plural with *a gente* is after all agreement with a null counterpart of *nós*, which allows to derive the PL-PL pattern and, simultaneously, exclude the PL- \emptyset pattern.

- (8) a. $[_{DP} \textit{a gente} [\text{sg}]]$
 b. $[_{DP} \textit{NÓs}_{\text{pl}} [_{DP} \textit{a gente} [\text{sg}]]]$
 (Costa and Pereira 2013: 177-178)

The \emptyset - \emptyset pattern of Table 1 and example (5a) rests unexplained in Costa and Pereira's (2013) analysis.¹ Moreover, Costa and Pereira's proposal seems at odds with the fact that a northeastern dialectal area excludes the PL-PL pattern (the black circles in Map 2), since the pronoun *nós*, which always triggers first person plural agreement, is available in this area (in overt and null manifestations) and adjunction configurations are generally available in Portuguese grammar. Finally, it does not predict the existence of the type of subject-verb agreement pattern that is dominant in the island of São Miguel (Azores) but is also present in other island of the Azorean archipelago and the western coastal area of Continental Portuguese (see Map 2 and examples (3c), (4a-c)).

In the next section an alternative approach to variable agreement with the pronoun *a gente* will be put forward, which aims to account for all the data presented in section 2, namely: the three patterns of subject verb agreement (i.e. \emptyset , *-mos* and *-m* verbal agreement morphology); the three available combinations of these patterns with those of secondary predicate agreement (i.e. \emptyset - \emptyset , \emptyset -PL, PL-PL) and the exclusion of the fourth hypothetical combination (*PL- \emptyset).

4. AN ALTERNATIVE ACCOUNT OF VARIABLE AGREEMENT WITH A *GENTE* WITHOUT FEATURE MISMATCH BETWEEN MORPHOLOGY AND SEMANTICS

After introducing Martins and Nunes' (2021) analysis of the pronominal and agreement systems (§4.1), it will be shown how a ϕ -feature-mismatch-free

1 In this respect, the authors say: «the predicate internal to the small clause tends to appear in the plural. In the dialectal data, this is not categorical, and there are some instances of singular agreement. However, the fact that the gender matches with the speaker's gender leads us to assume that semantic agreement is involved even in these contexts. Further work is, therefore, needed in order to understand why *plural* may be absent in cases of semantic agreement in this context.» (Costa and Pereira 2023: 177). They also provide quantitative data from CORDIAL-SIN (Masc. Sing. 23,71 %; Masc. Pl. 45,3 %; Fem. Sing 25,7 %; Fem. Pl. 7,2 % - Table 2, p. 174) and Pereira 2003's questionnaires applied to speakers of the standard variety (Male informants: Masc. Sing. 4,991 %; Masc. Pl. 76,650 %; Fem. Sing 15,780 %; Fem. Pl. 0,483 %. Female informants: Masc. Sing. 4,370 %; Masc. Pl. 54,172 %; Fem. Sing 14,039 %; Fem. Pl. 16,953 % - Table 1, p. 173). Note that in CORDIAL-SIN the percentages of singular and plural agreement between *a gente* and the secondary predicate are not so dissimilar (using Costa and Pereira's (2013) quantitative data on their Table 2: Sing 48/99, 48,5 %; Pl. 51/99, 51,5 %).

approach gives us the tools to account for the three grammatical options in Table 1, as well as for the unavailability of the fourth logically possible one.

4.1. Personal pronouns, agreement, verbal inflection, and null subjects in European and Brazilian Portuguese (Martins and Nunes 2021)

Based on data from Brazilian and European Portuguese, Martins and Nunes (2021) propose that rather than overt morphological distinctions, what is relevant for null subject licensing is the underlying feature specification of the verbal inflection, after agreement between T(ense) and a subject pronoun values the relevant features.

A characterization of the pronominal and agreement systems of Brazilian and European Portuguese is put forward that discards mismatches between semantic and morphological features and shows, in addition, that different morphological specifications can be expressed by the same phonological exponent (see Table 2), according to the correspondence rules formulated in Table 3.

Comparing column 2 (pronoun semantic specifications) of Table 2 with columns 3–4 (pronoun morphological specifications), one sees no mismatches in feature values (e.g. the morphological specification of *a gente* is not third person singular, contrary to what is traditionally assumed);² one observes instead that pronouns might be morphologically underspecified while they are semantically fully specified. Comparison between columns 3–4 of Table 2 and column 5 (verbal agreement morphology), on the other hand, evidences that pronouns with different morphological specifications in European Portuguese and Brazilian Portuguese (where pronominal underspecification is extensive) trigger similar agreement morphology on the verb, which the rules in Table 3 explain.

2 Pronouns' person and number features may be fused (marked as P.N on Table 2) or not fused. In this latter case, the morpheme *-s* is the overt realization of the value plural for number (compare, for example, *você* and *vocês*). This is why on the third column of Table 2, some matrices of morphological features have the format [P.N:2.SG] (see *tu*) while others have the format [P:2; N:SG] (see *você*).

Table 2. Pronominal person and number specifications and verbal agreement in Portuguese

Nominative pronouns	Semantic specifications (person and number)	Morphological specifications (person and number)		
		European Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese	
eu 'I'	[P:1; N:SG]	[P.N:1.SG]	[P.N:SG]	<i>trabalho</i>
tu 'you (SG)'	[P:2; N:SG]	[P.N:2.SG]		<i>trabalhas</i>
você 'you (SG)'	[P:2; N:SG]	[P:2; N:SG]	[P; N]	<i>trabalha</i>
ele, ela 'he, she'	[P:3; N:SG]	[P:3; N:SG]	[P; N]	
a gente 'we'	[P:1; N:PL]	[P.N]	[P.N]	
nós 'you (PL)'	[P:1; N:PL]	[P.N:1.PL]	[P.N:1]	<i>trabalhamos</i>
vocês 'you (PL)'	[P:2; N:PL]	[P:2; N:PL]	[P; N:PL]	<i>trabalham</i>
eles, elas 'they'	[P:3; N:PL]	[P:3; N:PL]	[P; N:PL]	

Table 3. Correspondence rules for the morphological realization of verbal agreement inflection

	European Portuguese	Brazilian Portuguese
a.	[P.N:1.PL] ↔ {-mos}; [N:PL] ↔ {-m}	[P:1] ↔ {-mos}; [N:PL] ↔ {-m}
b.	[P.N:1.SG] → {-o} / INDIC.PRES_ → {-i} elsewhere.	[N:SG] → {-o} / INDIC.PRES_ → {-i} / INDIC.PERFPAST_
c.	[P.N:2.SG] → {-ste} / INDIC.PERFPAST_ → {-s} elsewhere.	∅ elsewhere.
d.	∅ elsewhere.	

Martins and Nunes (2021) analysis of the Portuguese pronominal and agreement systems can explain why in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) Null Subjects display different degrees of acceptability depending on the pronoun that is dropped, as exemplified in (9): the null counterpart of BP *nós* is fully grammatical because *nós* has a morphologically specified

value for the person feature; the null counterpart of BP *eu* is marginally licensed because *eu* has no morphological specification for person but has a morphologically specified value for the number feature; the null counterparts of BP *você* or *ele* are ungrammatical because these pronouns have no morphological specification for person and number features. All the sentences in (9), on the other hand, are equally fine in European Portuguese (EP) because the four relevant pronouns all display morphological specifications/feature values for person and number (see Martins and Nunes 2021 for further details).

- (9) a. Quem \emptyset devíamos contratar? ($\emptyset = \textit{nós} \rightarrow$ BP: OK; EP: OK)
 b. O que \emptyset tenho a ver com isso? ($\emptyset = \textit{eu} \rightarrow$ BP: ??; EP: OK)
 c. O que \emptyset quer fazer? ($\emptyset = \textit{você/ele} \rightarrow$ BP: *; EP: OK)

In the European Portuguese pronominal system, only the pronoun *a gente* is morphologically underspecified; accordingly, this is the only pronoun whose null counterpart is not licensed, as shown in (10a). That it is the underlying feature composition of the pronoun that matters, not the lack of overt verbal agreement morphology, is demonstrated by the contrast between *a gente*, on the one hand, and the pronouns *você* and *ele*, on the other. Although superficially sentences (10a-c) are similar, none of them displaying overt agreement morphology on the embedded verb, (10a) is ungrammatical whereas (10b-c) are grammatical.

- (10) a. Eles pensam que \emptyset não quer viajar. ($\emptyset = \textit{a gente} \rightarrow$ *)
 ‘They think that we don’t want to travel.’
 b. Eles pensam que \emptyset não quer viajar. ($\emptyset = \textit{você} \rightarrow$ OK)
 ‘They think that you don’t want to travel.’
 c. Eles pensam que \emptyset não quer viajar. ($\emptyset = \textit{ele/ela} \rightarrow$ OK)
 ‘They think that he/she doesn’t want to travel.’

4.2. Explaining variation in agreement patterns with *a gente* under Martins and Nunes’ (2021) characterization of EP pronominal system

Extending the application of the correspondence rules in Table 3 to semantic agreement, the three subject-verb agreement patterns found in sentences with the subject pronoun *a gente* display respectively (see (11a-c)): semantic agreement in person and number (1.PL), corresponding to the verbal morpheme *-mos* (11a); semantic agreement in number (PL),

corresponding to the morpheme *-m* (11b) and morphological agreement, corresponding to the \emptyset elsewhere morpheme (11c).

- | | | | |
|---------|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| (11) a. | A gente trabalh amos muito. | a. | [P:N:1.PL] \leftrightarrow {-mos}; |
| b. | A gente trabalh am muito. | | [N:PL] \leftrightarrow {-m} |
| c. | A gente trabalh a muito. | d. | \emptyset elsewhere. |

The questions to be addressed are, accordingly, what makes semantic agreement possible, why it varies in its surface manifestation and why it is not a general option (see Map 2). One also needs to clarify the relations between subject-verb and secondary predication agreement to correctly derive the empirical facts summarized in Table 1.

Considering that the pronoun *a gente* has no values for its person and number features, provides us with a simple answer to the first question, namely that subject-verb agreement can activate semantic features when the morphological ϕ -features of the subject pronoun are underspecified. This accounts for the 1PL – PL pattern (i.e. *A gente ficamos cansadas*). The fact that the 1PL – PL pattern is not available everywhere (see Map 2) signals that morphological underspecification *can*, but does not have to, activate semantic agreement. Whether this activation arises or not is subject to dialectal variation.

Moreover, activation of semantic features can be total (person and number) or partial (number only), also subject to dialectal variation. Partial semantic agreement accounts for the PL – PL pattern characteristic of the Azorean dialect of São Miguel (i.e. *A gente ficam cansadas*).

The exclusion of the PL – \emptyset pattern (i.e. **A gente ficamos cansada*) indicates that when semantic subject-verb agreement is activated, it necessarily extends to agreement with secondary predicates. On the other hand, morphological subject-verb agreement does not bar the availability of semantic agreement with secondary predicates, which accounts for the \emptyset – PL pattern (i.e. *A gente fica cansadas*), but does not make it necessary either, hence deriving as well the \emptyset – \emptyset pattern (i.e. *A gente fica cansada*). Put in a different way: morphological agreement arises derivationally. Semantic agreement, when possible, is posterior and targets representations. Only a syntactic constituent is a legitimate domain for semantic agreement. Hence in sentences involving secondary predication,

The dialects allowing ‘*a gente-verb.1PL-se*’ (which most dialects exclude, displaying instead ‘*a gente-verb.1PL-nos*’) have possibly lost or are in the verge of losing (part of) the *nós*-series, thus replacing reflexive *nos* with reflexive *se*, which is presumably an underspecified pronoun in these dialects (Martins 2009).³ This hypothesis is compatible with both Martins and Nunes (2021) and Costa and Pereira (2013). Recall that in a few CORDIAL-SIN insular and southern points there are no occurrences of *nós* (see section 2.1), even though it is considered the standard form relative to *a gente*.

5. EXTENDING THE ANALYSIS TO SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT WITH *VOCÊS*

CORDIAL-SIN reveals that the nominative pronoun *você*s replaced the nominative pronoun *vós* in most of the Portuguese territory, a change that correlates with the loss of the second person plural verbal agreement morphology (expressed by the morphemes *-i(s)/-de(s)*) (§5.1; see Lara Bermejo 2015, Selph 2021). One of the CORDIAL-SIN net-points (COV) shows the availability of two patterns of verbal agreement with *você*s, which can be explained if *você*s is underspecified for person in this dialect (§5.2).

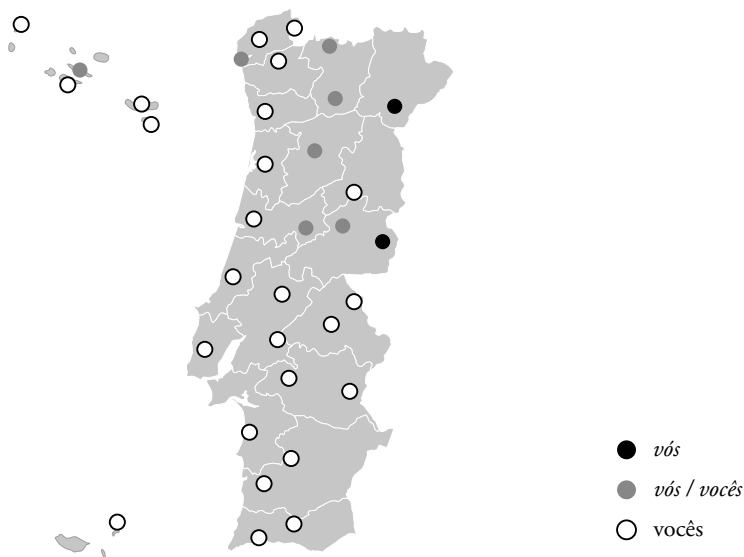
5.1. The geolinguistic distribution of the two competing second person plural pronouns: *você*s and *vós*

As Map 4 shows, except for two northern inland points (the black circles), *você*s is attested in CORDIAL-SIN throughout the Portuguese territory (where a symbol is missing in the map only null subjects are attested for second person plural). In part of the North (mainly northeast), the *você*s innovation coexists with the earlier, Latin-based pronoun *vós* (the grey circles). In the island of Pico (Azores), *vós* only appears in the context of traditional story telling (in a dialogue between

3 Note that *a gente* can be used as an accusative/dative object, but not as a reflexive (Menuzzi 2000). Hence the ungrammaticality of **A gente tratou a gente bem* in contrast with *Eles trataram a gente bem*. Common alternatives for the ungrammatical sentence are *A gente {tratou-se/tratámo-nos} bem*.

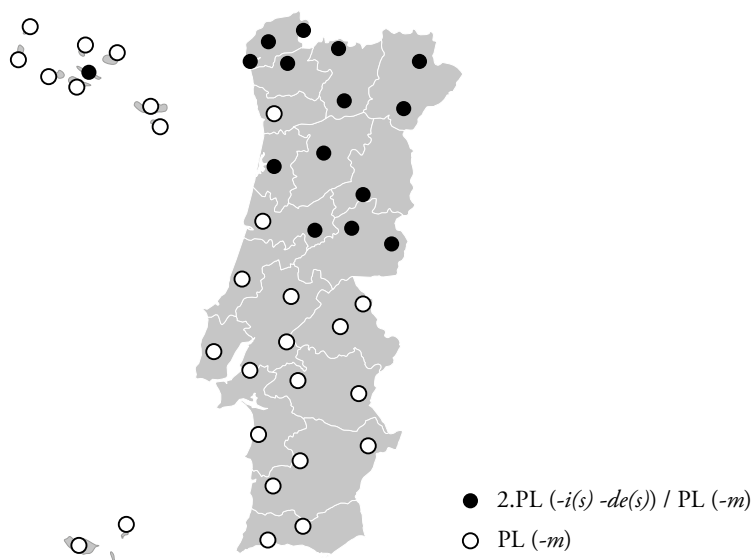
the witch and the story's main character). As the distribution of the white circles indicates, the innovation *vocês* expanded from the south to the north of mainland Portugal (possibly through the coast) and to the archipelagos of Madeira and Azores.

Map 4. Distribution of the second person plural pronouns *vocês* and *vós*



The loss of *vós* prompted the loss of second person plural verbal inflection, although the area of persistence of second person plural inflection is larger than the area of *vós* (compare Map 4 with Map 5). The pronoun *vós* agrees with the verb in second person plural, whose overt manifestations are the verbal endings *-i(s)* *-de(s)*. Usually, *vocês* overtly agrees with the verb in plural (verbal ending *-m*; see Table 3 above), but in Covo (COV: the coastal northern black circle sandwiched between two white circles on Map 5) *vocês* displays two patterns of subject-verb agreement, namely in plural or in second person plural (see next section). Map 5 also includes all occurrences in CORDIAL-SIN of null subjects that are semantically second person plural and trigger the morphemes *-m* (PL) or *-i(s)* *-de(s)* (2.PL) on the verb.

Map 5. Verbal inflection with second person plural subjects (overt/null)



5.2. Two patterns of subject-verb agreement with *vocês* in dialects that preserved verbal inflection in second person plural

The two patterns of subject-verb agreement with *vocês* found in Covo are those in (13). Since subject-verb agreement is always in plural, the invariant agreement with secondary predicates is expected (see Table 1 and section 4.2). Speakers of Covo's dialect may alternate between plural and second person plural subject-verb agreement with *vocês*, as illustrated in (14). The (14a-e) sentences were uttered by the same informant, belong to the same discourse fragment, and display intra-sentential and inter-sentential variation.

- (13) a. Vocês ficam cansadas/cansados
 You(PL) stay.PL tired.FEM.PL/tired.MASC.PL
 b. Vocês ficais cansadas/cansados
 You(PL) stay.2PL tired.FEM.PL/tired.MASC.PL

- (14) a. *Olhai* lá, que é que *vocês andam* a fazer?! (CORDIAL-SIN, COV01)
 b. *Vocês andais* a gastar dinheiro (CORDIAL-SIN, COV01)
 c. E se *vocês* não *quiserem*, *ide* falar com o padre (CORDIAL-SIN, COV13)
 d. Ó meus amigos, agora *escolhei* o que *vocês* *quiserem* (CORDIAL-SIN, COV10)
 e. Se *quereis* à cega a tirar uns bilhetes assim, (CORDIAL-SIN, COV10)
 e se não *quiserem*, *vocês escolhei*, *lei* as folhas
 como *vocês quiserem*, diante do advogado, e
vocês escolhei, e eu fico com aquilo que *vocês*
 não *quiserem*.

Under the proposal put forward to account for variation in agreement patterns with *a gente*, Covo's variable subject-verb agreement with *vocês* can be explained if in this dialect *vocês* is morphologically underspecified for the person feature, in contrast to the dialects where it has a value for person (i.e. [P:u; N:PL] in Covo *vs.* [P:2; N:PL] in other dialects, including standard European Portuguese – see Table 2). Underspecification of the person feature allows semantic agreement to be activated; hence it will be visible in a dialect that preserves 2PL verb morphemes. In such dialects the correspondence rules for the morphological realization of verbal agreement inflection are as shown in Table 4, to be compared with Table 3 (bold highlights the difference). Agreement between *vocês* and secondary predicates displays no variation since both the semantic and morphological features of underspecified *vocês* have the value plural for number (only the morphological feature person has no value: [P:u; N:PL]).

Table 4. Correspondence rules for the morphological realization of verbal agreement inflection in north dialects

European Portuguese	
a.	[P:N:1.PL] ↔ {-mos}; [P:N:2.PL] ↔ {-i(s)/de(s)}; [N:PL] ↔ {-m}
b.	[P:N:1.SG] → {-o} / INDIC.PRES ____ → {-i} elsewhere.
c.	[P:N:2.SG] → {-ste} / INDIC.PERF.PAST ____ → {-s} elsewhere.
d.	∅ elsewhere.

The proposed underspecification analysis to account for variable subject-verb agreement with *você*s in Covo predicts that the null counterpart of *você*s should be marginal in this dialect. Recall that according to Martins and Nunes (2021), null subjects are a grammatical option when the relevant nominative pronoun has a specified value for the person feature; otherwise, null subjects are marginal (if only the number feature has a specified value) or ungrammatical (if person and number features are both underspecified) – see section 4.1. The quantitative data in Table 5 show that, in fact, the frequency of semantically 2PL null subjects in Covo is lower than in CORDIAL-SIN, be it taken globally or restricted to the area with 2PL verbal inflection. Moreover, 2PL null subjects seem to occur more often in Covo with the null counterpart of *vós* (54,5 %) than with the null counterpart of *você*s (25 % in Covo against 61,3 % in CORDIAL-SIN globally).

Table 5. Null subjects semantically second person plural (adapted from Selph 2021)

	CORDIAL-SIN (global)	CORDIAL-SIN (area with V.2PL)	Covo
Ø-V.2PL (-is/-des)	66,2 % 49/74	66,2 % 49/74	54,5 % 12/22
Ø-V.PL (-m)	61,3 % 247/403	54,7 % 64/117	25 % 8/32
TOTAL	62,05 % 296/477	59,2 % 113/191	37 % 20/54

Observing the actual data, and putting aside coordinate structures, a configuration where also *a gente* (and non-NSL pronouns) can be deleted, there are only five occurrences of null subjects clearly corresponding to *você*s in Covo (see (15)). Three of them are imperative sentences (see (15c-e)), which allow null subjects in a non-NSL like English. The two other sentences (15a-b) display ‘non-information-seeking’, ‘special’ interrogatives (Bayer and Obenauer 2011, among others). There are no occurrences of null subjects clearly corresponding to *você*s in declarative sentences in Covo.

- (15) a. Estiveram?
 ‘Were you(PL) (there)?’ [implied: ‘I didn’t know and am surprised’]
 b. Não acham?
 ‘Don’t you(PL) think? [Implied: ‘I do’, seeking agreement]’

- c. Chega lá, oiçam, diz assim:
'He arrives there, listen(PL), he says this.'
- d. Venham para dentro.
'Come(PL) inside.'
- e. Comam moras.
'Eat(PL) berries'

6. CONCLUSION: MORPHOLOGICAL UNDERSPECIFICATION FEEDS VARIABLE AGREEMENT

This paper proposes that pronouns whose person or number features are morphologically underspecified may give rise to variable patterns of subject-verb and secondary predicate agreement, because morphological underspecification makes semantic agreement, besides morphological agreement, a possible grammatical option.

ϕ -underspecified pronouns display apparent mismatches between semantic and morphological feature specifications and do not (fully) license null subjects (Martins and Nunes 2021). This is the case of the European Portuguese pronouns *a gente* and a particular dialectal instance of *vocês*, which precisely display variable patterns of subject-verb (*a gente* and *vocês*) and secondary predicate (*a gente*) agreement, besides not licensing (*a gente*) or marginally licensing (*vocês*) null subjects and being traditionally considered to have dissimilar semantic and morphological features. These descriptive correlations support the paper's proposed analysis.

Investigation of the variable agreement patterns found in the corpus CORDIAL-SIN with the pronouns *a gente* and *vocês* showed that variation across dialects depends on whether semantic agreement is allowed or not and, if allowed, whether it is total (person and number) or partial (only number); it also depends on the specific correspondence rules for the morphological realization of verbal agreement inflection (thus, even if allowed, semantic agreement will be invisible in a dialect with underspecified *vocês* for the person feature but without 2PL verbal inflection). Differently from semantic agreement, morphological agreement is a general grammatical option, not subject to dialectal variation.

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