

Exploring the productivity and systematicity of Recipient passives in Mozambican Portuguese

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Abstract: This study aims to explore and provide a detailed description of the construction known as “Dative passives” or Recipient passives in the Mozambican variety of Portuguese, in the framework of Cognitive Grammar (LANGACKER, 1991, 2008) and Construction Grammar (GOLDBERG, 1995, 2006). Particular attention will be paid to the complex semantic categories of passive and ditransitive structures in order to identify which of their conceptual aspects lay behind the emergence of Recipient passives. By means of a corpus study based on the *Corpus do Português* (DAVIES, 2016), it will be shown that this construction is found with a wide range of verbs of transfer, thus showing increasing signs of productivity, and that the variation displayed by Mozambican Portuguese is not random but systematic, occurring in well-defined semantic contexts. Furthermore, adopting a constructional approach to the variation at hand provides a strong argument against considering Recipient passives as derived from Double Object constructions, a claim often made in the literature (GONÇALVES, 1990, 1996, 2010). By doing so, this study also offers to delve deeper into the pluricentricity of Portuguese, a tendency that is furthermore bound to increase in the near future (SOARES DA SILVA, 2022).

Keywords: Recipient passives; Mozambican Portuguese; Ditransitives; Pluricentricity; Construal.

Introduction

As a result of its tumultuous history of expansion and colonisation spanning a period of over four centuries, Portuguese has grown into a language characterised by increasing degrees of pluricentricity, with two well-established varieties on the one hand, and several emerging varieties on the other, especially on the African continent. Since their countries’ independence from Portugal in 1975, African varieties of Portuguese have entered a fast-paced nativisation process, which has been documented by several researchers (ÁLVAREZ LÓPEZ; GONÇALVES; ORNELAS DE AVELAR, 2018). Population growth is moreover likely to strengthen this tendency: demographic projection data show a considerable

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population increase on the African continent by the end of the 21st century, especially in Angola and Mozambique, thus leading to an increase in the number of Portuguese speakers in Africa. Angola and Mozambique together will then represent 60.6% of the population of the Portuguese-speaking countries worldwide, while Brazil's percentage will drop from 74,31% (in 2015) to 35.1% (in 2100) (SOARES DA SILVA, 2022, p. 139).

African varieties of Portuguese share a set of contextual features that set them apart from both European and Brazilian Portuguese, in terms of the sociohistorical context that conditioned their emergence. They are all relatively recent varieties, outcome of a history of Portuguese colonisation and late independence, but also product of language contact and second-language acquisition in a multilingual context (HAGEMEIJER, 2016, p. 43-44). Substrate influence is still very lively on the African continent, where Portuguese coexists alongside a wide variety of local languages from the Bantu group. The choice made by these African countries of maintaining Portuguese as official language, “the language of national unity” (FIRMINO, 2008, p. 22), came along with the implementation of the European standard as the model of reference.

The current situation African varieties of Portuguese is thus characterised by a “tension between an ongoing process of nativisation and normative pressure from European Portuguese” (SOARES DA SILVA, 2022, p. 139): on the one hand, a relatively recent but fast-paced nativisation process is likely to lead to the crystallisation and diffusion of many innovative linguistic features. On the other hand, though, this process is not yet followed by endogenous standardisation so that these linguistic innovations are still considered non-standard in light of the European reference norm. Finally, it would be a misconception to assume an overly uniform view on the Portuguese spoken in Africa. Although they emerged under the same sociohistorical conditions, African varieties of Portuguese are currently evolving in specific regional contexts that shape linguistic variation at the local level (HAGEMEIJER, 2016, p. 63).

Within this global picture, the variety of Portuguese spoken in Mozambique stands out because of a linguistic innovation not found in any other African variety: the occurrence of Recipient passives. With ditransitive verbs taking both a direct and indirect object, only passivisation of the direct object is available according to normative Portuguese standards. Mozambican Portuguese, however, developed a new variant: the indirect object, when

associated with the semantic role of Recipient, may appear in subject position in the passive voice, thus triggering agreement (see examples under (1)). This option is not only precluded according to European and Brazilian standards, but also conspicuously absent from Angolan and Santomean Portuguese (GONÇALVES; DUARTE; HAGEMEIJER, 2022). This Recipient passive innovation occurs in alternation with the “standard” Theme passive construction (see examples under (2)) in which the Theme/direct object features as subject. According to Nhatuve and Mavota (2021, p. 221), this new strategy of the Mozambican variety is socially and linguistically stable and should be considered as evidence for the ongoing nativisation process of this variety. Considering the steady increase in the number of native speakers of Portuguese in Mozambique, from 10,7% in 2007 to 16,6% in 2017³, it can be expected that this construction will further consolidate its position within the grammar of the Mozambican variety in the near future.

- (1) a. Para garantir a viagem, tinha que ir primeiro ao curandeiro para ter sorte. O jovem foi tratado, **foi dado** algumas raízes que serviriam de escudo para onde estivesse. (CP) (EP: “O jovem foi tratado, **foram-lhe dadas** algumas raízes [...]”).
‘In order to ensure safe travel, the first step was to go to the healer for good luck. The young man was treated, he was given some plants that would serve as a protection for wherever he would go’.
- b. Ele foi lá, negociou e conseguiu o primeiro financiamento e naquele tempo fazer uma revista eram 20.000 meticais. Os tais 20.000 **fomos dados** pela Embaixada de Portugal. (CP) (EP: “os tais 20.000 **foram-nos dados** pela Embaixada [...]”).
‘He went there, negotiated and obtained the first funding. At that time, 20.000 meticais were necessary to publish a journal. We were given these 20.000 by the Portuguese embassy’.
- (2) a. O fundo de iniciativas locais que **foi dado** aos distritos foi com tanta força política que esqueceu o essencial das coisas. (CP).
‘The Local Initiative Fund that was given to the districts came with so much political power that the most important things were overlooked’.
- b. Penso que ninguém está satisfeito com as justificações que nos **são dadas** sobre a morte de Samora Machel. (CP).
‘I think no one is satisfied with the justifications given to us about Samora Machel’s death’.

³ Data retrieved from the Mozambican National Institute of Statistics (INE). In Mozambique, Portuguese coexists with more than twenty African languages from the Southern Bantu group, the most spoken ones being Macua in the north of the country, and Changana in the area of the capital city Maputo, in the southern part of Mozambique (FIRMINO, 2008).

Although the position of Portuguese in Africa is bound to increase in importance in the future, fine-grained corpus-based studies on African varieties are still quite rare, and descriptive studies along the lines of Construction Grammar almost inexistent. By means of one specific case study, i.e., Recipient passives, this study thus aims at (i) bringing new insights into the study of the pluricentricity of Portuguese, by delving deeper into the recent nativisation process of post-colonial varieties of Portuguese, as well as (ii) advancing research on constructional variation in the context of pluricentric languages, by showing how a reorganisation of the constructional network can take place at the level of individual varieties.

More specifically, the primary goal of this paper is to bridge a gap in the literature by providing a thorough and systematic description of Recipient passives in Mozambican Portuguese, identifying its semantic characteristics and the contexts in which they occur. Second, we intend to show the benefits of viewing this change from a constructional angle, as adopting a constructional perspective offers a more comprehensive and integrated view on the phenomenon at hand. Thirdly, we will turn to the constructional alternation with Theme passives and show how semantic factors play an important part in guiding the speaker's choice for one constructional variant over the other.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the next section starts with a review of the relevant literature, in order to identify the questions that remain to be dealt with. Section 3 outlines the relevant theoretical background, along the lines of Construction Grammar and Cognitive Grammar. Section 4 introduces the corpus data as well as the methodology. The last two sections present a descriptive analysis and a discussion about the linguistic phenomenon under analysis. The paper ends with some conclusions and avenues for further research.

Recipient passives in the literature: challenges and opportunities

Better known as *passivas dativas* 'Dative passives' in the literature in Portuguese, Recipient passives have drawn the attention of linguists ever since the first studies on these varieties in the 1980's. Carvalho (1987) is arguably one of the first authors to report on them, in a brief contrastive study comparing passive structures in the Portuguese spoken in Mozambique and in Portugal. In subsequent work, Gonçalves (1990, 1996, 2010) examined

these innovative passive structures in more detail. She proposed an analysis mainly in terms of syntactic movements, interpreted as the result of Bantu language interference (see also NGUNGA, 2012) in a context of second language acquisition in the framework of Generative Grammar.

Most importantly, to account for these “strange passives” in MP (GONÇALVES, 1996, p. 49), she posits a change in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs, by which such verbs in MP would select two bare noun phrases as direct and indirect objects, giving rise to Double Object constructions (DOC), whereas their European Portuguese (EP) equivalents categorically encode indirect objects as a prepositional phrase headed by the preposition *a* ‘to’. The claim that Recipient passives are derivations from DOCs nevertheless lacks an empirical basis.

Over the course of the last twenty years, Recipient passives have only been mentioned in passing, and no attempt was ever made towards describing them in more depth. However, two recent papers (GONÇALVES; DUARTE; HAGEMEIJER, 2022; NHATUVE, 2022) provide fresh insights and raise new questions. Importantly, both Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeijer (2022, p. 9) and Nhatuve (2022, p. 14) acknowledge the presence of the Recipient passive construction in recently collected data. These authors, however, make use of different type of data produced by different profiles of informants. While Nhatuve mainly worked with written productions from students who have a Bantu language as mother tongue, Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeijer (2022) gathered a corpus of spoken interviews with informants from different ages and education backgrounds, the large majority of whom has Portuguese as a first language. Furthermore, Nhatuve focuses exclusively on passive constructions, whereas Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeijer take the active voice as their point of departure.

Interestingly, although both Nhatuve (2022) and Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeijer (2022) share the underlying assumption that DOCs are a prerequisite for the formation of Recipient passives, they actually diverge on the current status of Recipient passives in MP. On the one hand, Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeijer (2022, p. 11) conclude that “altogether, while DOCs and dative passives still occur in MP, they appear to have become less common and more restricted than they were in the corpus collected by Perpétua Gonçalves [in the 1990s]”. Nhatuve (2022, p. 7), on the other hand, makes the following observation: “the occurrence of dative passives in MP turns out to be more widespread and stable, as they can

be observed across different groups of speakers (from more to less educated)”. In the light of these elements and the diverging views regarding the status of Recipient passives in contemporaneous MP, a few questions remain open and will be addressed in the following sections.

Setting the stage: what are Recipient passives made of?

A preliminary and essential step to the analysis of variation is delineating the variable context, so as to circumscribe data extraction to “only those contexts that are functionally parallel as well as variable” (TAGLIAMONTE, 2012, p. 10). In the case of Recipient passives, the variable context can be described as *ditransitive passive sentences with three obligatory participants*. In the remainder of this section, we will take a closer look at the linguistic components and properties of this complex construction in turn in order to identify its main conceptual elements.

Passives and transitivity

The passive voice provides an alternative event construal from the active, by shifting the focus of attention from the Agent to the Patient, and from the initiator force to the result or terminal point of the event (MALDONADO, 2007, p. 834). Petré (forthcoming, p. 7-8) emphasises two specific functions of the passive construction. From a pragmatic point of view, he argues that passives work as a “discourse-structuring device”, making the Patient (or the Recipient) match given information and the Agent, if present, new, unknown or irrelevant information. He further claims that passives function as a “viewpoint device”, reflecting the speaker’s perspective on the situation, which is an instance of *construal*. In sum, passivisation does not change the propositional content of the sentence, but its information structure, as well as the way this content is perspectivised, both in terms of *focusing* (LANGACKER, 2008, p. 55) and in terms of perspective or *viewing arrangement* (LANGACKER, 2008, p. 73).

In Portuguese, the canonical strategy for forming passive sentences is the periphrastic passive formed out of the auxiliary *ser* ‘be’, followed by the past participle, known as *eventive* passive. Two other types of passives also exist, the stative passive formed with the auxiliary *estar* and the resultative passive formed with the auxiliary *ficar* (DUARTE, 2013). However, the Recipient/Theme passive alternation is only possible with the former type of passive: it requires a dynamic reading, one in which the notion of Agency is still strongly implied, in contrast to the adjectival reading of stative and resultative passives, so that the action can be construed from its other end.

Quite surprisingly, relatively few studies take passive structures as the starting point of their analysis – Kaltenbach (2020) can be cited among the exceptions.⁴ Instead, most authors turn to the passive to gain further insights into some active construction, as passives are considered a “good diagnostic of ‘highly transitive’ or ‘fully effective’ Agent-Affected relations” (DAVIDSE, 1998, p. 148). It emerges from this that the conceptual links that exist between active and passive constructions are to be found in the concept of transitivity, as a formal reflex of the conceptual category of causality. According to Langacker (1991, p. 344), the transitive construction reflects our basic conceptualisation of action as a causal chain involving energy transfer from an Agent (the energy source) to a Patient (the energy sink). The passive reverses the representation of the causal chain.

Ditransitivity, in turn, can be thought of as a special model of causality, in which the transitive relation occurs both between the Agent and the Patient and between the Agent and the Recipient: “in terms of causal transitivity, both Dative and Patient are targeted and affected by the Agent” (DAVIDSE, 1998, p. 148). In languages such as English, this is reflected in the capacity of either of the objects to be coded as subject of the passive clause (or as a noun phrase in the Double Object construction). However, the possibility of Recipient/Subject alignment appears to be language-specific – even variety-specific, in the case of Portuguese. Languages may vary in the way they encode the causal event, by choosing among several strategies along a continuum of transitivity. By way of illustration, let us

⁴ Likewise, the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in English is not so much an object of analysis either, as compared to the abundant amount of literature related to its active counterpart, the Dative Alternation (e.g., BRESNAN *et al.*, 2007; HOVAN; LEVIN, 2008; SZMRECSANYI *et al.*, 2016).

contrast English, Changana⁵ and MP with respect to the different types of less prototypical passive constructions they admit (or not).

(3) Changana

Recipient passive (from GONÇALVES, 1996, p. 43).

Vatsongwana va-nyik-iw-ile mali.

‘Children were given money’.

Beneficiary passive (from NGUNGA; DUARTE; CAMARGOS, 2016, p. 348).

Vapfumba va-svek-el-iw-a tihlampfi (hi hahani).

‘The guests are being cooked some fish (by my aunt).’

(4) English

Recipient passive (from KALTENBACH, 2020, p. 77).

Mary is given the book (by the teacher).

Beneficiary passive (from GUERRERO MEDINA, 2020, n. p.).

??I was cooked a delicious dinner.

(5) Mozambican Portuguese

Recipient passive (from the CP).

Todas as federações foram dadas um tempo para fazer um estudo de condições existentes.

‘All the federations were given some time to carry out a study of existing conditions.’

Beneficiary passive

**Fomos cozinhados um excelente jantar.*

*‘We were cooked an excellent dinner’.

It emerges from examples (3)-(5) above that all three languages admit Recipient passives with the prototypical transfer verb *give*, but differ as to the status of Beneficiary passives. In Changana, the participant with the semantic role of Beneficiary appears quite naturally in subject position (although the introduction of an applicative morpheme *-el-* should be noted), while in MP, the possibility of forming Beneficiary passives seems to be blocked.⁶ In English, Beneficiary passives appear only marginally acceptable.⁷

⁵ Bantu language spoken in the area of Maputo.

⁶ We did not find any Beneficiary passive in the CP with verbs of creation or preparation such as *cozinhar* ‘to cook’ and *preparar* ‘to prepare’ (cf. verbs of “obtaining”, “creation” and “preparing” [LEVIN, 1993, p. 172]). Although we do not rule out the possibility of a frequency effect – the construction being too rare to appear in the corpus – a Mozambican informant confirmed the ‘unnaturalness’ of this construction in a personal communication.

⁷ Guerrero Medina (2020) argues that Benefactive Double Object constructions are mostly infelicitous in the passive voice in English because the Beneficiary participant is less object-like and more peripheral to the event. This, again, ties in with the fact that the passive voice is a good diagnostic of transitivity.

Ditransitives events and the Dative participant

Following Langacker (1991), who argues that language is structured around certain conceptual archetypes based on (a finite set of) humanly relevant scenes, ditransitives can first be approached as one such conceptual archetype, corresponding to the experience of *transfer*. Ditransitive constructions would then encode a semantics of *transfer* in their core, subsuming more specific event schemas such as caused possession, caused motion and benefaction.

Arguably, the main defining characteristic of ditransitive constructions is that they conceptually take three core participants – typically an Agent, a Patient/Theme (the object being transferred) and a Recipient. More specifically, ditransitive verbs take two objects, both of which function as focal points within the scene and are equally likely to achieve primary focal prominence. Among these three profiled participants, the Recipient/Indirect object, also frequently referred to under the label ‘Dative’, stands out as the most versatile and multifaceted participant, being discussed at length in the literature (see, e.g., the two volumes on the Dative edited by Van Belle and Van Langendonck in 1996 and 1998).

Both cross-linguistically and language-internally, this ‘Dative’ participant thus turns out to be very flexible, capable of taking on a variety of different semantic roles. Among the ones that are often associated with it, there is general agreement on the following scale: *Experiencer* > *Recipient*, *possessor* > *Beneficiary*, *maleficiary* > *Goal*. This classification broadly follows two axes: from more to less schematic, and from more to less internal to the action. Overlap between these different roles occur more often than not, so that it can sometimes be very intricate to tell them apart.

Geeraerts (2006) and Soares da Silva (1999) claim that the multidimensionality of the Indirect object (IO) category stems from the fact that the *transfer* event underlying ditransitive constructions can be perspectivised in two dimensions: “the focus may lie either on the *functional* aspects of the transfer (the transfer as a process with specific effects for the recipient), or on the *spatial* aspects of the transfer (the transfer as a material change of place of an object)” (GEERAERTS, 2006, p. 197-198). It follows from this that the IO too can be perspectivised according to these two same semantic dimensions, as a Recipient or as a Goal.

The third participant of ditransitive construction thus represents a complex category endowed with a rich semantics, that can be construed or perspectivised in a number of ways

even within the same language. The analysis by Geeraerts (2006) and Soares da Silva (1999, 2006) sought to unravel this complexity, taking as their point of departure three salient conceptual components (‘recipient’, ‘transfer’ and ‘material’ or ‘benefactive’ nature of the transfer), and showed how linguistic changes may stem from any of the components of this multidimensional semantic space. Crucially however, beyond its polysemy, it is also worth highlighting the *hybrid* character of the IO, at the intersection of the semantic roles of Agent (energy source) and Patient (energy sink), as well as between the status of core as opposed to peripheral participant. Langacker (1991, p. 328) emphasised the hybrid conceptual nature of the IO by defining it as an “*active* experiencer”. This allows the IO to be coded alternately as more Patient-like, when its affectedness is profiled; or more Agent-like, when its initiative capacity is called upon.

Complex categories as inherent triggers for variation

It emerges from all this that both ditransitive events and the multifaceted third participant they entail inherently bear the possibility of construing the situation in different ways, which naturally leads to alternate syntactic codings.⁸ It is this intrinsic conceptual ambivalence of ditransitive and ‘Dative’ structures that constitutes the basis for variation both within and across languages. On the one hand, as they take two objects, “ditransitive actions can be coded as primarily affecting the Dative or the Patient” (DAVIDSE, 1998, p. 179); on the other hand, Datives can be coded as either more Agentive or more Patient-like. The emergence of Recipient passives in MP can readily be accommodated under this view of inherent variation.

In a ditransitive event, there are two potential candidates for the status of (most) ‘Affected participant’, since both the Recipient and Patient are targeted and affected by the Agent. Ditransitive events thus conceptually offer “two complementary construal paradigms”, depending on which object participant is coded as being primarily affected, which in turn will define the ‘most transitive’ relation within the ditransitive construction (DAVIDSE, 1998, p.

⁸ Semantic complexity and variation are not necessarily mutually inclusive, considering that a linguistic category can be semantically complex and multifaceted, yet linguistically stable. However, in the case of the ‘Dative’ category, its semantic and conceptual complexity is undoubtedly a key determinant of its variability and instability across varieties of Portuguese.

148-149). Furthermore, this double perspective emerges most distinctly in the passive voice, rather than the active.

The Recipient, in turn, is a hybrid participant in two respects: it lies at the intersection between Agent and Patient and between Subject and Object. Davidse (1998) insists on the need to distinguish between these two layers of grammatical organisation in the clause⁹, in order to better understand the type of link that can be established between a Recipient and the subject of a clause. At the conceptual level, in terms of the ‘causal chain’ semantics, the passive construction requires a totally affected subject and highlights this quality in the Recipient; while in terms of grounding, the Recipient displays some referential and collocational properties that make it eligible for subject position: it is typically definite and often highly referential, while less collocational with the predicator (DAVIDSE, 1998, p. 179). In this light, a Recipient Subject appears as a natural coding strategy.

Different languages make different choices as to the manner of instantiating these different patterns (LANGACKER, 1991, p. 359). Some languages have the option to highlight the more Object-like properties of Recipients (typically English, by means of the Dative Alternation), whereas others prefer to showcase its higher position in the Agent-Recipient-Patient asymmetry and more agentive properties (typically standard Portuguese, which does not possess any such alternation). The development in MP of a new strategy in the way core participants are assigned focal prominence suggests that this emerging variety of Portuguese could be undergoing a kind of typological shift, although this is a bold claim that would require further empirical support.

Theoretical background, data and methodology

In practice, two decisions – one methodological, one theoretical – were made that set this study apart from previous research. The first was to enlarge the scope of the analysis. As

⁹ Davidse (1998) argues that no direct parallelism can be posited between the ‘semantic’ categories of Agent, Patient and Dative on the one hand, and the ‘syntactic’ categories of Subject, Direct Object and Indirect Object on the other, simply because “[t]hese two sets are involved in different layers of grammatical organisation in the clause” (DAVIDSE, 1998, p. 143). As a result, collapsing these two categories (e.g., of Agent/Subject and Dative/Indirect Object), albeit a convenient shortcut, may prove misleading. Instead, they should be thought of in terms of prototypical alignments.

previous works relied on relatively little data¹⁰, and considering that ditransitives occur with relatively low frequency – even lower for passive¹¹ ditransitives – it would be interesting to work with bigger amounts of data. Fortunately, this is made possible with the *Corpus do Português – Web/Dialects* (henceforth CP) (DAVIES, 2016). This corpus is composed of authentic written data retrieved from Lusophone blogs and websites, divided into the four main varieties of Portuguese (Portugal, Brazil, Angola and Mozambique), covering the period 2007-2013. Its major asset is undoubtedly its size: it encompasses over 27 million tokens for Mozambican Portuguese, which makes large-scale investigation possible. It furthermore includes different genres (journalistic and blog articles, forum posts, comments) and registers (from more to less formal), and is not restricted to the area of the capital city Maputo. Since they exclusively display Portuguese content, the blogs also propitiate a monolingual environment that limits direct interference from Bantu languages. As for its main drawbacks, this corpus is restricted to written productions, which could induce a register effect, and does not provide information about the sociolinguistic profile or L1 of the speakers. Unless explicitly specified otherwise, all examples provided in this paper are retrieved from the CP. The English translations are ours.

The second decision was to adopt a new theoretical perspective on this data. While Recipient passives have so far mostly been examined through the prism of Generative Grammar, the present analysis will be developed in the framework of Cognitive Grammar (LANGACKER, 1991, 2008) and Construction Grammar (GOLDBERG, 1995, 2006; DIESSEL, 2019). These constructional, usage-based models promote a view of grammar where form and meaning are tightly united into conventionalised symbolic units (LANGACKER, 2008), composing a network of interrelated constructions. Both Cognitive and Construction Grammar furthermore share the theoretical assumption that a change in meaning always underlies a change in form, thereby shifting the focus of the analysis towards the *semantic* aspect.

Finally, the last step prior to description and analysis was to build the dataset, which would constitute the basis of this study, with the retrieval as exhaustive as possible of all

¹⁰ For reference, Nhatuve's (2022) corpus is composed of 233 passive sentences, while Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemeyer (2022) analysed a total of 142 ditransitive structures, both active and passive, for MP.

¹¹ Maldonado (2007, p. 834) aptly points out that the passive construction is rather restricted in everyday discourse, even more so in languages (such as Portuguese and other Romance languages) where the unmarked construction is the active.

Recipient passives in the MP subsection of the CP. Attention was restricted to ditransitive contexts in which all three participants were overtly expressed (i.e., the variable context), so as to maximise comparability with Theme passives. Cases where the direct object was a complement clause were also considered. For this study, a total of 472 Recipient passives were collected.

Before moving on to the description of these passive constructions typical of the Mozambican variety of Portuguese, it is worth highlighting two important methodological issues. First, the theoretical background against which the relevant semantic categories for MP were established takes the active Dative alternation as a starting point. Since Construction Grammar consider passive constructions as paradigmatically related to active ones through the concept of transitivity, but ultimately independent constructions, it was thus necessary to take into account the particular semantic functions of the passive. Second and more importantly, the semantic classification proposed for the Dative alternation was developed on the basis of English data. Upon implementing these theoretical concepts in MP, it turned out that the English model of analysis developed (among others) by Goldberg (1995) and Hovan and Levin (2008) (see below) could not simply and straightforwardly be transferred to Portuguese; an *ad hoc* characterisation applicable to MP was required (cf. Table 1). One should thus be careful when it comes to importing theoretical notions from one language to another, since these are often implemented in language-specific ways that idiomatically vary from language to language.

Recipient passives in the spotlight: triggers and constraints on the construction

Lexicalist and Constructional models

Although this paper subscribes to a constructional approach to argument structure, it does not mean that the level of individual verbs was completely disregarded. Rather, we endorse the view that “the meanings of constructions and verbs interact in nontrivial ways” and that a constructional analysis must therefore be “both top-down and bottom-up”, taking

into account cross-reference between verbs and the constructions they appear in (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 24).

To identify with precision the whole range of verbs that are sanctioned in the Recipient passive construction in MP, we thus relied on the analysis of the English Dative Alternation Hovan and Levin (2008) on the one hand, and by Goldberg (1995) on the other. While the former authors advocate a verb-sensitive approach, arguing that it is what is lexicalised in the verb root that determines a verb's participation in a specific syntactic pattern, Goldberg envisions the ditransitive construction in terms of semantic extensions from a prototypical, central reading of material transfer. In addition, we drew on the *Dicionário de Regências Verbais do Português Moçambicano* (DRVPM) elaborated by Gonçalves and Justino (2020), which contains a list of verbs whose argument realisation deviates from the EP reference norm.

Goldberg (1995) promotes a constructional approach that fosters integration between what she calls “participant roles” (contributed by the verb, hence lexically profiled) and “argument roles” (contributed by the construction, hence constructionally profiled): “[c]onstructions [...] need to be able to constrain the class of verbs that can be integrated with them in various ways” (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 49). As for the English ditransitive construction, with its inherent transfer semantics, Goldberg argues that it typically encodes a transfer of possession, so that the basic, most prototypical sense of the ditransitive construction would be “Agent successfully¹² causes Recipient to receive Patient”, or X CAUSES Y TO RECEIVE Z. From this central sense, mechanisms such as metaphor and force dynamics motivate semantic extensions – causes the transfer, enables the transfer or prevents the transfer –, giving rise to constructional polysemy (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 33).

Meanwhile, Hovan and Levin (2008) also distinguish several semantic extensions of ditransitive events, although starting from the verbs. They first introduce a major division between *core* and *non-core* dative verbs, from which they subsequently derive more refined semantic classes. Within the core dative verbs, or *Give*-type verbs, we find verbs of ‘acts of giving’, verbs of ‘future having’ and verbs of communication; whereas non-core dative verbs are divided between *Send*-type and *Throw*-type verbs, the latter category subsuming mostly verbs of caused motion. While core dative verbs lexically select a Recipient and are as such

¹² Although the inference of successful transfer is debated (see HOVAN; LEVIN, 2008, p. 145).

associated to the event schema of caused possession exclusively, non-core dative verbs preferably encode a spatial goal and can have both caused motion and caused possession readings (HOVAN; LEVIN, 2008, p. 134).

Semantic classes

Through careful examination of the relevant literature matched with corpus exploration, we were able to identify four ditransitive verbs classes allowing for the formation of Recipient passives in MP. These constructions were found with a total of 54 lemmas, that were subsequently grouped into four semantic categories, all sharing the core semantic component of transfer (see Table 1 below). The first two semantic classes – *Give*-verbs (prototypical verbs of transfer, in which some change of possession is implied, either material or metaphorical) and Communicative transfer (see examples (6)-(7) below) – roughly correspond to Hovan and Levin’s (2008) core dative verbs, albeit with a few alterations. In fact, some verbs identified by the authors as being part of core dative verbs, hence potentially occurring in the Recipient passive construction in English, could not be found in this construction in MP and were therefore left out (e.g., verbs like *alugar* ‘rent’, *vender* ‘sell’, *emprestar* ‘lend’). On the other hand, the notion of core dative verbs turned out to be too limited as Recipient passives in MP also appear productive with a whole series of verbs that are disregarded in Hovan and Levin’s (2008, p. 134) analysis.

It was thus necessary to extend the range and include two further semantic categories, that we chose to label Negative transfer (8) and Directive Transfer (9), the latter being based on Langacker’s (2008, p. 394) semantic extension of the prototype of transfer: “an act of transfer is a social interaction as well”. The label ‘Directive transfer’ is to be understood in terms of directive illocutionary acts, that lead the interlocutor to perform some action (*pedir*, *mandar*, *ordenar*, *aconselhar*, *permitir*, *proibir*, etc.) and is in this respect distinguished from “assertive” acts (*dizer*, *afirmar*, *responder*, *negar*, etc.).¹³ These two latter categories,

¹³ These are obviously no impermeable categories and overlaps are likely to occur, especially between the semantic classes of Communicative and Directive transfer. However, we deemed relevant to maintain these as two separate categories.

particularly relevant for MP, are absent from Levin’s (1993) classification¹⁴, but appear as semantic extensions in Goldberg (1995).¹⁵ Finally, the so-called non-core dative verbs (i.e., *Send*-verbs and *Throw*-verbs) were not included in the analysis as they appeared infelicitous with Recipient passives in MP.


	Give-verbs (Material / Metaphorical Transfer)	<i>dar, oferecer, fornecer, atribuir, pagar, servir, conceder, entregar, outorgar, distribuir, restituir, confiar, dever, ceder, proporcionar, concessionar, devolver</i>
	Communicative Transfer	<i>dizer, explicar, comunicar, perguntar, responder, pedir, prometer, ensinar, mostrar, apresentar, solicitar</i>
	Negative Transfer	<i>arrancar, tirar, cortar, roubar, descontar, cobrar, levar, saquear, negar, recusar, rescindir, esconder</i>
	Directive Transfer	<i>permitir, exigir, ordenar, sugerir, supor, recomendar, aconselhar, requerer, responsabilizar, fazer</i>

Table 1 MP verbs taking part in the Recipient/Theme passive alternation. Fonte: A autora (2023).

(6) Material transfer

Chegámos à mina, fomos dados as pás e começámos a cavar.

‘We arrived at the mine, we were given the shovels and we began to dig’.

(7) Communicative transfer

Os adolescentes de hoje em dia, já não respeitam os mais velhos. Quando são ditos que não podem frequentar as discotecas, fingem que aceitam a ordem.

‘Teenagers today do not show due respect to the eldest anymore. When they are told that they cannot go to nightclubs, they pretend to agree to it’.

(8) Negative transfer

Eu me pergunto quantos moçambicanos querem ir a Portugal e são recusados os vistos de entrada naquele país?

¹⁴ In fact, there is a good reason for Levin disregarding the category “negative transfer”, as in English it does not participate in a prototypical ditransitive construction, the preposition *from* (or *of*) being used instead of *to* (LEVIN, 1993, p. 128-129). However, such verbs as *deny* or *steal* do appear in Recipient passives (e.g., “I was stolen my computer”; “I was denied entry to the country”). This fact warns us against establishing overly straightforward parallels between the active and the passive voice. In Portuguese, the situation is different, as verbs of negative transfer partake in the same construction as that for a prototypical ‘positive’ transfer, i.e., the indirect object is coded by the same preposition *a* (e.g., “o João deu um livro *ao* Pedro”; “o João roubou um livro *ao* Pedro”). In the case of Portuguese, this phenomenon can best be analysed as a case of *perspectival switch*, a perspectival change involving the directionality of the transfer (GEERAERTS, 2006, p. 205).

¹⁵ i.e., Extension C) “Agent causes Recipient not to receive Patient” with verbs of refusal (*refuse, deny*), and extension E) “Agent enables Recipient to receive Patient” with verbs of permission (*permit, allow*) (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 222-224).

‘I ask myself: how many Mozambicans want to go to Portugal and are denied entrance visas for this specific country?’

(9) Directive transfer

Trata-se da embarcação Txori Argi, que foi ordenada a dirigir-se ao Porto de Nacala, província nortenha de Nampula, para inspeções e averiguações aprofundadas.

‘It was a boat called Txori Argi, which was ordered to head to the harbour of Nacala, northern province of Nampula, for further inspection and inquiries.’

Semantic constraints

Although the identification and grouping into semantic categories of the relevant ditransitive verbs was a crucial first step for the analysis of Recipient passives, the identification of the contexts that are unfavourable to the formation of these constructions proved just as important. Nhatuve and Mavota (2021, p. 235) already hinted at the fact that some ditransitive verbs appeared more easily in Recipient passives than others (the examples they provided are reproduced under (10)-(13) below). While 50% of high school students and 45% of university students, when asked to provide a passive counterpart for an active ditransitive sentence, opted for forming a Recipient passive with the verb *oferecer* ‘offer’ (10)-(11), *comprar* ‘buy’ (12)-(13) proved less felicitous in this construction, as only 16% of high school students and 7% of university students turned to this option.

(10) Active sentence: *O Paulo ofereceu um livro bonito à Maria.*

(11) Recipient passive counterpart: *A Marie foi oferecida um livro bonito pelo Paulo.*

(12) Active sentence: *O João comprou um livro ao Pedro.*

(13) Recipient passive counterpart: *??O Pedro foi comprado um livro pelo João.* (NHATUVE; MAVOTA, 2021, p. 235).

How could these differences possibly be accounted for? Evidently, it is important to keep in mind that Recipient passives are still regarded as ‘deviations’ so that normative pressure from EP can be considered a major extralinguistic constraint. However, the linguistic system itself also seems to apply some restrictions on the construction that are semantic in nature. As shown in Table 1, Recipient passives are formed from a rather broad set of transfer verbs, including verbs denoting metaphorical extensions of the notion of transfer. This set of

verbs nevertheless appears limited if compared with the productivity of the Recipient passive construction in English or in Southern Bantu languages such as Changana.

It was furthermore argued in the previous paragraph that the notion of *core dative verbs* put forward by Hovan and Levin (2008) needed to be refined, removing some verbs while adding others, in order to reach a classification suited to MP. This is partly explained by the fact that the context of occurrence of Recipient passives turns out to be more highly restrictive in MP than in English.

We were able to identify three semantic constraints that allow to account for the verbs which *do not* appear in the Recipient passive construction, i.e., verbs with which the formation of Recipient passives seems to be blocked. Although the situation may very well evolve over time, as the new construction gains ground and the process of constructionalisation proceeds further (TRAUGOTT; TROUSDALE, 2013), such categorical contexts are not to be included in an analysis of constructional alternation (TAGLIAMONTE, 2012, p. 10).

The first semantic constraint is that the event profiled by the verb must conceptually take three arguments with full participant status. Recipient passives can only be formed when all three participants are simultaneously activated and central to the event. Both objects of the ditransitive verb must hence be considered as core (as opposed to peripheral) arguments, considering that the construction in turn imposes a profiled status on the Recipient role (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 53).

Core participants are correlated with high degrees of involvement and (in the case of objects) affectedness. This explains why Recipient passives are infelicitous with Beneficiaries, Possessors or Goals, more peripheral and “less Object-like” (LEVIN, 1993, p. 49), as well as with verbs like *comprar* ‘buy’ or *vender* ‘sell’, in which the Recipient is largely optional and often unknown or irrelevant. As Hovan and Levin (2008, p. 159) note, “the Recipient is more likely to be known in the description of a giving event than in the description of a selling event”. The authors further identify other verbs that pattern like *sell* in which the Recipient need not be part of the scene, among which *send* and *fax*. In addition to not complying with this first semantic condition of intrinsically putting in profile all three participants, such verbs point towards two further constraints: *motion* and *manner*.

The incompatibility of verbs like *enviar* ‘send’ and Recipient passives in MP, in contrast to English where they occur naturally, underlines the fact that the event schema underlying the Recipient passive construction in MP is that of (broadly construed) caused possession, categorically excluding that of caused motion. Unlike in English, the spatial dimension of the transfer seems to hinder the formation of Recipient passives. As a result, verbs that lexicalise a component of motion, e.g., *enviar* ‘send’, *encaminhar* ‘forward’, *transferir* ‘transfer’, or *trazer* ‘bring’ and *levar* ‘take’, are highly unlikely to be found in the Recipient passive, hence a second constraint. Even though a Goal can be construed as a type of Recipient (KALTENBACH, 2020, p. 90-91; GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 56), thereby licensing the use of such passives in English, this option is not (yet) available in MP.

As a third and last restriction, the occurrence of Recipient passives appears more likely when the focus lies on the result of the action rather than on the process itself. It follows from this constraint that verbs lexicalising the manner-of-transfer (or specifying the means by which transfer is effectuated), like *alugar* ‘rent’ and *emprestar* ‘lend’, are mostly infelicitous in the Recipient passive construction – although both verbs belong to Hovan and Levin’s (2008) core dative verbs category. A very low number of Recipient passives were found with verbs like *entregar* ‘deliver’, *devolver* ‘give back’, *distribuir* ‘distribute’ and *mostrar* ‘show’, which are verbs that specify to a greater degree *how* the transfer occurs. It turns out that the more the component of manner is present in the verb root, the less likely the choice for a Recipient passive.

A possible way to account for this difference between English and Portuguese is the typological distinction between verb-framed and satellite-framed languages, developed by Talmy (1991) for motion events. As a satellite-framed language, English verbs preferably encode the manner of motion (e.g., *run*), whereas the path of motion is typically encoded in a particle (‘satellite’, e.g., *out of*). Although Talmy’s typology was initially designed for the typological description of motion verbs, it nonetheless points to the fact that English verbs display a tendency to lexicalise the semantic component of manner in their root, so that ‘manner’ in English might have undergone semantic bleaching to a greater or lesser degree. In Portuguese, by contrast, ‘manner’ still proves a salient semantic component, which is also in line with the classification of Romance languages as verb-framed languages, typically lexicalising the path of motion (e.g., *saiu correndo da sala* ‘he ran out of the room’). A more

thorough investigation would nevertheless be necessary in order to confirm the validity of this hypothesis.

Discussion

Relevance of the constructional approach

Thus far, we identified triggers and constraints on the Recipient passive construction as well as the aspects of the polysemy of the ditransitive and dative categories of ditransitive that proved relevant for the emergence of this new construction. From the analysis outlined in the previous section, it appears that Recipient passives are only felicitous with a reading of caused possession. More importantly, the semantic core of this construction is the notion of *transfer*, specifically understood as a process with “specific effects” for the Recipient (GEERAERTS, 2006, p. 197-198; SOARES DA SILVA, 1999, p. 71). In other words, Recipient passives are formed in situations of *functional transfer*, since the spatial dimension of the transfer turned out to be a blocking factor.

As a result, the third participant of ditransitive construction which may feature as the subject of the passive sentence is most appropriately characterised as a ‘Recipient’, as opposed to the maximally generic Dative participant with semantic role of Experiencer identified by Langacker (1991, p. 327), or to the more specific role of Goal. More specifically, it is best construed as a highly schematic Recipient of ‘any kind of transfer’, hence the denomination “Recipient passives”, deemed more appropriate than “Dative passives”. It is schematic in the sense that its more specific features – in terms of the effects generated by the act of transfer – of beneficiary/maleficiary, possessor, and capacity of control over the situation underwent *semantic bleaching* (BYBEE, 2007).

The semantic expansion from prototypical transfer verbs to other categories of transfer points towards a certain degree of productivity of Recipient passives in MP, which runs counter the conclusions offered by Gonçalves, Duarte and Hagemerijer (2022, p. 11). It also provides a strong argument in favour of a constructional analysis, rather than in terms of changes in the argument structure of individual verbs. It was previously shown that the verb’s

semantics still determines to a large extent its participation in the Recipient passive construction, since the more semantic components a verb lexicalises in its root (such as manner and motion), the less likely it is to appear in a Recipient passive. However, the construction cannot be characterised exclusively in terms of the verbs that appear in it, as it also displays a transfer semantics that does not derive from the verbs and can add roles not contributed by them. Goldberg (1995, p. 54) argues that the ditransitive (as in this case the Recipient passive) construction imposes a profiled status on the recipient role, even in the cases where it is not lexically profiled by the verb.

More concretely, a constructional view can help us yield a uniform account of several passive constructions that Nhatuve (2022) treats as separate, even unrelated phenomena. The author introduced a distinction between the examples reproduced under (14) and (15-16) below and assigned them different explanatory causes: while (14) is said to be the outcome of a change in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs, hence a typical Recipient passive, the examples under (15)-(16) would stem from a general preference in MP for animate, typically human subjects due to Bantu influence (NHATUVE, 2022, p. 23). From a constructional perspective, however, (15)-(16) can be analysed as semantic extensions of the prototype of transfer, as examples of negative transfer and directive transfer, respectively. The two explanations provided by Nhatuve can thus be brought into one by postulating a constructional level.

- (14) *Cada um de nós existe porque foi dado a vida por uma mãe.* (transfer)
'Each of us exists because he has been given life by a mother'.
(15) *A minha filha foi roubado celular na baixa.* (negative transfer)
'My daughter was robbed her phone downtown'.
(16) *O jovem é exigido a uma experiência de serviço de 5 anos.* (directive transfer)
'Young people are required to a five-year service experience'.
(NHATUVE, 2022, p. 23).

A constructional view thus allows to account for the less prototypical verbs of transfer that are found in Recipient passives (most prominently verbs of negative transfer such as *roubar* 'steal', *tirar* 'take from', or *negar* 'deny', and verbs of directive transfer such as *exigir* 'demand', *ordenar* 'order' or *supor* 'suppose'). Second, and most importantly, it also helps account for more marginal instances, i.e., Recipient passives occurring with non-

prototypically ditransitive verbs such as *esconder* ‘hide’, *responsabilizar* ‘give responsibility’, *investir* ‘invest’¹⁶ (see (17)-(19) below). These less prototypical examples are a good illustration of how the own transfer semantics of the construction licenses new instances with verbs even more peripheral to transfer such as *investir* ‘invest’, in which the players (*jogadores*) are reanalysed as the Recipient of the investment.

Both levels – lexical and constructional – are thus relevant, which fully complies with a constructional approach to argument structure “in which the semantics of the verb classes and the semantics of the constructions are integrated to yield the semantics of particular expressions” (GOLDBERG, 1995, p. 59-60).

(17) *Muitos militares foram escondidos filhos.*

‘A lot of soldiers didn’t know that they had children, it was hidden from them’.

(18) *Por causa da minha entrega e rápido enquadramento, fui evoluindo até ao ponto de ser responsabilizado outros cargos.*

‘Because of my commitment and quick integration, I steadily progressed on my career path to the point of being entrusted with other functions’.

(19) *Os jogadores devem serem investidos desde a sua formação.* (from Firmino, 2021, p. 183).

‘It is necessary to invest in the players when they are still in training’.

Highlighting the relevance of the constructional level has yet other consequences, among which to underscore the inadequacy of treating passive structures as derived from active ones. A claim frequently made in the literature is that Recipient passives are the consequence of an alteration in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs, leading to the possibility, in MP, of forming Double Object constructions (e.g., GONÇALVES, 1996; NHATUVE, 2022, p. 14). Most authors working on MP hence assume the emergence of Recipient passives as being contingent upon the formation of active DOCs. However, a small query in the *Corpus do Português* revealed that DOCs proved less frequent and less productive than their alleged passive counterpart. From a randomly retrieved sample of data based on five verbs of transfer (the prototypical *dar* ‘give’, along with one verb per semantic

¹⁶ The verb *esconder* may take two objects, the secondary object typically being a human participant, however, this human participant is generally introduced by the preposition *de* (*esconder algo de alguém*). The third participant, or secondary object, of the verb *investir* is generally encoded by means of another preposition, *em* ‘in’. Finally, the verb *responsabilizar* is usually a monotransitive verb, with a human participant being coded as a NP.

category, i.e., *oferecer* ‘offer’, *pedir* ‘ask’, *negar* ‘deny’ and *ordenar* ‘demand’), it turned out that the proportion of Recipient passives was systematically higher than that of DOCs: 9.4% against 2.2% for *dar*; 8.3% against 3.8% for *oferecer*; 16.7% against 1.5% for *negar*; 7.1% against 4.5% for *pedir* and 55.9% against 20.6% for *ordenar*.¹⁷

A syntactic pattern actually seems to emerge, as DOCs proved more frequent when one of the two objects was a clause¹⁸, with *pedir alguém para* ‘ask someone to’ and *ordenar alguém para* ‘order someone to’ reaching a percentage of respectively 4.5% and 20.6%. By contrast, DOCs with two full NPs turned out to be quite rare in the data (see also GONÇALVES; DUARTE; HAGEMEIJER, 2022, p. 10). At least in the written language (with the CP used as a proxy), the results obtained confirm the claim that there is a strong tendency in MP to express the Recipient participant in DOCs. By contrast, Recipient passives display increasing signs of productivity. The question of DOCs in MP and their productivity remains, however, to be investigated in more details to confirm these claims.

Alternation between Recipient and Theme passives

Now that Recipient passives in MP have been described at length and the variable context has been minutely identified, it is worth turning to the alternative with which they compete, namely Theme passives – in fact the only available passive option as far as other varieties of Portuguese are concerned.¹⁹ We reiterate the claim that we are dealing with a real case of constructional alternation here, since Recipient and Theme passives express the same propositional content, the same referential situation, but in distinct conceptual and pragmatic-

¹⁷ Only the contexts with three overt participants were retained, so as to maximise the comparability between the active and the passive voice.

¹⁸ The interpretation of *para* ‘to’ as either preposition or complementizer with directive verbs like *pedir* and *ordenar* is ambiguous in MP, remaining unclear whether the infinitive clause it introduces should be interpreted as a direct or oblique complement. Corpus data nevertheless reveal the existence of both finite and infinitive clauses headed by *para* or *para que* with directive verbs in MP (GONÇALVES, 2010), providing evidence for an increasing tendency in MP to consider *para* as a complementizer, thereby justifying the DOC interpretation of *pedir/ordenar alguém para*. In addition, although the “object of request” is syntactically introduced by a preposition (*para*), semantically it is the Theme “to be transferred”. See also Kaltenbach (2020, p. 85) on the need to distinguish between NP and clausal Themes, which pattern differently and therefore deserve a separate analysis.

¹⁹ Other alternative strategies could likewise be envisaged, such as the active 3rd-person impersonal form (e.g., *eu fui dito que* vs. *foi-me dito que* vs. *disseram-me que* ‘I was told that’). However, such an extended analysis falls out of the scope of the present study.

discursive ways, conveying differences in terms of construal and information structure. Based on the assumption endorsed by variationist and cognitive sociolinguistics that grammatical variation is hardly ever random but conditioned by both language-external (chiefly social) and language-internal (structural, conceptual, discursive, etc.) determinants, it would be of utmost interest to unravel the most relevant factors underlying the individual speaker's choice between Recipient and Theme passives.

This is a major endeavour deserving a detailed qualitative and quantitative investigation: in what follows, we will limit ourselves to the identification of the factors that seem to influence most strongly the choice of Mozambican Portuguese speakers when it comes to forming a Recipient over a Theme passive, namely animacy of the Recipient (a traditional factor from the literature on the Dative Alternation, see e.g., BRESNAN *et al.*, 2007), topicality of the Recipient (derived from the profiling imposed by the passive construction), and construal (or conceptual perspectivisation of the event). All three are intrinsically *semantic* factors (albeit of a different kind, some conceptual, other pragmatic), and as such, align with a cognitive view on language variation, one in which variation is semantically motivated.

The first factor, animacy, could be characterised as a scalar semantic category derived from our own subjective experience with the world. Animacy can be considered hierarchic since “we tend to think of the world as organised around animate beings which perceive and act upon their inanimate environment”, and human beings feature most prominently among animates (YAMAMOTO, 1999, p. 11). Human and sentient participants are thus cognitively more salient, hence the general tendency in natural languages for human referents to be the topic of a clause. Yamamoto (1999, p. 24) suggests the following Animacy Scale: speaker > hearer > human > animal > physical object > abstract entity. The syntactic coding of these entities tends to reflect this hierarchy: hence animates tend to be coded as subjects or indirect objects; and inanimates as direct objects. Animacy thus correlates with Subjecthood, and as the Recipient scores higher on the animacy hierarchy than the Theme, it makes it a suitable candidate for Subjecthood. In the data under analysis, however, a few Recipient passives were found with inanimate subjects (20) – to be distinguished from cases of metonymic animacy (21) –, hinting at the fact that animacy is not the whole story.

- (20) *Acreditamos que este assunto deve **ser dado** maior importância logo nos primeiros anos.* (inanimate Recipient subject)
‘We believe that more importance should be dedicated to this matter in the first years’.
- (21) *A questão é que essas grandes companhias estrangeiras vêm **sendo atribuídas** recursos pertencentes a esses Países [...] mas não providenciam emprego para as pessoas naquela área.* (metonymically animate Recipient subject)
‘The thing is that resources belonging to these countries are being allocated to big foreign companies, [...] but these fail to provide jobs to the local people’.

Topicality is another particularly relevant factor involved: if the Recipient is salient in pragmatic terms, as discourse topic, it will more easily appear in subject position. This factor ties in with a general tendency for given information to be promoted to subject status as well as with the use of the passive as a discourse-structuring device that involves making the most affected participant match given information and the agent, if present, new information (PETRÉ, forthcoming, p. 8). As both objects are equally available for subject status in MP, the more topical will be selected (see (22) with salient first-person Recipient, (23) with topical Recipient and (24) with topical Theme). Other more purely structural factors are also likely to play a part, mainly the length of the Recipient and Theme constituents, by virtue of the principle of end weight (SZMRECSANYI *et al.*, 2016, p. 122) (see Theme passive in (25) motivated by a topical Theme standing in contrast with an inanimate, indefinite and heavy Recipient).

- (22) *Tal como pobreza, o conceito riqueza é complexo. Importante é **sermos ditos** a definição usada para o caso em questão. **Sermos ditos** os números.*
‘Just like poverty, the concept of wealth is a complex one. It is important that we are told the definition used for the case in point. Told the numbers’.
- (23) *No parlamento moçambicano, macuas raramente vão ao podium expor uma ideia, eles têm medo de serem gozados, riscados e desqualificados por causa do sotaque característico. Macuas **são confiados** o trabalho de escrever, secretariar, compilar e raramente aparecem como ‘porta-vozes’.*
‘In the Mozambican parliament, Macuas rarely go on the stand to expose their ideas, they are scared of being laughed at, and disqualified because of their distinctive accent. Macuas are generally entrusted with the administrative work of writing and compiling, and rarely appear as spokespersons’.

- (24) *É isto que deve ser dito à sociedade e não se deve continuar a mentir ou omitir aquilo que foi aprovado.*
‘This is what must be said to the community and one should stop with lying or omitting what has been approved’.
- (25) *O seu nome foi atribuído a uma das ruas na capital moçambicana, após aprovação duma proposta.*
‘His name was attributed to one of the main streets of the Mozambican capital city, on approval of a proposal’.

Last but not least, subject choice can also be motivated, beyond purely pragmatic and discursive considerations, by the own subjective point of view of the speaker, to highlight a participant that is more central to the situation. The choice of *trajector* – the participant who is assigned primary focal prominence (LANGACKER, 1991, p. 293) – also has consequences on the conceptualisation of the event itself, by virtue of image schemas (HAMPE, 2005) associated with each participant. These considerations build on the notion of *construal*, a key concept in Cognitive Grammar, according to which two grammatical possibilities for expressing one and the same situation are two different ways of describing, hence ‘construing’ that situation.

The construal prompted by the Recipient passive is to apprehend the scene from the viewpoint of the Recipient, onto whom a higher degree of prominence is conferred, which in turn affects the *dynamicity* of the scene. According to Langacker (1991, p. 389-393), a scene can be conceived as more or less energetic, by virtue of the “billiard-ball” cognitive model, which is a fundamental way in which we view the world (LANGACKER, 2008, p. 103). As a transfer event describes an *action* (as opposed to a state), being therefore inherently dynamic, it entails *energy* to a greater or lesser extent. This energy follows a force-dynamics pattern: it is transmitted from an Agent, energy source, who passes it onto both of the objects, with the Theme entering into the dominion of the Recipient. This energy, however, can be either profiled or put in the background, hence motivating more or less energetic conceptualisations, and this can be shown to play a part in the alternation between Theme passives (26) and Recipient passives (27). The former can be considered as more dynamic as we mentally track the path followed by the Theme – the electric current in (26) – thereby accompanying the unfolding of the action towards its final outcome; while the latter prompt a more static reading, since we access the action through the viewpoint of the Recipient – ‘Mozambique’ in (27) –, the affectedness of whom works as the starting point for interpretation.

Langacker (1991, p. 360) furthermore analyses the English Dative Alternation in terms of which aspect of the transfer is profiled: the DOC construction focalises the *possessive relationship* between a Recipient and a Theme, whereas the *to*-construction stresses a *path scenario* (i.e., the trajectory followed by the object). Both constructions are thus associated with different image schemas: the *container* for the DOC and the *source-path-goal* for the prepositional *to*-construction. This distinction also holds in the passive; in fact, it proves more relevant since the passive makes alternate perspectives even clearer, with both objects competing for trajector status. The participants can also be envisaged in terms of their association with these two image schemas, which furthermore imply different degrees of energy. The Recipient can thus be conceived of as a container, with the Theme landing into its dominion (LANGACKER, 1991, p. 357).

In this light, the Recipient passive construction gives prominence to the possession relationship between the Recipient and the Theme, hence to the resulting state of the transfer, in contrast to the Theme passive construction where the attention is directed on the transfer itself. The latter option could then be considered as more energetic, since the focus lies on the process of transfer – the electricity to be provided to Mozambique in (26), whereas the former option could be regarded as less dynamic, emphasising the outcome of the transfer – the rather adverse consequences for Mozambique of being provided electricity under unfavourable conditions in (27).

(26) *A hidroeléctrica fornece energia a Moçambique, Zimbabwe e África do Sul, este último por onde obrigatoriamente a corrente tem de passar para ser transformada e, em seguida, ser fornecida a Moçambique.*

‘The hydroelectric station provides energy to Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa, the latter through which the current must necessarily pass in order to be transformed and then, be supplied to Mozambique’.

(27) *De outro modo, pode-se dizer [que Moçambique é fornecido a sua própria corrente eléctrica por um país vizinho]. Era suposto [fornecermos e não sermos fornecidos], porque afinal de contas é nossa.*

‘In other words, it can be said that Mozambique is provided its very own electrical power by a neighbouring country. We were supposed to provide and not be provided, because after all it [the electricity] is ours’.

A major challenge is to look for linguistic markers that could provide support for the view that Recipient and Theme passive stand in contrast as to the degree of energy involved.

As a first element, a main clause may be associated with an energetic conceptualisation, since it generally represents the nucleus of the action, thereby funnelling most of its energy and prompting sequential scanning (LANGACKER, 2008, p. 111). In the example of energetic construal illustrated by the Theme passive under (26), although the verb *ser fornecida* features in a subordinate clause, its Theme-subject, *a corrente*, appears in the main clause, thus legitimising a main-clause reading. Moreover, the *para*-clause of purpose (*para* ‘in order to’), underscores that the process is moving towards some kind of objective. Finally, the presence of dynamic adverbs such as *em seguida* ‘then’ helps put emphasis on the process.

By contrast, linguistic markers pointing towards an explicit outcome, such as the reformulation (*de outro modo* ‘in other words’) and the presentation clause (*pode-se dizer* ‘it can be said’) in (27), contribute to making the energy recede into the background and conceptualising the event of ‘being provided’ as a self-contained whole. The two Recipient passives in (27) furthermore occur in a subordinate clause and as an infinitive respectively, which reinforces the self-contained reading. In particular, the use of the infinitive, by prompting summary scanning, imposes a holistic, hence less energetic, construal (LANGACKER, 2008, p. 112).

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, we have sought to explore the questions on Recipient passives that were left open in the literature on Mozambican Portuguese, especially regarding their characteristics, distribution, status, and the conditions of their emergence. Although language contact with Southern Bantu languages, which display similar passive structures, has most certainly been foundational in the emergence of Recipient passives, it was also shown that the complex conceptual categories involved in the formation of this construction intrinsically bear the possibility of perspectivising the event in different ways that can be instantiated in different syntactic patterns. More specifically, the possibility of focalising either the possessive relationship between the Recipient and the Theme or the path followed by the Theme, as well as the hybrid conceptual nature of the indirect object, further motivated the development of Recipient passives in MP.

We then moved on to circumscribe as precisely as possible the contexts in which Recipient passives occur and start alternating with Theme passives in MP, as well as the contexts influencing the choice of one over the other variant. We saw that these contexts were quite specific if compared with their much less restrained counterpart in English and Bantu languages and that they shared a consistent set of semantic features.

Regarding the status of Recipient passives, we demonstrated that they were a productive construction in MP, occurring with a wide range of transfer verbs, and a stable phenomenon, pervasive in the written language as well as in the speech of Mozambican speakers with higher education. Second, we claimed that postulating a constructional level generalising over various dimensions of transfer provided a more unifying account of the variation than considering it as a change in the argument structure of individual verbs. Moreover, by showing that Recipient passives proved more stable and systematic than DOCs in our corpus, we provided arguments in favour of a certain independence of passive vis-à-vis active constructions. Finally, we showed that Recipient passives were by no means a case of wild, randomly occurring variation, but proved very systematic in terms of language-internal triggers and constraints. In addition, cognitive-semantic and pragmatic-discursive factors such as animacy, construal and topicality feature prominently in the choice between the Recipient and Theme passive variants.

The exploration of Recipient passives in MP, however, does not end with this analysis. Quite on the contrary, we have only scratched the surface of a vast field of study and various questions remain to be explored in more details, such as the status of DOCs in MP, the role of language contact in terms of its direct and more diffuse effects, and how the grammar of Portuguese could in itself also have played a part in this variation through the influence of analogical mechanisms. Furthermore, carrying out multivariate statistical analyses and experimental studies could lend further empirical support to the findings presented in this paper.

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Explorando a produtividade e sistematicidade das passivas dativas no português moçambicano

Resumo: O presente estudo tem como objetivo explorar e fornecer uma descrição pormenorizada de uma construção conhecida como “passivas dativas” (ou passivas com sujeito Recipiente), na variedade moçambicana do português, no âmbito da Gramática Cognitiva (LANGACKER, 1991, 2008) e da Gramática de Construções (GOLDBERG, 1995, 2006). Será dada atenção especial às categorias semânticas complexas das construções passivas e das construções ditransitivas para se poder identificar os fatores conceptuais que podem determinar a emergência das passivas dativas. Com base num estudo de corpus baseado no *Corpus do Português* (DAVIES, 2016), procura-se mostrar, por um lado, que esta construção se realiza com um conjunto diversificado de verbos de transferência, indiciando assim um grau crescente e elevado de produtividade, e, por outro lado, que esta construção exclusiva do português moçambicano não é aleatória mas sistemática, ocorrendo em contextos semânticos bem definidos. Além disso, analisar esta variação numa perspetiva construcional proporciona um argumento sólido contra uma abordagem das passivas dativas como sendo derivadas de construções de duplo objeto, como é frequentemente descrito na literatura (GONÇALVES, 1990, 1996, 2010). A nível mais geral, este estudo permite também contribuir para o reconhecimento do crescente pluricentrismo da língua portuguesa (SOARES DA SILVA, 2022).

Palavras-chave: Passivas dativas; Português moçambicano; Construções ditransitivas; Pluricentrismo. Perspetivização conceptual.

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