

Describing the internal syntax of *demais* constructions in Portuguese¹

Descrevendo a sintaxe interna das construções com demais em português

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ABSTRACT: In Portuguese, the typical locus of adjective phrase degree modifiers is before the adjective: this has been traditionally represented by a degree phrase having a head that contains a degree modifier and c-commands an adjective phrase (Martinho, 2007). Such a generalization is well anchored in theory (Abney, 1987; Corver, 1997) and works well for describing the internal syntax of constructions with modifiers such as *muito* 'very', *bastante* 'especially/enough' or *demasiado* 'too'. However, it is insufficient to account for the behavior of *demais* 'too', a degree word that is invariably placed after the adjective it modifies. In this study, we aim to tackle this problem by investigating the motivation behind the apparently exceptional locus of *demais*. Furthermore, we advance a novel structure that explains the internal structure of such a pattern. We propose that the main factor causing *demais* to occur after adjectives is that it is lexically specified to do so. The explanation for this possibly lies in its etymology: it derives from Latin *valde magis* 'especially'. The evolution of that expression into *de magis* in Vulgar Latin (Adams, 2007) indicates that its initial *de* element was reanalyzed as a preposition. By aligning this fact to the notion that in Portuguese prepositional modifiers typically follow the adjectives they modify, we establish that there is a residual prepositional element in *demais* that causes its exceptional behavior. Based on this, we argue that for *demais* to modify an adjective, three steps are required: i) the element *-mais* is generated as the specifier of the adjective phrase; ii) the prepositional-like element *de-* is generated in the head of a degree phrase, which c-commands the adjective phrase; iii) the adjective moves from the head of the adjective phrase to the specifier of the degree phrase, thus reaching a position before *demais*. While this involves head-to-specifier movement, which is marked in many frameworks, there are certain conditions under which it can occur (Vicente, 2007), and we conclude that this is one of them. Such a structure has sufficient explanatory power to account for the anomalous pattern of *demais* following the adjective it modifies.

KEYWORDS: Syntactic theory; Adjective phrase; Degree modifiers.

RESUMO: Em português, o locus típico dos modificadores de grau do sintagma adjetival é antes do adjetivo: isto tem sido tradicionalmente representado por um sintagma grau com um núcleo

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que contém um modificador de grau e c-comanda um sintagma adjetival (Martinho, 2007). Tal generalização está bem fundamentada na teoria (Abney, 1987; Corver, 1997) e funciona bem para descrever a sintaxe interna de construções com modificadores como "muito", "bastante" ou "demasiado". No entanto, ela é insuficiente para explicar o comportamento de "demais", um modificador de grau que é invariavelmente gerado após o adjetivo que modifica. Neste estudo, pretendemos abordar esse problema investigando a motivação por trás da localização aparentemente excecional de "demais". Além disso, apresentamos uma nova estrutura que explica a estrutura interna desse padrão. Propomos que o principal factor que faz com que "demais" ocorra após adjetivos é que está lexicalmente especificado para tal. A explicação para isso pode estar na sua etimologia: deriva do latim *valde magis* 'especialmente'. A evolução dessa expressão para "de magis" no latim vulgar (Adams, 2007) indica que o seu elemento inicial de- foi reanalisado como uma preposição. Ao alinhar este facto com a noção de que, em português, os modificadores preposicionais seguem normalmente os adjetivos que modificam, estabelecemos que existe um elemento preposicional residual em *demais* que causa o seu comportamento excecional. Com base nisto, argumentamos que, para que *demais* modifique um adjetivo, são necessários três passos: i) o elemento -mais é gerado no especificador do sintagma adjetival; ii) o elemento preposicional de- é gerado como núcleo de um sintagma de grau, que c-comanda o sintagma adjetival; iii) o adjetivo move-se do núcleo do sintagma adjetival para o especificador do sintagma de grau, alcançando assim uma posição anterior a "demais". Embora isso envolva um movimento de núcleo para especificador, que é marcado em muitas abordagens, há certas condições sob as quais ele pode ocorrer (Vicente, 2007), e concluímos que esta é uma delas. Tal estrutura tem poder explicativo suficiente para justificar o padrão anómalo de "demais" seguir o adjetivo que modifica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Teoria sintática; Sintagma adjetival; Modificadores de grau.

1. Introduction

In both Brazilian and European Portuguese, degree modifiers of Adjective Phrases (henceforth APs) typically come before the adjective, as in (1):

- (1) *Aquele carro é muito caro*
That car is very expensive
'That car is very expensive'

This applies to other degree modifiers, such as *super* 'super', *bastante* 'especially/enough' and *demasiado* 'too'². Crucially, however, this situation changes with the degree modifier *demais* 'too (much/many)', which invariably needs to be placed after

² For the purposes of this paper, we argue that *demasiado* 'too' display a more cristalized behaviour in comparison to *demais*, due to it undergoing a morphological derivation process that does not affect *demais* (cf. Vicente 2007); thus the different distribution. Relevantly, in Brazilian Portuguese the use of *demasiado* is largely restricted to learned/academic register, with *demais* being the primary degree modifier for the meaning 'too (much/many)'.

the AP it modifies, as in (2). When it is placed before the adjective, following the seemingly canonical order for degree modifiers, the sentence is ungrammatical as in (3):

(2) Aquele carro é caro **demais**
That car is expensive too
'That car is too expensive'

(3) *Aquele carro é **demais** caro
That car is too expensive

We can empirically observe this pattern in multiple Portuguese corpora, encompassing the two best-documented varieties of the language: European and Brazilian Portuguese. In the CETEMPúblico Corpus (www.linguateca.pt/CETEMPUBLICO) of European Portuguese, there are 487 occurrences of *demais* following the adjective it modifies. There are 228 occurrences of *demais* preceding APs, and in all of them *demais* is preceded by the preposition *por*. In such cases, we assume that the behavior of *demais* is modified by the preposition, something we will touch upon in the conclusion. In CORDIAL-SIN (Martins, 2022), an oral corpus of dialectal European Portuguese, all of the 12 occurrences of *demais* as an adjective modifier had it occurring after the AP. Finally, in the C-Oral-Brasil (Raso & Mello, 2012), which contains spoken Brazilian Portuguese data, we have found 72 occurrences in which *demais* modified an adjective, invariably coming after it. Importantly, these corpora include interrogative, topicalized and negative sentences. Still, they show that, even under the special circumstances above, in both Brazilian and European Portuguese, *demais* is placed after the adjective it modifies.

In this paper, we aim on the one hand to describe how degree modifiers fit into the internal syntax of APs in Portuguese and on the other hand to explain why *demais* displays an exceptional behavior in comparison to other words from the same class. Our research questions are:

- How are APs with *demais* constructed in Portuguese, and how does this fit into previous models describing the internal syntax of APs?

- Why is *demais* invariably placed after the AP it modifies, and how can a model account for that?

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, we review the literature on the internal syntax of Adjective Phrases, looking at works focusing not only on Portuguese but also on Dutch and English. In section 3, we assess different proposals for representing *demais* structures and select two as the best candidates relying both on language-specific and universal constraints. In section 4, we present our final remarks, reiterate the main argumentation line and propose topics for future research endeavors in this area.

2. Theoretical background and methodology

In order to describe the internal syntax of Portuguese APs, we will follow a similar framework to Corver's (1997) analysis of Dutch APs. In this sense, its crucial contribution to this study is the functional DegP hypothesis. Following Abney's (1987) DP hypothesis, Corver postulates that the Dutch adjectival projection acts as the complement of a functional phrase DegP, which is headed by a degree modifier. This goes against Jackendoff's (1977) lexical head hypothesis, *i.e.* that degree words would project a Degree Phrase located in the specifier of AP.

This choice is first justified by structural parallelism: if in both English and Dutch noun phrases are contained within a functional projection headed by a Determiner, it is coherent to postulate an analogous structure for APs. Similar instances of parallelism have been postulated for other adjective-related constructions, *e.g.* by Talić (2015). By applying this line of thought to Portuguese, we find that NPs are also treated as the complements of functional Determiners (Brito, 1993): there is room, therefore, for postulating a parallel structure in the adjectival domain.

This possibility is thoroughly analyzed by Martinho (2007), who also rejects the lexical head hypothesis for Portuguese. Building on Corver (1997), he highlights that Portuguese degree modifiers can co-occur to the left of the adjective, such as in (4), in which two degree modifiers (*muito* 'very', and *mais* 'more') occur simultaneously to the left of *caro* 'expensive'. The same happens with *much* and *more* in the English translation:

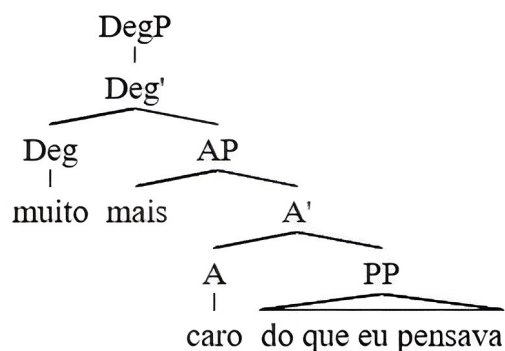
- (4) Aquele carro é **muito mais** caro do que eu pensava
 That car is much more expensive than what I thought
 'That car is much more expensive than I thought'

Such a co-occurrence is difficult to justify by adopting a lexical head hypothesis: both degree modifiers would have to occupy the same position (SpecAP), thereby crashing the syntactic computation (Martinho, 2007). If we adopt a functional DegP hypothesis, this problem is solved: one degree word would occupy the head of the DegP, and the other would be generated in SpecAP. This is exemplified by Corver's (1997) example (5), replicated here as (5) for convenience:

- (5) Fred was [DEGP so [AP *utterly* [A' confused]]] that he fell off the podium]

Our example in (4) and similar constructions can, therefore, be analogously analyzed so that we get the following internal structure:

FIGURE 1 - Internal structure of adjectival constructions with two degree modifiers³



(Source: created by the author)

Importantly, the lexical head hypothesis is not rejected if we adopt the idea of inner and outer specifiers (as described in Chomsky, 1995; 2001)⁴. In such a framework, we can assume that AP has multiple specifiers (in this case, two), and that each degree modifier

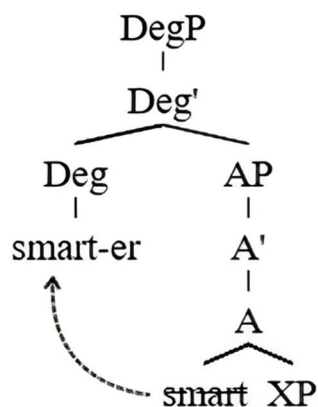
³ The internal syntax of Portuguese comparative constructions is not analyzed in this article. One anonymous reviewer has pointed out that the comparative clause can be the complement of the degree head, as in Fábregas (2020); we have opted to stick to the structures shown in Corver (1997: 9) and Martinho (2007).

⁴ We thank an anonymous reviewer for this additional point.

would occupy one specifier position. However, even if this theoretical problem is thus solved, there are other issues with this hypothesis that, as we argue, justify the postulation of a Degree Phrase instead.

Another argument in favor of the functional DegP hypothesis is the head-to-head movement observed in synthetic comparatives (Corver, 1997). In both English and Dutch, comparatives can be formed with the addition of the *-er* degree suffix to the modified adjective. In a lexical head hypothesis, if this suffix is generated in SpecAP (that is, to the left of the adjective), it cannot move to the right of the adjective nor can the adjective move leftwards to its own specifier: both options involve movement to a non-c-commanding position, which violates Travis' (1984) Head Movement Constraint. In contrast, in the functional DegP hypothesis the suffix would be generated as the head of DegP; the movement of the adjective from the head of AP to SpecDegP would be allowed, as the latter position c-commands the former (Corver, 1997):

FIGURE 2 - General internal structure of comparative adjectives formed with the suffix *-er*

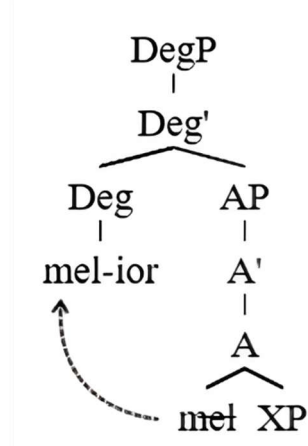


(Source: created by the author based on Corver, 1997)

In applying the same rationale to Portuguese, Martinho (2007) highlights that the vast majority of Portuguese comparatives are formed with the structure *mais* 'more' + adjective (e.g. *mais esperto* 'smarter', with no head-to-head movement needed) as illustrated in Figure 1 with *mais caro* 'more expensive'. At the same time, at least four comparatives are formed with the *-or* morpheme (i.e. *melhor* 'better', *menor* 'smaller', *maior* 'bigger' and *pior* 'worse'), which shares its etymology with Germanic *-er* (both coming ultimately from Proto-Indo-European **-yōs*). We can also add that the Portuguese *-or* form derives from the much more productive *-ior*, the Latin comparative suffix. Similar

to *-er*, in Latin *-ior* is realized to the right of the adjective; we can represent this derivation (which lives on etymologically in Portuguese *melhor*, *menor*, *maior* and *pior*) in Figure 3 with the adjective *melior* 'better', formed through the addition of *-ior* to the root *mel-*:

FIGURE 3 - General internal structure of comparative adjectives formed with the suffix *-ior*



(Source: created by the author based on Martinho, 2007)

Martinho's (2007) final argument, for the purposes of this study, involves adapting Corver's (1997) discussion of Dutch extraction effects to Portuguese. Martinho shows that the extraction of a degree word out of an AP results in ungrammaticality:

- (6) a. A minha pele está [tão sensível]!
 The my skin is so sensitive
 'My skin is so sensitive!'
 b. *Tão_i a minha pele está [t_i sensível]!
 c. [Tão sensível]_i a minha pele está [t_i]!

At the same time, the extraction of the degree word together with the adjective yields a perfectly grammatical sentence, as in (6c). Martinho (2007) only applies this to so-called partial adjectival exclamative sentences, but we can also say the same of topicalization of the degree word together with the adjective in negative polarity sentences:

- (7) a. Ele não é [tão alto]
 He not is so tall
 'My skin is so sensitive!'
 b. *Tão_i ele não é [t_i alto]
 c. [Tão alto]_i ele não é [t_i]

Such an effect could not be explained with the lexical head hypothesis: if the degree word *tão* 'so' was indeed generated in SpecAP, movement from this position to SpecCP would be possible. This is not, however, what we observe in (6b) and (7b); the ungrammaticality goes against the theory's prediction. By adopting Corver's (1997) functional head hypothesis, the problem is solved: if *tão* is generated as the head of DegP, the ungrammaticality of (6b) and (7b) is justified. The movement of a head to SpecCP violates the preservation of the structure. At the same time, moving the whole DegP (with the AP as its complement) to SpecCP as in (6c) and (7c) renders a grammatical sentence, showing that DegP is a constituent (Martinho, 2007).

3. Data analysis and results

Martinho's (2007) analysis is convincing and solidly anchored on empirical data: it demonstrates that the functional head model is the one that best explains the internal syntax of APs in Portuguese. Nevertheless, the *demais* problem mentioned in Section 1 persists. *Demais* 'too (much/many)' is a degree word that follows the adjective in Portuguese, contrary to other degree words - these always come before AP, like in English and Dutch. In Martinho's model, the only possibility would be for it to be placed in Deg^o; Martinho does not discuss whether this would motivate movement of the adjective, as his focus is solely directed to non-exceptional degree words such as *muito* 'very', *bastante* 'especially; enough' and *demasiado* 'too'.

In order to understand the internal syntax of *demais* constructions, the first issue to address concerns it following the AP it modifies. One way to explain this is through the etymology of *demais*. It comes from the Latin construction *valde magis* 'especially, lit. very more' (Gaffiot, 1934): there is evidence that the initial *val* was quickly lost, with the construction *de+magis* still being attested in Latin, often as a single word (Adams, 2007).

In the evolution of Vulgar Latin into Portuguese, the intervocalic /g/ in *magis* was subject to lenition and eventually deletion, with a subsequent diphthongization of /ai → aj/. The resulting expression *demais* was also treated as a single word in Portuguese; the same goes for its cognates in other Ibero-Romance varieties.

Based on this etymology, we argue that for a significant period in the history of Latin (and, possibly, of Old Galician-Portuguese) *demagis/demais* was treated as a Prepositional Phrase due to its initial element *de* being homophonous and homograph with the preposition *de* 'of' in both languages. Furthermore, in contemporary Portuguese the expression *de mais* 'of more', a *de facto* Prepositional Phrase, also exists and is frequently confounded with *demais* in writing by many Portuguese natives. It is relevant to highlight that this mixing up of two similar expressions is mostly motivated by orthographical, and not semantic reasons, as illustrated by the examples in (8). Nevertheless, the fact that both expressions begin with 'de' - in *demais*, a residual prepositional element and in *de mais* a *de facto* preposition - is an essential component of this confusion.

- (8) a. O carro é caro **demais**
The car is expensive too
'The car is too expensive'
- b. O carro precisa **de mais** gasolina
The car needs of more gas
'The car needs more gas'

In this sense, we propose that the word *demais*, while still remaining a degree word, contains a residual prepositional element that leads it to having some syntactic properties that are typical of PPs. Indeed, in Portuguese PPs generally follow both the adjectives and nouns they modify, regardless of being complements or modifiers - as illustrated in (9):

- (9) a. O carro é caro [de verdade]
The car is expensive of truth
'The car is truly expensive' (Modifier)

- b. Ela está orgulhosa [da Maria]
 She is proud of Maria
 'She is proud of Mary' (Complement)
- c. O Marco é um vendedor [de fruta]
 The Marco is a seller of fruit
 'Marco is a fruit seller' (Complement)

Etymologically, then, there appears to be sufficient motivation for *demais* following APs. Importantly, we do not argue that *demais* is a full fledged PP. Indeed, in Portuguese PPs can typically be topicalized and move across constituents. In a structure such as [*PP Da Maria*]_{*t_i*}, *ele está orgulhoso* [_{*t_i*}], lit. 'of Mary, he is proud', the PP *da Maria* 'of Mary' moves from a lower position (after the adjective *orgulhoso* 'proud') to a higher one, preceding both the subject and its predicate⁵. However, having an analogous structure with *demais* is not possible: while *ele está orgulhoso [demais]* 'he is too proud' is completely grammatical, **[demais]_{*t_i*} ele está orgulhoso [_{*t_i*}]*, with *demais* moving analogously to the PP in the previous example, is not.

Therefore, *demais* is still a Degree modifier. Nevertheless, in order to explain its exceptional behaviour when compared to other Degree modifiers, we propose the hypothesis that its etymology can be relevant in motivating it. A similar solution is adopted by Corver (1997) to explain the anomalous behaviour of Dutch *genoeg* 'enough', which, contrary to other Dutch quantifiers, comes after the adjectives it modifies. In Corver's examples (74) and (75), adapted here as (10a-b), it is proposed that the adjective *bang* 'afraid' moves from A° to a position before Q°, possibly SpecQP:

- (10) a. *Jan is [genoeg bang daarvoor]
 Jan is enough afraid there-of
- b. Jan is [QP bang_{*i*} + genoeg [AP *t_i* daarvoor]]
 Jan is afraid enough there-of
 'John is afraid enough of it'

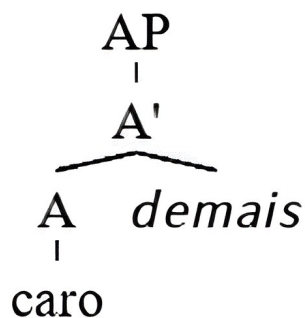
⁵ We thank an anonymous reviewer for this example.

When it comes to the motivation for this movement, Corver proposes that this is an “idiosyncratic property of *genoeg* [...] encoded in its lexical entry” (Corver, 1997; 332). Based on this, we assume that the exceptional behaviour of *genoeg* in relation to other quantifiers is analogous to that of *demais* when compared to other degree modifiers. The data in this paper, combined with the theoretical insights in Martinho (2007) and Corver (1997, 2013), attempt to demonstrate that, when *demais* modifies an adjective, the adjective has to move to a higher position. It is certainly questionable whether diachronic, etymological factors can serve as motivators for syntactic movement. Thus, we opt to concur with Corver (1997) in saying that the lexical entry of *demais* is, contrary to that of other degree modifiers, encoded with an idiosyncratic property that requires adjective movement.

There still remains the problem of describing the internal syntax of these constructions: in the remaining of this article, we will propose two different analyses of how *demais* works syntactically, based on the etymological/lexical factors discussed above and on Corver’s (1997) and Martinho’s (2007) proposals regarding the AP structure.

Our first proposal involves *demais* being generated in the complement position of the Adjective Phrase, with a structure that is parallel to that of prepositional complements of nouns and adjectives:

FIGURE 4 - Preliminary proposal for representing the internal structure of *demais* constructions



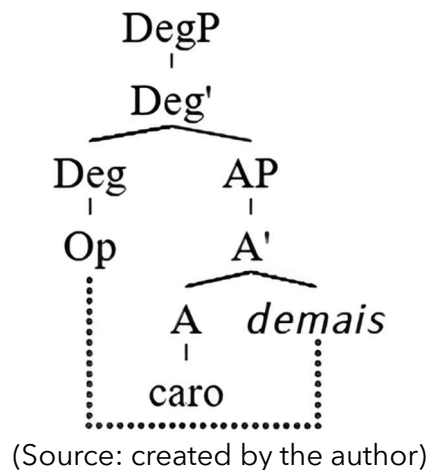
(Source: created by the author)

One extra step is necessary in this analysis: it needs to account for the fact that *demais* constructions cannot co-occur with other degree modifiers:

- (11) a. O carro é caro **demais**
 The car is expensive too
 'The car is too expensive'
- b. *O carro é **muito/bastante/demasiado** caro **demais**
 The car is very/especially/too expensive too

For this reason, the construction that we propose in Figure 5 involves a silent operator (Op, not phonologically realized) being generated together with *demais* and occupying the position Deg°. With this operator, the insertion of other degree modifiers into Deg° is blocked, and the sentence remains grammatical:

FIGURE 5 - Intermediate proposal for representing the internal structure of *demais* constructions



There is one last argument that can be used to justify this internal structure. Firstly, if the adjective remains *in situ* and is modified by a *demais* element generated as its complement, there is a systematic parallelism with other related structures, such as that of adjective complements and noun complements. In the case of the former, adjectives that can take a prepositional complement (e.g. *consciente* 'aware', *cansado* 'tired', *orgulhoso* 'proud') also remain *in situ* and c-command their complements. In Figure 6, the PP *do perigo* 'of the danger' is the complement of *consciente*, with the AP displaying the structure described above. As for noun complements, they have an analogous structure which crucially differs from noun modifiers as shown in Figure 7: in the structure *vendedor de fruta* 'fruit seller' the PP occupies the complement position, whereas in *vendedor de bigode* 'a seller with a moustache' the PP occupies an adjunct position. Indeed, both noun

complements and noun modifiers can co-occur, as in *vendedor de fruta de bigode* 'a fruit seller with a moustache'.

FIGURE 6 - Prototypical syntactic structure of prepositional complements of adjectives in Portuguese

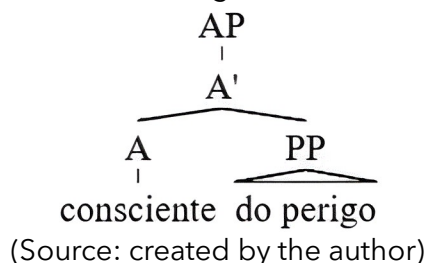
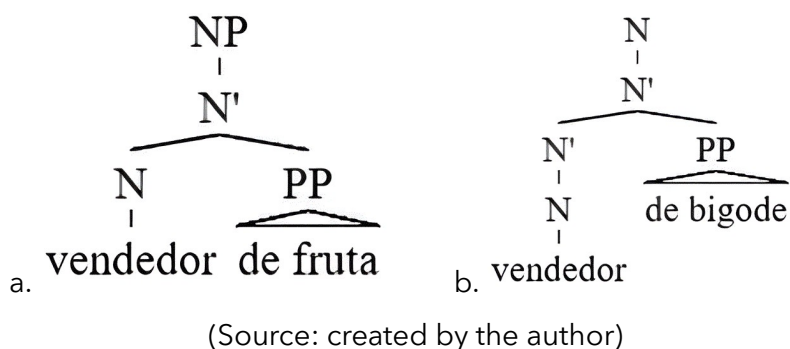


FIGURE 7 - Prototypical syntactic modifiers (a) and adjuncts (b) of nouns in Portuguese



So far, the structure in Figure 5 seems adequate for both etymological and syntactic reasons: internal parallelism is accounted for and there is no empty Deg° where a degree word can be added - something which renders such a sentence ungrammatical in Portuguese. Nevertheless, there is one issue that it does not solve. *Demais* constructions can not only be used with singleton adjectives (as in Figure 4), but also with adjectives that have complements:

- (12) a. O José está orgulhoso demais da Maria
 The José is proud too of.the Maria
 'José is really/too proud of Maria'
- b. A Joana está cansada demais das aulas
 The Joana is tired too of.the classes
 'Joana is too tired from classes'

- c. ?O José está orgulhoso da Maria demais
 The José is proud of.the Maria too
 'José is really/too proud of Maria'
- d. *O José está demais orgulhoso da Maria
 The José is too proud of.the Maria

This creates a problem for the internal structure in Figure 5: if *demais* already occupies the complement position, there would be no room for more (prepositional) complements to be added to the structure. In other words, sentences (12a), (12b) and (12c) would be ungrammatical - which they are not. An alternative solution that leaves the complement position free would be to think of *demais* as the degree modifier of a PP that is optionally phonologically realized. In examples (13a-b), we see that this solution seems to yield grammatical results. This would, in principle, explain why *demais* follows adjectives. A similar hypothesis is proposed by Brito & Matos (2003) to explain the behavior of modifier *bastante* 'fairly/enough'. However, when we analyze minimally different examples, *i.e.* when we change the degree modifier as in (13c), the only way to avoid ungrammaticality is by having the degree modifier c-commanding the adjective⁶. Furthermore, we can see in example (13d) that moving the proposed structure with the DegP and the PP results in an ungrammatical structure. Additionally, this hypothesis assumes that *demais* does not directly modify adjectives, which creates an atypical syntactic asymmetry between it and semantically/etymologically related *demasiado* 'too'.

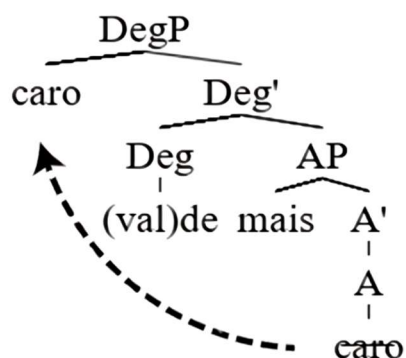
- (13) a. O carro é caro [DegP demais [PP para mim]]
 The car is expensive too for me
 'The car is too expensive for me'
- b. O carro é caro [DegP demais [PP Ø]]
 The car is expensive too
 'The car is too expensive'
- c. *O carro é caro [DegP muito/bastante/super [PP para mim]]
 The car is expensive very/fairly/super for me

⁶ As shown, *e.g.*, in Figure 1 or in a structure such as *o carro é [DegP muito [AP caro]] para mim* 'the car is very expensive'.

d. *O carro é [DegP demais [PP para mim]] caro
 'The car is too for me expensive'

For this reason, while still adopting Corver's (1997) functional DegP framework and considering that *demais* is a direct degree modifier of adjectives, we propose the following structure to account for the patterns in (12) and (13c-d):

FIGURE 8 - Final proposal for representing the internal structure of *demais* constructions



(Source: created by the author)

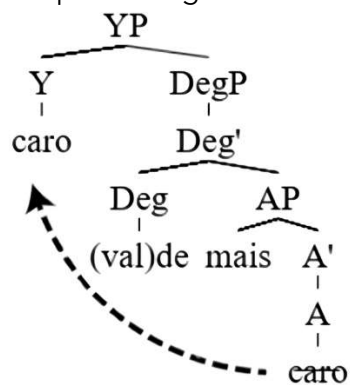
In this new structure, *demais* is generated in two steps, reflecting the pattern found in its Latin etymology: i) *-mais* occurs as the specifier of AP, in an analogous way to constructions with two degree words as in Figure 1; ii) *de-*, which for historical and etymological reasons discussed above has properties both of a degree word (cf. *valde*, 'much') and of a preposition (*de*, 'of'), is generated in the Deg° position. So far, this follows the typical structure of Portuguese adjectives modified by two degree words (Martinho, 2007). Nevertheless, this is insufficient, as the surface result would be **demais caro*. One last step is necessary, namely the movement of the adjective from A° to the specifier of DegP. One hypothesis to explain this movement is that it is mostly etymologically motivated, due to *demais* having some syntactic properties of PPs – specifically, that of following the adjective they modify. The adjective, then, does not remain *in situ*, but moves to the specifier of DegP to match the surface form *Adjective + demais*. An alternative solution is to assume that the movement of the modified adjective is a requirement that is encoded in the lexical entry of *demais*. It would entail a kind of topicalization of the adjective, which is moved to a higher position, something which does not happen with other, non-exceptional degree modifiers.

Compared to our first proposal Figure 5, the one in Figure 8 has two main advantages. Firstly, it does not rely on the postulation of a non-phonologically-realized operator: both the Deg^o and A^o positions are occupied by lexical, pronounced elements. Secondly, in Figure 8 the complement position of AP can be filled, something that is not allowed by the structure in Figure 5 but that still happens in Portuguese, as shown by the examples in (12). Thirdly, this structure is particularly appropriate to illustrate what happens in the *por demais* cases mentioned in the introduction, in which *demais* exceptionally comes before the adjective it modifies when in co-occurrence with the preposition *por* ‘by/for’. These are, indeed, the only cases in the corpora that we have used in which *demais* does not follow the modified adjective. We argue that when this happens, the specifier position of DegP is occupied by the PP *por*, thus making this position unavailable for the movement of the adjective, which, in turn remains *in situ* (i.e. after *demais*).

With that said, it is true that our second proposal involves head movement to a specifier position, something which in syntactic theory is regarded as heavily marked, albeit possible in certain situations (Vicente, 2007), such as feature checking, focus/topicalization and EPP. Vicente (2007, p. 245) leaves it to further research to evaluate other factors that can motivate head-to-spec movement, and if the proposal in Figure 8 is adopted, the lexical specification of *demais*, possibly aligned with its etymology, is one of them.

In order to avoid postulating a head-to-specifier movement situation, an alternative structure as in Figure 9 is also possible, in which the adjective moves to the leftmost head position of the extended Adjectival Projection. For this, we need to propose a YP that has DegP as its complement. If we assume that the lexical entry of *demais* requires a kind of topicalization of the adjective that it modifies, we can postulate that this YP could be a complementizer phrase. This solution is very similar to what Sioni (1998) proposes as the structure of adjectival construct states in Hebrew. Assessing whether the structure in Figure 9 is inherently better than the one in Figure 8 is outside the scope of this article: both tackle the problem of *demais* coming after the AP, but treat adjectival movement in a different way according to different theoretical assumptions (i.e. the [im]possibility/[un]markedness of head-to-spec movement).

FIGURE 9 – Alternative proposal for representing the internal structure of *demais* constructions



(Source: created by the author)

4. Concluding remarks

In this paper, we have reflected on the internal structure of Portuguese adjective phrases modified by the degree word *demais*. Building on insights from minimalist proposals aligned with the functional DegP hypothesis (Corver, 1997; Martinho, 2007), we proposed two main structures to represent these constructions.

Regarding our main research question, our analysis is that the most appropriate form to describe the internal syntax of *demais* constructions is that outlined in Figure 8, with a variation described in Figure 9. They involve movement of the adjective to a position preceding *demais*, which is viewed as having two components: *de-* takes the Deg° position and *-mais* is generated in the specifier of the AP.

As to our second research question, both proposals account for the fact that *demais* invariably comes after the AP it modifies, unlike other degree words. One way to explain this fact is through the word's Latin etymology, with the expression *(val)de magis* being reanalysed as an exceptional degree word containing PP properties. Since in Portuguese PPs come after the adjective they modify, this would be the natural locus of a PP-like degree element such as *demais*. However, it is theoretically unclear whether such etymological factors can motivate the syntactic movement of the adjective. Our conclusion points to *demais* being an exceptional degree word, which is lexically encoded to require the adjective it modifies to be moved.

Future research can profit from assessing whether head-to-spec movement is the best way to explain the movement of the adjective in order for it to precede *demais* (as in Figure 8), or whether it is necessary to postulate head-to-head movement from A° to the

head of a new Y phrase (as in Figure 9). For this, more Portuguese examples would need to be analysed, e.g. to investigate whether parallel movement structures are observed in other domains (such as DP). Finally, other constructions in other (related or unrelated) languages can provide further evidence to our final conclusions: Corver (1997) already hints that Dutch *genoeg* (and by extension English *enough* and German *genug*) are formed by two different elements, *ge-/e-* + *-noeg/-nough/-nug*, which would motivate movement operations and account for their generally being placed (like *demais*) after the adjective they modify.

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