

# Competition of synonyms through time: Conceptual and social salience factors and their interrelations\*

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## Abstract

This paper highlights three theoretical and descriptive insights into synonymy and lexical variation and change: (1) the diachronic development of synonymous forms reveals essential aspects about the nature and motivations of synonymy; (2) the emergence and competition of synonymous forms can either result from conceptual salience factors or from social salience factors; (3) synonym competition sheds light upon processes of language variation and change. Focusing on the interplay between conceptual and social aspects of language variation and change, this study subscribes to the framework of Cognitive Sociolinguistics, an emerging extension of Cognitive Linguistics as a meaning-oriented and usage-based approach to language. Two corpus-based case studies in lexical synonymics of Portuguese will be presented. The first case study shows the semantic development of the verb *deixar* ‘to leave, to let’ from Old to Modern Portuguese and its most competitive synonyms, namely *abandonar* ‘to abandon’ and *permitir* ‘to allow’. The second case study includes the development of four dozens of sets of denotational synonymous nouns selected from the lexical fields of football and clothing in European and Brazilian Portuguese in the last 60 years. The two diachronic studies show essential aspects of synonymy and lexical variation and change.

**Keywords:** synonymy; lexical change; lexical variation; conceptualization; onomasiology; prototypicality; cognitive linguistics; lexical sociolectometry.

**Resum.** *La competició dels sinònims en el temps: Factors de rellevància conceptual i social i les seves interaccions*

Aquest article se centra en tres observacions teòriques i descriptives sobre la sinonímia, la variació lèxica i el canvi lèxic: (1) el desenvolupament diacrònic de formes sinònimes revela aspectes essencials de la naturalesa i la motivació de la sinonímia; (2) l'aparició de formes sinònimes i de la competició que en resulta es pot deure a factors de rellevància conceptual o de rellevància social; (3) la competició entre sinònims aporta llum als processos de variació i canvi lingüístics. Des de la interacció entre els aspectes conceptuals i socials de la variació i el canvi lingüístics, aquest estudi s'integra en el model de la Sociolingüística Cognitiva, una ampliació emergent de la Lingüística

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Cognitiva, entesa com a orientació lingüística orientada al significat i basada en l'ús. Hi presentem dos casos d'estudi de corpus sobre la sinonímia lèxica en portuguès. El primer cas descriu el desenvolupament semàntic del verb *deixar* 'deixar' del portuguès antic al modern, al costat del seus sinònims més en competitiu: *abandonar* 'abandonar' i *permitir* 'permetre'. El segon cas d'estudi s'ocupa del desenvolupament de quatre dotzenes de conjunts de sinònims denotatius del camp lèxic del futbol i del vestir en el portuguès europeu i del Brasil durant els últims 60 anys. Ambdós estudis diacrònics mostren aspectes essencials de la sinonímia i de la variació i el canvi lingüístics.

**Paraules clau:** sinonímia; canvi lèxic; variació lèxica; conceptualització; onomasiologia; lingüística cognitiva; sociolectometria lèxica.

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## 1. Introduction

This study takes as its starting point three hypotheses. First, the study of the diachronic development of synonymous forms reveals essential aspects about the nature and motivations of synonymy. Second, the emergence and competition of synonymous forms can either result from *conceptual* salience factors, namely prototypicality (semasiological salience) and entrenchment (onomasiological salience), from *social* salience factors, i.e. sociolinguistic, stylistic or pragmatic prevalence, or even from interaction of both salience factors. Crucially, prototype-theoretical features of the concepts involved (Geeraerts 1985, 1997; Taylor 1995) can determine the necessary differences between synonyms within and across lectal varieties or even across languages. Moreover, the lectal features of the items involved are not only able to determine the occurrence of synonyms across lectal varieties, but can also be responsible for motivating the differences of prototypical structure between synonyms. The third hypothesis is that synonym competition sheds light upon processes of language variation and change (Grondelaers, Geeraerts & Speelman 2007; Geeraerts & Speelman 2010), including convergence and divergence processes between lectal varieties and the processes of linguistic stratification and standardization (Soares da Silva 2010, 2012, 2014). Focusing on the interplay between conceptual and social aspects of language variation and change, this study subscribes to the framework of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (Kristiansen & Dirven 2008; Geeraerts, Kristiansen & Peirsman 2010), an emerging extension of Cognitive Linguistics (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007) as a meaning-oriented and usage-based approach to language.

These hypotheses will be tested on two different corpus-based case studies in lexical synonymics of Portuguese. The first case study presents the semantic development of the verb *deixar* ‘to leave, to let’ from Old to Modern Portuguese and its most competitive synonyms, namely *abandonar* ‘to abandon’ and *permitir* ‘to allow’ (Soares da Silva 1999, 2003). The second case study includes the development of four dozen sets of denotational, synonymous nouns selected from the lexical fields of football and clothing in European and Brazilian Portuguese in the last 60 years (Soares da Silva 2010). Their aim is to examine the impact of item-related features (i.e. endo-/exogenousness, foreign influence, neologism) and concept-related features (i.e. prototypicality, vagueness, innovation, semantic field) in the production of denotational synonyms within and across the two national language varieties.

After this introduction, the aim of Section 2 is to revisit the notion of synonymy, thus examining some of its essential aspects. In Section 3, different types of synonymy, as well as the distinction between synonyms and near-synonyms will be looked into. Prototypicality is the subject of Section 4, analyzed as a distinguishing factor between synonyms. In Section 5, we will deal with lectal synonymy. It will be shown that synonyms can be the manifestation of a process of convergence or divergence between national intralinguistic varieties. We will then wrap up this study with a section devoted to the discussion of the results and some conclusions.

## 2. Synonymy revisited

Synonymy is traditionally regarded as a phenomenon in which two or more linguistic forms – usually two or more lexical items – convey the same meaning. Synonymy is as widely known as it is easily recognized, which is reflected in the numerous synonyms dictionaries and thesauri that exist. However, whether one asserts or rejects the existence of a case of synonymy, it will ultimately depend on the definition of synonymy itself. If synonymy is viewed in terms of semantic similarity or referential identity, synonyms are easily found in any language. On the other hand, understanding synonymy not only as referential identity but as sociolinguistic, stylistic and contextual identity, i.e. total identity, synonyms are rather hard to find.

Even though the prototypical case of semantic equivalence is lexical synonymy, its domain is not confined to the lexicon. Viewed as semantic equivalence, synonymy is as relevant in the lexicon as it is in other domains: in grammatical theory, as the basis of constructional alternation; in sociolinguistics, as the basis of “sociolinguistic variables”; in typology, as the basis of crosslinguistic comparison; in applied linguistics, as the basis of translational equivalence. It is important, therefore, to approach the concept of synonymy from a broader perspective than is traditionally done, as a case of *semantic equivalence* not only of forms, but also of functions.

The traditional perspective on the notion of synonymy in lexical semantics is that of the structuralist model of lexical relations, according to which “the meaning of a given linguistic unit is defined to be the set of (paradigmatic) relations that the unit in question contracts with other units of the language (...), without any attempt being made to set up ‘contents’ for these units” (Lyons 1963: 59; 1977). Synonymy

is, therefore, understood as a relation of semantic equivalence between lexical items analyzed at the system level, without taking into consideration the referential, pragmatic and contextual levels. It is thus necessary to replace this traditional, typically structuralist notion of synonymy with one that does not equate semantic equivalence with systemic relations of meaning, but that takes into perspective the encyclopedic, referential and contextual aspects of meaning. These aspects are decisive in establishing a semantic equivalence relationship as well as in the identification of synonymy. Once one abandons the lexical relations model, and particularly its assumptions regarding a stable systemic structure of meaning relationships, the notion of synonymy becomes more flexible and more fluid, in conformity with the flexibility that characterizes meaning (Soares da Silva 2006). This is how meaning is analyzed under a conceptual theory, as represented by the Cognitive Semantics paradigm (Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007, Geeraerts 2010, Soares da Silva 2006).

Synonymy is the onomasiological counterpart of polysemy. This implies that several of the most typical aspects of polysemy, as it has been studied in Cognitive Semantics (Soares da Silva 1999, 2006), can be brought into the study of synonymy. This way, the referential level has to be included in the identification of synonymy, unlike what the structuralist model of lexical relationships proposes. As a matter of fact, semantically equivalent items may differ in their referential field of application, both as to their contextual, syntagmatic and, as it will be shown later, even their prototypicality differences. On the other hand, similarly to what happens with polysemy (Geeraerts 1993, Soares da Silva 2006), the different criteria that rule synonymy may not converge, thus leading to contradictory results. What is considered synonymy on an intuitive basis or in an experimental methodology may not be considered as such from a referential or distributional point of view. Crucially, what speakers think they are doing with words does not necessarily coincide with what they are, in fact, doing with them. A further aspect has to do with the fact that equivalences and differentiations of meaning that are relevant in one context may not be felt as such in another. In more specific terms, equivalence of meaning (synonymy) can be established at a more abstract level and vanish at a more specific level, just like a differentiation of meanings (polysemy) can be found at a more specific semantic level and disappear at a more abstract one. Crucially, meaning takes the form of a *schematic network* (Langacker 1987; Tuggy 1993, 2007; Soares da Silva 2006), where meanings can be construed in schematic and vague terms at the higher level of the network and in more specific and concrete terms at its lower level. As it happens with polysemy, which can operate at different levels of schematicity – thus being necessary to pull the meaning “up” or “down” (Soares da Silva 2006) – synonymy is also able to work at different levels in the schematic network.

From these observations, it emerges that not only is synonymy a more flexible and contextual phenomenon than the traditional conception makes us believe, but also that there are different possible patterns for the identification of synonymy. Besides, there are several types of synonymy, determined by contextual effects and grading levels of the schematic networks of meaning. Its identification must always take into account the effects of context, meaning flexibility and the correlation between the various methods of semantic equivalence.

There are, obviously, some unanswered questions regarding synonymy. One of those questions is how to determine equivalence of meaning and at what level that equivalence is to be found. This issue corresponds to the problem of differentiation of meanings within polysemy (Soares da Silva 2006). Another question is whether a difference in form will always correspond to a difference in meaning or function. Cognitive and functional theories of grammar, like Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008) and Construction Grammar (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Croft 2001), claim that a difference in form is necessarily meaningful, apparently not recognizing synonymy. However, these grammatical theories have paid much attention to the different *construals* (conceptual perspectivizations) of a given situation, grammatically coded in alternative constructions. Furthermore, a third question is how to identify constructional synonymy and how to distinguish between cases of synonymy determined by social factors, and those which are conceptually determined.

### 3. Synonyms and near-synonyms

There are two types of onomasiological variation building the basis of two types of synonyms. On the one hand, there is onomasiological variation involving conceptual differences, and this variation may be linked to synonymy, hyponymy or other relationships. In this case, synonymy occurs in contexts where semantically close concepts designate the same entity or situation, such as *atacante* ('forward') and *jogador* ('player') (exemplifying a hyponymy relation) or *abandonar* ('to abandon') and *deixar* ('to leave') (differing in the intensity of the abandonment). These synonyms are said to be *near-synonyms*. Naturally, this is a vague designation and one cannot fully know the extent of conceptual differences within a near-synonymic relationship can go. The most important aspect, though, of this kind of synonymy lies in the fact that a given entity or situation is susceptible of being conceptualized in different ways. This is why this kind of synonymy reveals conceptual differences.

On the other hand, there is another type of onomasiological variation, such as in *atacante* and *avançado* (both meaning 'forward'), which are geographically distinct, the former used predominantly in Brazilian Portuguese, and the latter in European Portuguese. These are denotational synonyms, or simply *synonyms*, and this onomasiological variation can be called *formal onomasiological variation*, in contrast with *conceptual onomasiological variation* illustrated in the previous examples (Gearererts, Grodelars & Bakema 1994). Denotational synonyms are thus characterized by the fact that their differences are not conceptual, but social in nature, namely sociolinguistic, stylistic or pragmatic. These synonyms are particularly interesting from a sociolinguistic perspective because they often display sociolinguistic differences and it is these differences that motivate the very existence of, and competition between, lectal varieties.

These two types of synonymy may coexist in the same pair of synonyms, as in, for example, *abandonar* ('to abandon') and *deixar* ('to leave'), whose differences are conceptual and social. In any case, it is important to point out that the distinction between synonymy and near-synonymy depends both on the type of semantic

equivalence under consideration and on the level of detail with which one construes the respective schematic networks of meaning.

#### 4. Prototypicality as a differentiating factor of synonyms: the diachronic development of *deixar* and its synonyms *abandonar* and *permitir*

The verbs *deixar* ('to leave') and *abandonar* ('to abandon') are synonymous in contexts like in (1); and the verbs *deixar* ('to let') and *permitir* ('to allow') are synonymous in contexts like in (2).

- (1) a. O João deixou a família e o emprego.  
 the John left the.F family and the job  
 'John left his family and his job.'
- b. O João abandonou a família e o emprego.  
 the John abandoned the.F family and the job  
 'John abandoned his family and his job.'
- (2) a. O João não deixou que ela saísse do país.  
 the John not let that she leave of-the country  
 'John didn't let her leave the country.'
- b. O João não permitiu que ela saísse do país.  
 the John not allowed that she leave of-the country  
 'John didn't allow her leave the country.'

Aiming toward a better understanding of the nature and motivations of the synonymy between *deixar* and *abandonar* and between *deixar* and *permitir*, let us consider briefly the historical development of the verb *deixar* (thoroughly analyzed in Soares da Silva 1999, 2003). Figure 1 systematizes the semantic development of the verb *deixar*, from Classical Latin to nowadays (the circles in bold type indicate prototypical centers).

The verb *deixar* comes from the Latin etymon *laxare* 'to loosen, to slacken' (bonds, fastenings, bolts, ropes, cables, attachments; body, mind). It was on the basis of 'to let go' ('to release'), a metonymic development which became prototypical around the second century AD, that two groups of senses ('to leave' and 'to let') were formed. This formation started in Late Latin, and comprised the following two groups of senses: (i) on the one hand, 'to grant (peace, truce, and rights)' and 'to forgive (sins, debts)' – senses which were to disappear in the Romance verb – and also 'to allow, to authorize'; (ii) on the other hand, 'to leave', 'to go away, to abandon', 'to leave somewhere or in a state'. It appears, then, that it was already in Latin that almost all the present-day senses of *deixar* had developed.

From Late Latin to Portuguese, a process of *deprototypicalization* of 'to let go' followed, which led to the consolidation of the two groups into two prototypical semasiological restructurings, and to a homonymic tension between them. The prototype of *deixar* shifts from the spatial domain to the psycho-social and moral

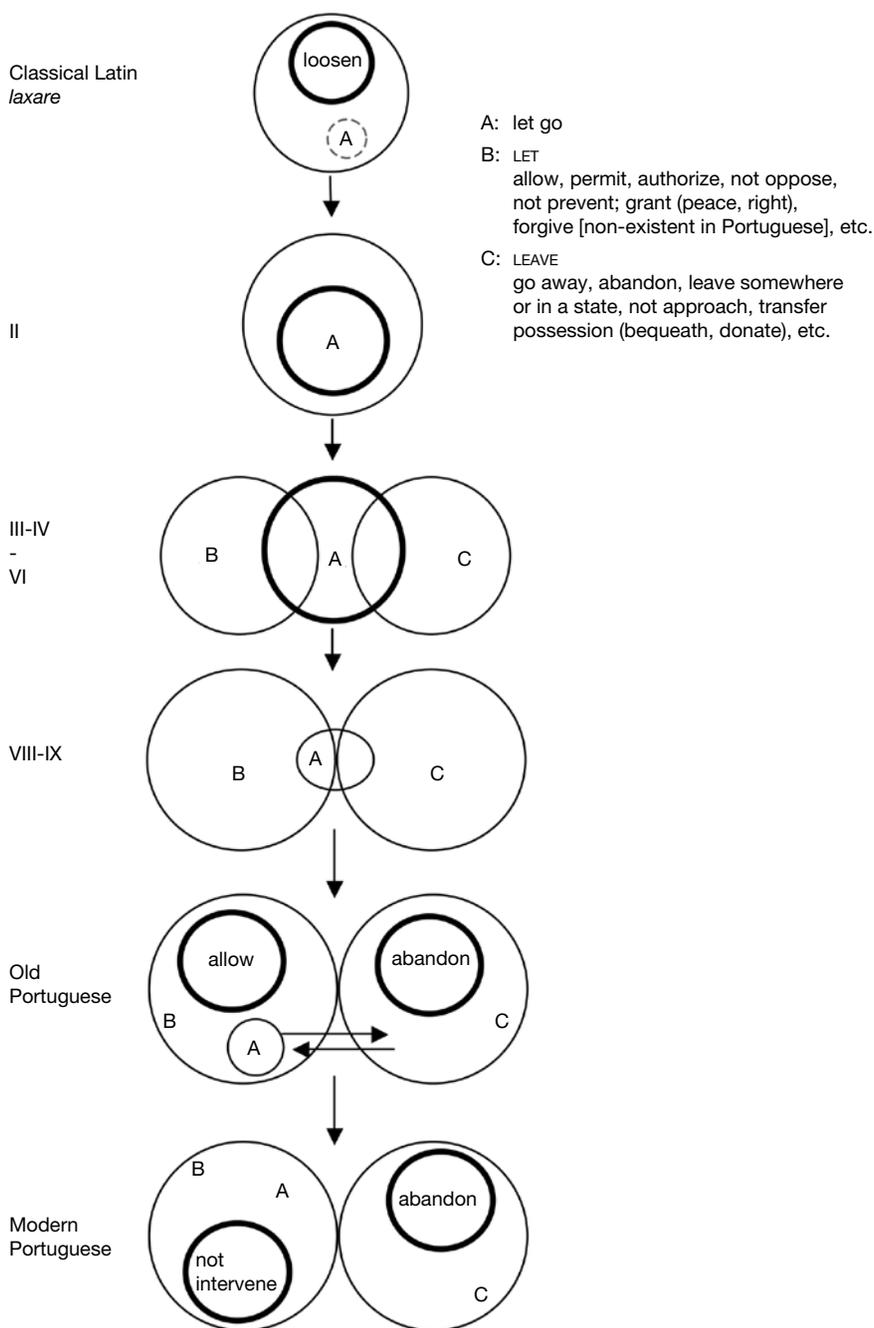


Figure 1. The semantic development of *deixar*.

domains, giving rise to, on the one hand, the prototypicalization of ‘to allow, to permit, to authorize’ and, on the other hand, the prototypicalization of ‘to abandon’.

The verbs *abandonar* ‘to abandon’ and *permitir* ‘to permit’ were introduced in Portuguese in the late stages of Old Portuguese: *abandonar* is a Gallicism (from the Old French *abandoner*, formed by the locutions *a ban doner* ‘leave in full freedom’ and (*laisser, mettre*) *a bandon* ‘(let, put) in somebody’s power, at somebody’s mercy’) and was introduced around the sixteenth Century; *permitir* is a juridical Latinism (from *permittere* ‘to permit, in a legal context’) and was introduced in the fifteenth Century. The late entry of *abandonar* and *permitir* into Portuguese led to a situation of full conceptual and distributional synonymy with the two prototypical uses of *deixar* at the time. However, this situation rapidly caused a semantic dissimilation which took the shape of a prototype reorganization, mainly in the semasiological structure of *deixar*.

On one side, the introduction of *permitir* allowed the passive use of ‘not to prevent’ to become prototypical in comparison with the active sense of ‘to allow’. The promotion of passivity gave origin to a structural asymmetry of prototypical centers. Whereas in Old Portuguese the two prototypical meanings of *deixar* (‘to abandon’ and ‘to allow’) were both active, from Classical Portuguese onwards, one of the prototypical centers remains active (‘to abandon’) and the other becomes passive (‘not to prevent’).

On the other side, the new verbs *abandonar* and *permitir* have positioned the prototypical meanings of *deixar* on hierarchically more schematic levels, namely ‘to actively suspend the non-spatial interaction with what is characterized as static’ in *deixar* with a nominal complement and ‘not to passively oppose what is presented as dynamic’ in *deixar* with a verbal complement. In terms of Talmy’s (1988, 2000) force dynamics, the opposition is between the cessation of impingement on the natural disposition of the Agonist to rest, and the non-occurrence of impingement on the natural disposition of the Agonist to motion. A crucial fact with onomasiological implications is that the verb *deixar* started to have in each of its two groups of meanings a general or schematic prototype and at the same time a specific or local prototype.

Another differentiating factor consists in the nondenotational (or nonreferential) differences of meaning. In relation to *abandonar*, *deixar* expresses ‘abandonment’ with a lesser degree of intensity and emotional density, hence *deixar* can be used as a euphemism for the process conveyed by *abandonar*. Let us, then, compare examples (3) and (4): example (3) is not as strong and it is more euphemistic than in (4); the speaker chooses (4) if (s)he is willing to convey, or unwilling to attenuate, a negative evaluation regarding the subject’s attitudes and the negative consequences regarding the abandoned object. There is therefore a difference of emotional meaning.

- (3) O João deixou a sua mulher/o emprego/o partido comunista/os  
 the John left the.F his.F wife/the job/the party communist/the.pl  
 estudos.  
 studies  
 ‘John has left his wife/his job/the communist party/his studies.’

- (4) O João abandonou a sua mulher/o emprego/o partido comunista/os  
 the John abandoned the.F his.F wife/the job/the party communist/the.pl  
 estudos.  
 studies  
 ‘John has abandoned his wife/his job/the communist party/his studies.’

In contrast to *permitir*, *deixar* belongs to a non-formal register (a difference in stylistic meaning) and presupposes a more familiar (or *subjective*) authority (a difference in pragmatic meaning and also in conceptual meaning). Example (5) is thus more adequate in a familiar context, as in from father to daughter, whilst (6) is more suitable in an institutional situation, from someone in a higher position to one of their subordinates. Moreover, *deixar* possesses the advantages which result from its relative grammaticalization, namely the advantage of construing a more direct causative relation other than *permitir*. Therefore, the verbal complement of *deixar* is selected as a whole, unlike what happens with the verbal complement of *permitir*.

- (5) Ele deixou a Maria chegar mais tarde.  
 he let the.F Mary arrive more late  
 ‘He let Mary arrive later.’
- (6) Ele permitiu que a Maria chegasse mais tarde  
 he allowed that the.F Mary arrive.sbj more late  
 / autorizou a Maria a chegar mais tarde.  
 authorized the.F Mary to arrive more late  
 ‘He allowed/authorized Mary to arrive later.’

Comparing the onomasiological salience of these verbs, *deixar* has a more salient role than *abandonar* when used to convey the more neutral emotive expression of abandonment among interpersonal and functional relationships. It is also more salient than *permitir* in contexts of less formality, less normativity and more interpersonality. This local onomasiological saliency of *deixar* also derives from the global onomasiological saliency of a basic level category, as well as from a semasiological saliency, or prototypicality, of the processes of abandonment and giving permission in the referential field of application of *deixar*.

Now, what does the semantic development of *deixar* and its synonyms *abandonar* and *permitir* reveal about synonymy? First, prototypicality is a differentiating factor for synonyms, both synchronically and diachronically. Synchronically, two or more synonyms can be referentially and distributionally equivalent but have different prototypical structures. In Modern Portuguese, the verb *permitir* is referentially and distributionally equivalent to the permissive meaning of *deixar* with a verbal complement (not mentioning the syntactic differences of *permitir* as a “verb of control”), both being verbs of permission in a strict sense. However, the prototype of *permitir* is the active meaning of giving permission, whereas the prototype of *deixar* with a verbal complement is the passive meaning of non interfering. In

Classical and Modern Portuguese, the verb *abandonar* is referentially and distributionally equivalent to the specific prototype of *deixar* with a nominal complement, but *deixar* with a nominal complement also possesses a more schematic prototype which influences the specific prototype of *deixar* and that extends it to other points in the semasiological structure of *deixar*.

This result is the same as the one achieved by the pioneer study of Geeraerts (1988) on the pair of synonyms *vernielen* and *vernietigen*, both with the meaning of ‘to destroy’ in nineteenth-century Dutch. Both verbs were used to designate the exact same situations and to display the same collocational properties, albeit possessing different prototypes: *vernietigen* was used predominantly with an abstract meaning, whereas *vernielen* was used to designate, mainly, an act of physical destruction.

Diachronically, competition and differentiation between synonyms occur through the semasiological reorganization of prototypes. The introduction of the verbs *permitir* and *abandonar* at the final stages of Old Portuguese was one of the main factors for the successive restructurations of the prototypical centers of *deixar*, and those prototypical restructurations had a major role in the differentiation of the three verbs.

As a second result, we found that the social features of the items involved interact with prototype-based features of the concepts involved. Stylistic, emotive and pragmatic needs motivated the emergence of *permitir* and *abandonar* in a period where the semasiological complex of *deixar* became well-established. The same social features also facilitated the prototype reorganizations of *deixar*, and contributed to the conceptual differentiation of prototype structures between *deixar* and *permitir-abandonar*.

## **5. Synonyms and lectal varieties: the diachronic development of football and clothing denotational synonyms in European and Brazilian Portuguese**

This case study is a development of the author’s previous sociolexicological and sociolectometrical research into the lexical convergence and divergence that has taken place between European Portuguese (EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in the last 60 years (Soares da Silva 2010, 2012, 2014a, b). Focusing on the lexical fields of football and clothing concepts, three main issues are addressed by means of a corpus-based and sociolectometrical approach: (i) whether onomasiological heterogeneity is greater in BP than EP; (ii) the impact of item-related features (such as endo-/exogenousness, foreign influence, neologisms) and concept-related features (such as prototypicality, vagueness, recent origin) in the production of denotational synonyms within and across the two national varieties; (iii) the impact of item-related and concept-related features of denotational synonyms on the convergent/divergent evolution of the two national varieties.

The study is concerned with onomasiological variation between semantically equivalent terms (denotational synonyms) and therefore takes into account the concept expressed by the lexical item and the different ways of expressing it. The *onomasiological* method has been adopted to study language-internal variation,

since denotational synonyms often display sociolinguistic differences and it is these differences that motivate the very existence of, and competition between, language varieties. In addition, looking at alternative expressions of lexical meanings provides us with a reliable control mechanism to avoid the potential statistical bias caused by an asymmetric distribution of concepts.

The data include thousands of observations of the usage of alternative terms to refer to 43 nominal concepts from football and clothing terminologies in the 1950s, 1970s and 2000s. Corpus material was extracted from three different sources: (i) sports newspapers and fashion magazines from the early years of the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s/2000s; (ii) Internet Relay Chat (IRC) channels related to football (traditional chat fora); and (iii) labels and price tags pictured from shop windows in two Portuguese and Brazilian towns respectively. The sub-corpus of football contains 2.7 million tokens selected from 8 newspapers (4 Portuguese and 4 Brazilian newspapers) and 15 million tokens collected from Internet chats. The sub-corpus of clothing extends to 1.2 million tokens gathered from 24 fashion magazines (14 Portuguese and 14 Brazilian magazines) and 1,300 pictures of labels and price tags photographed from clothes shop windows. These two sub-corpora make up the CONDIVport corpus (Soares da Silva 2008).

The study uses advanced corpus-based and sociolectometrical methods to measure onomasiological heterogeneity and convergence/divergence between lectal varieties. Two sociolectometrical techniques were used: uniformity measures and featural measures. Onomasiological heterogeneity, convergence, and divergence between lectal varieties can be calculated using uniformity measures. The internal uniformity (I) measure consists of calculating onomasiological homogeneity within a single language variety. It reaches its highest value when all the speakers, in every circumstance, choose the same lexical item to denote a given concept. The internal uniformity value will decrease the greater the amount of terms that compete to denote the same concept, and the more dominant some of these terms become. The external uniformity (U) measure consists of calculating uniformity between language varieties. Diachronically, convergence and divergence can be quantified through increasing or decreasing external uniformity. Synchronically, the greater the distance there is between the standard and substandard registers, the smaller external uniformity there is between these two registers. Featural (A) measures provide the proportion of terms possessing a special feature, such as that of being borrowed. These measures are based on *onomasiological profiles*, i.e. sets of alternative synonymous terms, together with their frequencies. For instance, the profile for the concept GOAL<sub>1</sub> includes the alternative terms *bola*, *goal*, *gol*, *gól*, *golo*, *ponto* and *tento*.

On the basis of the CONDIVport corpus, 21 onomasiological profiles from football terminology and 22 onomasiological profiles from clothing terminology were compiled. As selection criteria, concepts that were onomasiologically-formally heterogeneous, and concepts that were representative of their respective lexical fields were chosen. As for the corresponding lexical items, terms with a strong popular mark were excluded to avoid inflating differences. As regards the 21 profiles from the field of football, a total number of 183 terms were studied in a

database containing 90,202 observations of these terms used in sports newspapers and 143,946 observations of their use in Internet chats. As for the 22 profiles of clothing items for men (M) and women (F), 264 terms were studied in a database compiling 12,451 observations of their use in fashion magazines and 2,775 observations of their use in labels and price tags pictured from clothes shops. The profiles for football are: BACK, BALL, COACH, CORNER, DRIBBLING, FORWARD, FOUL, FREE KICK, GOAL<sub>1</sub>, GOAL<sub>2</sub>, GOALKEEPER, MATCH, MIDFIELDER, OFFSIDE, PENALTY, REFEREE, ASSISTANT REFEREE, SHOT/KICK, SHOT/PLAYING, TEAM, WINGER. The profiles for clothing are: BLOUSE F, CARDIGAN M/F, COAT F, COAT M, DRESS F, JACKET M/F, JACKET (BLOUSON) M/F, JEANS M/F, JUMPER M/F, LEGGINGS F, OVERCOAT M/F, RAINCOAT M/F, SHIRT M, SHORT JACKET F, SHORT JACKET M, SHORT TROUSERS M/F, SKIRT F, SUIT M, SUIT/OUTFIT F, TAILORED JACKET M/F, TROUSERS M/F, T-SHIRT M/F.

Figures 2 and 3 systematize the results of the internal and external diachronic analysis of the last 60 years. They present the percentages of internal uniformity within each national variety and external uniformity between the two national varieties in the corpus of football and in the corpus of clothing in the three time periods studied, namely the 1950s, 1970s and 1990s-2000s. The first number of each pair of results represents the unweighted uniformity and the second number the weighted uniformity. The results displayed on the horizontal lines are the percentages of external uniformity between the Portuguese (P) and Brazilian (B) variety in the 1950s, 1970s and 2000s. For instance, the weighted uniformity between the two national varieties in the corpus of football is 43.78% in the 1950s and 56.76% in the 2000s. This means that the two varieties converge in football vocabulary. The results shown on the vertical and diagonal lines are the percentages of external uniformity obtained from one time period to another and between the different time periods. For instance, the weighted uniformity between the 1950s and the 1970s in the corpus of football is 86.74% for the Portuguese variety and 49.96% for the Brazilian variety. The results associated to each variety and time period are the percentages of internal uniformity or internal onomasiological homogeneity. For instance, the internal uniformity/homogeneity in the corpus of football in the 1950s is greater in the Portuguese variety (61.09%/51.86%) than in the Brazilian variety (46.93%/30.85%), both for unweighted and weighted measures.

The results obtained for football terms (Figure 2) and clothing terms (Figure 3) differ with regard to the issue of lexical convergence/divergence between European and Brazilian Portuguese (compare the percentages of external uniformity displayed on the horizontal lines): divergence is found in the corpus of clothing (decreasing external uniformity) and restricted convergence is found in the corpus of football (increasing external uniformity). The hypothesis of divergence is therefore confirmed in the lexical field of clothing but not in the lexical field of football. Clothing terms are more representative of common vocabulary and, therefore, the results obtained for clothing are probably closer to the sociolinguistic reality. The slight convergence observed in the field of football is probably the effect of globalization and standardization of the vocabulary of football.

As regards football terms (Figure 2), we see convergence between the two national varieties from 1950 to 1970, expressed in the increase in weighted uni-

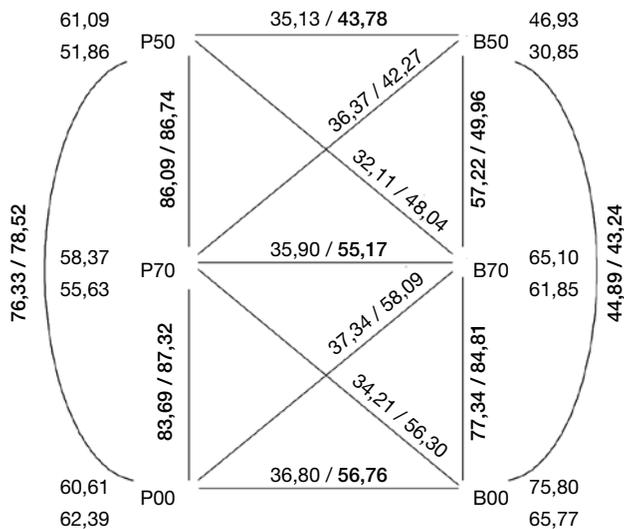


Figure 2. Uniformity results for football terms.

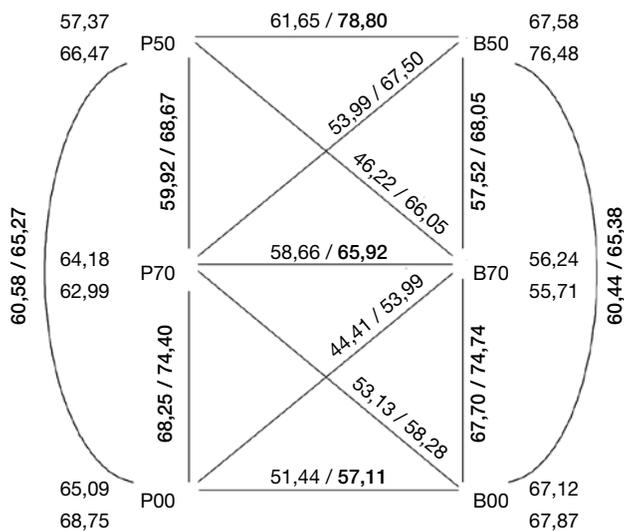


Figure 3. Uniformity results for clothing terms.

formity (from 43.78% in 1950 to 55.17% in 1970), but there is no significant change in the extent of convergence at the level of the unweighted uniformity (it remains fairly even) nor between 1970 and 2000 (we see an increase of only 1.59%). As for clothing terms (Figure 3), the two national varieties diverge along the three time periods. This is expressed in the decrease in (unweighted and weighted) uniformity from 1950 to 1970 and from 1970 to 2000. Weighted uniformity decreases 12.88% between 1950 and 1970 (from 78.80% to 65.92%) and 8.81% between 1970 and 2000 (from 65.92% to 57.11%); throughout the whole period, weighted uniformity decreases 21.69%.

The percentages of uniformity shown on the vertical and diagonal lines in Figures 2 and 3 indicate similarities, but also some differences between the two lexical fields. In the football corpus (Figure 2), many more changes occurred in the Brazilian variety (see the vertical lines) over the long term (1950 to 2000) and also during the first time period (1950 to 1970). This means that internal evolution is stronger and faster in the Brazilian variety than in the Portuguese variety. Furthermore, the Brazilian variety seems to have come closer to the Portuguese variety between 1950 and 1970 (see the diagonal line): the 1970s Brazilian database not only came closer to the 1970s Portuguese database but also to the 1950s Portuguese database, namely the weighted uniformity between B70 and P50 is greater (48.04%) than the weighted uniformity between B50 and P50 (43.78%). We could infer that the convergence happens mainly in the Brazilian variety. This interpretation is problematic, though. In fact, there is a factor which may partly explain why BP exhibits greater changes, as well as the apparent approaching of BP towards EP in the first two periods. This factor is the introduction of loanwords which have had a greater influence on BP.

In the clothing corpus (Figure 3), we see symmetry in the evolutionary trends of both varieties (global changes and intermediate changes are identical) and divergence on both sides, in both time periods. The changes are not stronger or faster in one variety than in the other, but, rather, they are identical in the two varieties (see vertical lines). Uniformity between the varieties in two different periods (P70 and B50, B70 and P50, P00 and B70, B00 and P70) is always smaller than uniformity between the varieties in the preceding period (P50 and B50, etc.) (see diagonal lines).

This means that a specific orientation of one variety in relation to the other does not seem to exist (neither approaching nor moving apart) in the lexical fields under analysis. Both varieties diverge from each other in the vocabulary of clothing. The fact that BP undergoes many changes in the vocabulary of football does not necessarily mean that BP is coming any closer to EP, in the sense of BP conforming to EP.

Finally, Figures 2 and 3 show greater internal changes in the Brazilian variety than in the Portuguese variety in both lexical fields (see the percentages of internal uniformity associated to each variety and time period). In the football corpus, there is a great increase in internal onomasiological homogeneity in BP, mainly between 1950 and 1970 (from 30.85% to 61.85%), whereas only minor changes are found in EP (from 51.86% to 55.63%). It is the Brazilian variety which exhibits a greater decrease in the number of alternative terms; only in two (BACK and MIDFIELDER) of the twenty-one onomasiological profiles are there more synonyms in BP00 than in

EP00; in the rest of the profiles there are either fewer (eleven profiles) or the same number (eight profiles) of synonyms in BP00; there are four profiles with only one term in BP00 (FOUL, OFFSIDE, GOALKEEPER and FREE KICK), which is not observed in EP00; and finally, within the set of the 21 profiles and respective 183 terms, 93 are from EP00 against 71 in BP00. In the clothing corpus, internal uniformity percentages show two things. First, there is a consistent evolutionary pattern: the internal uniformity decreases between 1950 and 1970 (except in the Portuguese database at the level of the unweighted measure) and increases between 1970 and 2000 in both varieties. The fluctuations in internal uniformity may be related to a process of lexical renovation with regard to fashion, particularly clothing. Second, there are greater changes in the Brazilian variety than in the Portuguese variety, especially between the intermediate periods (long term changes are also observed but only at the level of the weighted uniformity).

We will now examine the impact of item-related and concept-related features on the global evolutionary trend. As regards the item-related features, the influence of endogenous, exogenous and binational terms, the influence of loanwords and the influence of neologisms and Brazilian terms were measured. As for the corpus of football, we found a marked increase of binational terms, a decrease of endogenous terms which appears to be stronger in Brazil and greater changes of exogenous terms in Brazil. These changes are consistent with the convergent trend previously observed (between 1950 and 1970) and confirm that the Brazilian variety is subject to greater change than the Portuguese variety. As for the corpus of clothing, the global divergence observed earlier is associated with two internal changes: one is the decrease in binational terms; the other change, having a greater impact than the previous one, is the increase of endogenous terms on both sides. Again, the Brazilian variety changes more than the Portuguese variety.

Tables 1 and 2 show that the influence of foreign terms, namely English loanwords ( $A'_{\text{Engl}}$ ) in the vocabularies of football and clothing, and French loanwords ( $A'_{\text{Fr}}$ ) in the vocabulary of clothing, is stronger in the Brazilian variety (B) than in

**Table 1.** Loanwords in the corpus of football (from the 1950s to the 2000s)

$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P50)	7.1%	<	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B50)	18%
$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P70)	9.8%	<	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B70)	17.1%
$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P00)	10.2%	<	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B00)	16.2%

**Table 2.** Loanwords in the corpus of clothing (from the 1950s to the 2000s)

$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (P50)	17.6%	≈	$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (B50)	18.5%
$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (P70)	15.9%	≈	$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (B70)	18.1%
$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (P00)	10.2%	≈	$A'_{\text{Fr}}$ (B00)	7.9%
$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P50)	3.3%	≈	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B50)	4.2%
$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P70)	5.8%	≈	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B70)	7.6%
$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (P00)	16.9%	≈	$A'_{\text{Engl}}$ (B00)	16.8%

**Table 3.** Adaptations/translations of English borrowings in the corpus of football

A'_{Engl.adapt} (P50)	6%	≅	A'_{Engl.adapt} (B50)	2.8%
A'_{Engl.adapt} (P70)	7.9%	<	A'_{Engl.adapt} (B70)	16.9%
A'_{Engl.adapt} (P00)	8.9%	<	A'_{Engl.adapt} (B00)	16%

**Table 4.** Brazilian terms in the corpus of European Portuguese for football

A'_{Braz} (P50)	0.8%	2.3%
A'_{Braz} (P70)	1.0%	3.4%
A'_{Braz} (P00)	1.1%	2.0%

the Portuguese variety (P). These results confirm the hypothesis of the Brazilian variety's greater receptivity to loanwords, whether through direct importation or adaptation.

As regards the adaptation of foreign terms, Table 3 illustrates the greater tendency of the Brazilian variety to adapt foreign borrowings, in contrast with the Portuguese variety which tends to replace them by vernacular terms. The percentage of adapted borrowings from English (A'\_{Engl.adapt}) in the field of football increases dramatically in the Brazilian database between 1950 and 1970. For the overall 21 onomasiological profiles, we find 23 adaptations and 19 loan translations in the Brazilian database against 6 adaptations and 14 loan translations in the Portuguese database.

As regard neologisms, it is of more interest to see their influence on the vocabulary related to clothing. It is not a surprise that new clothing terms or new uses of preexisting terms are introduced in both varieties. These new terms or uses contribute to the global divergence between the two varieties, although they are not the only determining factor.

Table 4 reveals that the anticipated growing influence of BP on EP, particularly in the field of football, is not clearly confirmed. Two measurements of the Brazilian terms (A'\_{Braz}) in the corpus of the Portuguese variety (P) are given in this table: the percentages on the left include widely known Brazilian terms and the ones indicated on the right show all the Brazilian terms registered in reference dictionaries. As regards the percentage of Brazilian terms used in the European variety, the weighted measure varies from 0.8% to 2.3% in P50 and from 1.1% to 2% in P00.

We will now see to what extent item-related features contribute towards lexical heterogeneity (synonyms) between the two national varieties (lectal synonyms). Three correlations were found. First, a positive correlation is observed between endogenousness, English loanword and neologism, on the one side, and lexical heterogeneity, on the other side, in both national varieties. This means that lectal heterogeneity (number of synonyms and completion between them) increases as a concept adds endogenous terms, English loans and neologisms. Second, a negative correlation is observed between French loans and lexical heterogeneity in the vocabulary of clothing in both varieties. This means that lexical heterogeneity decreases as a concept adds French loanwords. This nega-

tive correlation can be interpreted as a specific effect of the semantic field in question; both varieties tend to behave in the same way with regard to French fashion and clothing terms. Finally, a negative correlation is observed between exogeneity and English influence, on the one side, and lexical heterogeneity, on the other side, in the vocabulary of football as regards the European variety. This means that lexical heterogeneity decreases as a concept adds exogenous terms and English loanwords.

Finally, we calculated the correlation between concept-related features such as salience, vagueness, innovation, and lexical heterogeneity in both national varieties. Three correlations were found. First, a negative correlation is observed between prototypical concepts and lexical heterogeneity. As we can see in Figures 2 and 3, the weighted uniformity percentages are always higher than the non-weighted uniformity percentages. This means that lexical heterogeneity (synonymy) increases as a concept becomes more frequent. Second, a positive correlation is observed between new concepts and lexical heterogeneity. This means that lexical heterogeneity increases as new concepts emerge. Finally, a positive correlation is observed between vague concepts and lexical heterogeneity. For example, the word *blusa* is used to name the concepts BLOUSE F, JUMPER M/F and T-SHIRT M/F, and the word *jaqueta* is used to designate JACKET M/F and BLOUSON M/F. This means that lexical heterogeneity increases as different concepts overlap.

What does the development of football and clothing denotational synonyms in both national varieties of Portuguese reveal about synonymy? First, item-related features such as endogeneity (endogenous terms), foreign influence (loanwords) and word creation (neologisms) contribute to lexical heterogeneity within and across national varieties. These factors of lexical heterogeneity are social. This result was already expected, given that social factors unleash the emergence and the interaction between lectal varieties and, on the other hand, those lectal varieties give birth to the heterogeneity lexical, i.e. the occurrence of synonyms.

Second, concept-related features such as concept salience, concept vagueness and concept creation also contribute to lexical heterogeneity within and across national varieties. These factors of lexical heterogeneity are clearly conceptual. Salience and vagueness are more interesting because they are non-orthodox concept features, well studied in Cognitive Linguistics, in particular by prototype theory. Unlike the previous one, this was an unexpected result for two reasons: on the one hand, because, traditionally, conceptual factors regarding the emergence of dialectological lexical heterogeneity are not recognized; on the other hand, because the resulting heterogeneity concerns denotational synonyms, i.e. conceptual factors may determine the occurrence of synonyms without conceptual differences. This last result shows how conceptual and social factors can interact in order to make the occurrence of synonyms among lectal varieties happen.

Third, linguistic pluricentricity has a notable effect on onomasiological heterogeneity, particularly in the development of denotational synonyms and, inversely, denotational synonyms are good indicators of linguistic pluricentricity. Finally, standardization can diminish lexical heterogeneity but it doesn't have to. Our results for football terms are clear regarding this issue.

## 6. Conclusions

Our discussion of the notion of synonymy and the analysis of two case studies on lexical synonyms through time give way to some conclusions. First, synonymy is a flexible phenomenon of semantic equivalence of expressions. It depends upon context and upon the grading levels of the schematic networks of meaning. This implies that one should abandon the traditional structuralist model of synonymy that regards it as a relationship of meaning between lexical items at the systemic level, and embrace the encyclopaedic, referential and contextual aspects upon which a relationship of semantic equivalence depends.

Second, prototypicality is a differentiating conceptual factor for synonyms, both synchronically and diachronically, and it may very well be the only one, or at least the most important differentiating factor, as it was shown via the synonyms *deixar*, *abandonar*, and *permitir*. This means that to study synonymy only from a qualitative point of view or by looking only at meaning differences is rather restrictive; one should also study synonymy from the point of view of quantitative differentiation or salience differences.

Third, prototypicality is a conceptual factor that generates synonyms across lectal varieties. As seen in the onomasiological profiles of football and clothing terms across the European and Brazilian varieties of Portuguese, the less frequent and vaguer concepts are those more susceptible to the occurrence and competition of synonyms between the two national varieties. This implies that by taking only into account aspects of geographic and social differentiation, a study of synonymy becomes too narrow.

Fourth, social features, such as stylistic, emotive and pragmatic features interact with prototype-based conceptual features in differentiating synonyms. For example, social differences can motivate differences of prototypical structure between synonyms. Moreover, social features, such as endogenousness, foreign influence, neologism, and stylistic stratification, interact with prototype-based and other conceptual features in the emergence and competition of denotational synonyms within and across lectal varieties.

Finally, competition of synonyms through time highlights the sufficient semantic similarity and necessary semantic differences between synonyms, correlations of conceptual and social factors of synonymy, the role of prototypicality in lexical change and variation, and convergence and divergence between national varieties and other lectal varieties.

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