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Recipient passives in the Portuguese of Mozambique

**a socio-cognitive approach to a constructional innovation
in a nativising variety**

Tese de Doutoramento apresentada à
Universidade Católica Portuguesa
para obtenção do grau de doutor em
Linguística

Alice Marie-Paule Emmanuel Mevis

Faculdade de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais

MARÇO 2025



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Sob a orientação do
Prof. Dr. **Augusto Soares da Silva**

*À mes parents pour leur soutien indéfectible
À mes deux sœurs pour m'apprendre l'art de vivre avec légèreté
À mes grands-parents qui ont souvent entrevu, avant moi-même, ce que je pourrais être*

Merci de m'avoir donné des ailes tout en m'enseignant la valeur de mes racines

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SUMMARY

This PhD dissertation investigates the ongoing nativisation of the Mozambican variety of Portuguese, through the lens of one specific syntactic innovation: the Recipient passive construction. This construction, which occurs with TRANSFER verbs, is a type of ditransitive passive which promotes the recipient, rather than the theme, to subject position – an innovation absent in the grammar of European Portuguese and other national varieties of Portuguese. Although previous studies on Mozambican Portuguese (MP) have consistently mentioned the Recipient passive, it remains unclear whether this constructional innovation represents transitional variation due to second language acquisition or a structural change in progress. The present study therefore proposes a detailed examination of these innovative passive structures from both linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives, following the theoretical framework of Cognitive (Socio)Linguistics (e.g., Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007, Wen & Taylor 2021; Kristiansen & Dirven 2008, Geeraerts et al. 2010) and the grammatical models of Construction Grammar (e.g., Goldberg 2006, Diessel 2019) and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 2008). By assessing the systematicity and productivity of the Recipient passive in MP and mapping its linguistic and social distribution, this dissertation contributes to a broader understanding of grammatical change in postcolonial varieties of Portuguese.

The dissertation is structured into two parts and comprises ten chapters. **Part I** lays the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the analysis, beginning with an overview of Mozambique’s sociolinguistic landscape (Chapter 2). This contextual background helps explain the conditions under which the new Recipient passive construction has emerged and the broader dynamics shaping MP’s current nativisation process. The discussion draws on Schneider’s (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model for World Englishes – which aligns with Cognitive (Socio)Linguistics in its view of language as a dynamic and adaptive complex system –, extending its applicability to African varieties of Portuguese. The nativisation of MP is reflected in the increasing number of monolingual Portuguese speakers, particularly in urban centres. Historically, Mozambique’s population primarily spoke Bantu languages, with Portuguese functioning as a second language (L2). However, following independence in 1975, Portuguese began to play an increasingly significant role, first as a reinforced lingua franca and later as a native language (L1), largely due to its institutional status and the mass expansion of Portuguese-medium education across the country. This ongoing shift, which comes at a cost to indigenous languages, clearly demonstrates how the sociolinguistic landscape of a country can undergo profound transformation within a relatively short period.

The remaining sections of Part I establish the theoretical (Chapters 3 and 4) and methodological (Chapter 5) framework of the analysis. First, by shifting the focus from a *derivational* syntax-based model to a *constructional* approach – where grammar is conceived as a dynamic network of interrelated constructions –, this study offers a more comprehensive, integrated and economical account of linguistic change, particularly in the domains of semantic and syntactic change. Second, by incorporating semantic considerations, especially regarding the concept of transitivity, it underscores the conceptual coherence and plausibility of the emergence of alternative grammatical structures. Lastly, by shifting the perspective from linguistic structures and languages in contact to speakers in contact, it accounts for the complexity of multilingualism and diglossia, which are typical of postcolonial contexts where

individuals with diverse linguistic repertoires and worldviews interact. This dissertation thus embraces a cognitive and constructional approach to linguistic structure, variation and change, speaker-centred and empirically grounded in corpus and survey data, while also attending to the complex sociolinguistic dynamics of postcolonial settings. This perspective reveals the intricate interplay between the grammatical system of Portuguese, Bantu contact languages, culturally embedded mental representations and (presumed universal) cognitive factors underlying language use, in line with Cognitive Sociolinguistics and Cognitive Contact Linguistics.

Part II constitutes the empirical core of this dissertation, focusing on an in-depth exploration of the Recipient passive construction in MP. The investigation unfolds in four key stages. First, a preliminary analysis highlights the need to move beyond the derivational hypothesis of transitivisation proposed in previous studies (e.g., Gonçalves 2010), which considers Recipient passives to be the outcome of a structural shift in ditransitive verbs involving the loss of the preposition *a* ‘to’ that introduces indirect objects in standard Portuguese (Chapter 6). Second, an initial corpus analysis examines the conceptual foundations of ditransitive and passive constructions, allowing to delineate the context of occurrence of Recipient passives and better understand the motivations behind their emergence. This analysis sketches the linguistic profile of the Recipient passive construction and confirms its systematicity and productivity within MP (Chapter 7). Third, a second corpus-based study, employing advanced multivariate statistical techniques, investigates the innovative Recipient passive in relation to its closest structural counterpart, the Theme passive construction (or standard ditransitive passive). Using random forest models and conditional inference trees, the analysis reveals a constructional alternation primarily governed by pragmatic-discursive factors (such as topicality and accessibility) as well as conceptual factors, particularly the perspective through which the transfer event is construed, either as a result-oriented or process-oriented event (Chapter 8). Finally, the last case study explores the social dimension of the Recipient passive by means of an acceptability judgment task conducted in four Mozambican cities over a ten-week fieldwork period. This experimental analysis provides insights into the speakers’ perception and usage of the construction (Chapter 9).

The main findings of this dissertation, resulting from the four analyses conducted in Part II, demonstrate that: (i) the emergence of the Recipient passive construction in MP reflects an ongoing process of *constructionalisation* (Traugott & Trousdale 2013), rather than a derivational restructuring; (ii) this Mozambican innovation has become a stable form-meaning pairing with a coherent semantic structure, exhibiting increasing degrees of schematicity and productivity; (iii) the new grammatical construction represents structured variation, responsive to a set of intralinguistic criteria, including discursive salience and conceptual perspectivisation (or *construal*, Langacker 2008), and has moreover naturally integrated into the constructional network of Portuguese, interacting with pre-existing grammatical patterns; and finally, (iv) Recipient passive constructions are widely accepted across different regions of Mozambique, and among speakers with diverse linguistic backgrounds and educational levels, suggesting that they are no longer confined to specific social groups or speaker profiles. By examining the development and productivity of the Recipient passive construction in MP, this thesis sheds light on the mechanisms of linguistic change in postcolonial varieties. These findings, in turn, contribute to a broader understanding of the ongoing nativisation process of African varieties of Portuguese, while also documenting further the increasingly pluricentric nature of the Portuguese language on the global stage (Soares da Silva 2018, 2022).

RESUMO

A presente tese de doutoramento investiga o processo em curso de nativização da variedade moçambicana do português, desenvolvendo a análise de uma inovação sintática específica: a construção passiva de recipiente, também conhecida como construção “passiva dativa”. Esta construção, que ocorre com verbos de TRANSFERÊNCIA, é uma estrutura passiva ditransitiva na qual o recipiente, e não o tema, é promovido à posição de sujeito gramatical – uma inovação ausente na gramática do português europeu e de outras variedades nacionais do português. Embora estudos anteriores sobre o português moçambicano (PM) tenham mencionado a passiva de recipiente, ainda não está claro se esta inovação construcional representa uma variação transitória decorrente da aquisição de língua segunda ou uma mudança estrutural em progresso. O presente estudo apresenta uma análise linguística e sociolinguística detalhada destas estruturas passivas inovadoras, seguindo o enquadramento teórico da (Socio)Linguística Cognitiva (e.g., Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007, Wen & Taylor 2021; Kristiansen & Dirven 2008, Geeraerts *et al.* 2010) e os modelos gramaticais da Gramática de Construções (e.g., Goldberg 2006, Diessel 2019) e da Gramática Cognitiva (Langacker 2008). Ao avaliar a sistematicidade e a produtividade da passiva de recipiente no PM e ao mapear a sua distribuição linguística e social, a presente tese contribui para uma compreensão mais ampla das mudanças gramaticais em variedades pós-coloniais do português.

A tese está estruturada em duas partes e compreende dez capítulos. A **Parte I** descreve a contextualização do fenómeno linguístico estudado e as bases teóricas e metodológicas de análise, começando com uma visão geral do panorama sociolinguístico de Moçambique (Capítulo 2). Esse contexto permite compreender as condições sob as quais a nova construção passiva de recipiente emergiu e as dinâmicas mais amplas que moldam o atual processo de nativização do PM. A contextualização sociolinguística apoia-se no Modelo Dinâmico de Schneider (2003, 2007) para os *World Englishes* – que converge com a (Socio)Linguística Cognitiva relativamente à conceção de língua como sistema complexo dinâmico e adaptativo –, ampliando a sua aplicabilidade às variedades africanas do português. A nativização do PM reflete-se no crescente número de falantes monolíngues de português, especialmente nos centros urbanos. Historicamente, a população moçambicana falava predominantemente línguas bantu, sendo o português uma língua segunda (L2). Após a independência em 1975, o português passou a desempenhar um papel cada vez mais relevante, inicialmente com o estatuto reforçado de língua franca e, posteriormente, como língua materna (L1), devido, em grande parte, ao seu papel institucional e à expansão massiva da educação em português por todo o país. Essa mudança em curso, que ocorre em detrimento das línguas indígenas, demonstra claramente como a situação sociolinguística de um país pode transformar-se significativamente num período relativamente curto.

As restantes unidades da Parte I estabelecem o quadro teórico (Capítulos 3 e 4) e metodológico (Capítulo 5) da análise. Em primeiro lugar, ao deslocar-se o foco de um modelo sintático *derivacional* para uma abordagem *construcional* – na qual a gramática é concebida como uma rede dinâmica de construções interrelacionadas –, este estudo proporciona uma explicação mais abrangente, integrada e económica da mudança linguística, particularmente da mudança semântica e sintática. Em segundo lugar, ao incorporar motivações conceptuais, especialmente no que diz respeito à transitividade, evidencia-se a coerência conceptual e a

plausibilidade do surgimento de estruturas gramaticais alternativas. Por fim, ao deslocar-se a perspectiva das estruturas da língua e das línguas em contacto para os falantes em contato, a presente investigação consegue dar conta da complexidade do multilinguismo e da diglossia, típicos de contextos pós-coloniais, em que interagem indivíduos com repertórios linguísticos e visões de mundo diversas. Assim, esta dissertação desenvolve uma abordagem cognitiva e construcional, centrada no uso dos falantes e empiricamente fundamentada em dados de *corpus* e de inquérito, da variação e mudança linguísticas expressas nas estruturas passivas de recipiente, ao mesmo tempo que atenta nas complexas dinâmicas sociolinguísticas dos cenários pós-coloniais. Esta perspectiva sócio-cognitiva e centrada no uso da língua permite revelar a intrincada interação entre o sistema gramatical do português, as línguas bantu de contato, representações mentais culturalmente enraizadas e processos cognitivos (presumivelmente universais) de uso da língua, em conformidade com a Sociolinguística Cognitiva e a Linguística Cognitiva de Contacto.

A **Parte II** constitui o núcleo empírico da dissertação, tendo por objeto a análise aprofundada e integrada da construção passiva de recipiente no PM. A investigação desenvolve-se em quatro etapas. Primeiro, uma análise preliminar destaca a necessidade de se ir além da hipótese derivacional da transitivização, proposta em estudos anteriores (e.g., Gonçalves 2010), que considera a passiva de recipiente como resultado de uma mudança estrutural nos verbos ditransitivos, envolvendo a perda da preposição *a* que introduz os objetos indiretos no português padrão (Capítulo 6). Em segundo lugar, uma análise inicial de *corpus* mostra as bases conceptuais das construções ditransitivas e passivas, permitindo delimitar o contexto de ocorrência das passivas de recipiente e compreender melhor as motivações da sua emergência no PM. Esta análise descreve o perfil linguístico da construção passiva de recipiente e confirma a sua sistematicidade e produtividade no PM (Capítulo 7). Em terceiro lugar, um segundo estudo baseado em *corpus* e utilizando técnicas estatísticas multivariadas avançadas examina a alternância entre a passiva de recipiente inovadora e a sua contraparte estrutural mais próxima, a passiva de tema (ou passiva padrão). Aplicando modelos estatísticos de *random forest* e árvores de inferência condicional, a análise revela que a alternância construcional entre passiva de recipiente e passiva de tema é determinada por fatores principalmente pragmático-discursivos, nomeadamente a topicalidade e a acessibilidade, e conceptuais, especialmente a perspectiva de conceptualização do evento de transferência, focalizado ora no resultado ora no processo de transferência (Capítulo 8). Finalmente, o último estudo de caso explora a dimensão social da passiva de recipiente através de um teste de juízos de aceitabilidade, conduzido em quatro cidades moçambicanas ao longo de um trabalho de campo de dez semanas. Esta análise experimental permite avaliar a percepção linguística e o uso da construção passiva de recipiente (Capítulo 9).

Os principais resultados da presente dissertação, decorrentes das quatro análises desenvolvidas na Parte II, demonstram que: (i) o surgimento da construção passiva de recipiente no PM reflete um processo contínuo de *construcionalização* (Traugott & Trousdale 2013), e não apenas uma reestruturação derivacional; (ii) a inovação moçambicana consolidou-se como um pareamento estável entre forma e significado, com uma estrutura semântica coerente e um grau crescente de esquematicidade e produtividade; (iii) a nova construção gramatical representa uma variação estruturada, sensível a critérios intralinguísticos como a saliência pragmático-discursiva e a perspetivação conceptual (ou “construal”, Langacker 2008), além de se ter naturalmente integrado na rede construcional do português, interagindo com padrões gramaticais já existentes; e finalmente (iv) as construções passivas de recipiente são

amplamente aceitas em diferentes regiões de Moçambique e por falantes com diferentes perfis linguísticos e níveis educacionais, o que sugere que já não estão se restringem a grupos sociais específicos ou a determinados perfis de falantes. Ao examinar o desenvolvimento e a produtividade da construção passiva de recipiente, a presente tese lança luz sobre os mecanismos mudança linguística em variedades pós-coloniais do português. Os resultados obtidos contribuem para uma compreensão mais ampla do atual processo de nativização das variedades africanas do português, evidenciando ao mesmo tempo o crescente pluricentricismo da língua portuguesa (Soares da Silva 2018, 2022) no cenário global.

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Chapter 7 has been published as:

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Mevis, Alice (in press). Recipient passives in Mozambican Portuguese: a case of constructional alternation in the making. *Language Variation and Change*.

Our ten-week fieldwork period in Mozambique gave rise to an additional publication [in Portuguese]:

Soares da Silva, Augusto & Mevis, Alice. (2024). Português no Índico: evidências de nativização do português moçambicano. *Orientes do Português*, 6, 9–38.

1. Introduction

1.1. The genesis of postcolonial Mozambique and its linguistic consequences

In 2025, Mozambique will commemorate the 50th anniversary of its independence. Back in 1975, on the 25th of June, Samora Machel proclaimed the independence of the Popular Republic of Mozambique and became its first president, after a decade of armed struggle against the Portuguese colonial regime. This major political event, part of the broader wave of liberation of the African continent from the European colonial rule in the second half of the 20th century, would change the destiny of its population in multiple ways, including linguistically. Crucially, political emancipation occurred within the arbitrary borders established during the colonial era, reclaimed by the leaders of the liberation war in a unification attempt that became known as *do Rovuma ao Maputo*.¹ Mozambican political leaders therefore had to cope with a large territory in which ethnic and linguistic diversity prevailed. These leaders, from different regional backgrounds but united in the same resistance movement against the Portuguese occupier, resorted to the Portuguese language to coordinate their efforts, eventually leading to its adoption as the official language of the newly founded nation (Timbane 2017: 24).

More generally, 1975 was a landmark year for the Portuguese language, with the independence of the remaining Portuguese colonies – including Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe in Africa, and Timor-East in Asia – all of which chose to retain Portuguese as their official language. This moment truly laid the foundation for Lusophony and set the stage for the creation of the Community of Portuguese Language

¹ “From Rovuma to Maputo”: the phrase refers to the northern and southern ends of the country respectively, and gained prominence during the anti-colonial liberation struggle led by the FRELIMO party (*Frente de Libertação de Moçambique*). It served as a unifying slogan to rally people from across the country's regions against colonial rule.

Countries (CPLP) in 1996. But most interestingly, 1975 had far-reaching linguistic consequences as it marked the beginning of a new phase in the evolution of Portuguese. Its enduring presence in Africa and implantation in new sociolinguistic environments characterised by language contact and societal L2 acquisition gave rise to distinct postcolonial varieties, each following its own unique trajectory (Álvarez-López et al. 2018).

In Mozambique, as in other former African colonies, Portuguese was thus elected as the only official language while the African languages, designated as ‘national languages’, were only acknowledged in the second Constitution of 1990 (C-MZ 1990, art. 5). They were later recognised as “cultural and educational patrimony” in the third and current Constitution approved in 2004 (C-MZ 2004, art. 9). Portuguese, which in colonial times held a superior status but had limited impact on the daily lives of most Mozambicans, was suddenly propelled into the schools and the public institutions of the new republic, paving the way for massive learning of this language, supported by official educational and literacy campaigns (Firmino 2024: 814). Over less than fifty years, the number of native speakers of Portuguese in Mozambique grew tremendously (from 1,2% in 1980 to 16,6% in 2017), while nearly half of the population now claims to speak Portuguese as either a first or second language (47,4% in 2017 against 24,4% in 1980), according to data from the Mozambican *Instituto Nacional de Estatística* (INE). As the renowned Mozambican writer Mia Couto observed: “the Mozambican government has done more for the Portuguese language than five hundred years of colonisation” (Couto 2009: 192). As a result, Portuguese gradually expanded “beyond the mere role of a political and administrative tool to become a normal language of daily use”, especially so in urban centres, as evidenced by the growing number of speakers (Firmino 2024: 814).

Interestingly – paradoxically? – Portuguese in Mozambique has evolved from the language of the coloniser into an identitarian language (Langa 2019: 276), and became a “symbol for imagining a united nation” (Firmino 2024: 817). This shift in the perception of the ex-colonial language, from stigmatisation to adhesion, is a rather common phenomenon in postcolonial contexts, usually driven by ideological motives that are subtly framed as practical considerations. It is therefore important to examine the ideological motivations underlying the choice of Portuguese. While the official justification emphasised the need to avoid ethnic conflicts and fight against “tribalism”,² other linguistic options could equally have been

² A piece of the official discourse can be found in the following citation from the Education Minister at the time, Graça Machel, in an address to the 1st National Seminar on the *Teaching of Portuguese* in 1979: “The need to fight the oppressor called for an intransigent struggle against tribalism and regionalism. It was this necessity for unity that dictated to us that the only common language – the language which had been used to oppress – should assume a new dimension” (Lopes 1998: 458-459; Ashby & Barbosa 2011: 5).

considered to achieve this aim. Ultimately, the decision to adopt Portuguese subtly reproduces structures of dominance, as proficiency in the official language remains tightly connected to issues of power, effectively re-enacting aspects of the colonial power dynamics (Ponso 2012: 135) and perpetuating the typically European monolingual language ideology (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 272).

The three following reasons are key in understanding the maintenance of Portuguese in Mozambique. First of all, Portuguese proved a convenient choice for the leaders-to-be, most of whom were educated elites trained in the colonial system, hence in Portuguese. Second, in line with their education background, they perceived Portuguese as “the neutral language of integration and modernisation” (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 272) which they believed would help strengthen Mozambique’s emergent position in an increasingly globalised world, albeit with little regard for the actual needs of the population. And last but not least, they soon detected the language’s potential as a nation-building tool. Considering Mozambique’s cultural and linguistic diversity and the arbitrary nature of its borders,³ there was a need to foster national consciousness and create a “supra-ethnic national citizen” who could contribute to the construction of a new nation, and Portuguese was expected to play a key role in this endeavour (Firmino 2024: 814).

By examining the ideas associated with Portuguese, one can infer in counterpoint the status and stereotypes attributed to the indigenous African languages. They emerge as the languages of the less educated; regional languages linked to rural areas, hence incompatible with the demands of a globalised world; languages tied to traditions that are sometimes perceived as archaic, making them seem at odds with the demands of a modern state; and finally, languages exacerbating feelings of tribalism and ethnic affiliation, hence threatening national identity. These linguistic hierarchies reflect the diglossic distribution between the official and the national languages, arising from the alleged superiority of Portuguese and the ensuing devaluation of indigenous languages, a lingering legacy of colonial language ideologies that continues to shape language attitudes and policies in present-day Mozambique (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 271).

Nowadays, however, Portuguese in Mozambique can no longer be considered a foreign language but has become a key part of Mozambican national identity, supported by the

³ The possibility of an alternative political structure or subdivision in smaller political entities was seriously hindered by the destruction of local political structures and social organisations, which had been dismantled by half a century of intensive colonial occupation and three additional centuries of slave trade (Bouamama 2023: 30-31).

aforementioned nation-building ideologies to which the population fully adhered. The Mozambicans embraced the national project and enacted Portuguese as the symbol of national unity. Portuguese became an integral part of social life, especially in urban areas, and at the dawn of the 21st century, the country witnessed the emergence of the first generations of native speakers of Portuguese (Firmino 2024: 817). Looking ahead, it is projected that, by the century's end, Portuguese will have an even more significant presence in Africa, especially in Angola and Mozambique, due to population growth (Soares da Silva 2022: 139).

Over the 50 years that went by since independence, Mozambique has developed its own distinct variety of Portuguese, through the gradual incorporation of new linguistic forms, functions, social uses and symbolic values – a process known as *nativisation* (Schneider 2003, 2007). This transformation has ultimately legitimised Mozambican Portuguese (hereafter referred to as MP) as a distinct variety on its own terms.⁴ Despite a relatively short diachrony, social and structural changes are already observable and readily available for academic analysis. 50 years of history already makes it possible to trace back some aspects of its evolution and identify its specificities (Timbane 2017: 19). Yet academic research about MP, and more generally emerging varieties of Portuguese, remains scarce, especially when compared to the extensive body of literature on European and Brazilian Portuguese (EP and BP), the two dominant standards. Moreover, many existing studies examine MP through a comparative lens, considering Mozambican linguistic innovations far too often as ‘deviations’ from the EP standard, which remained the reference model in Mozambique (Firmino 2024: 818). This approach created a gap between the idealised norm modelled on EP and the vernacular spoken by the population, leading the speakers to oscillate between exonormative and endonormative uses and attitudes.

1.2. Motivations, aims and object of study

This unique and complex Mozambican backdrop provided a fertile ground for numerous reflections that germinated into the present dissertation, which seeks to contribute to the

⁴ Political and national boundaries have long been shown to play a significant role in shaping linguistic identities and standardisation processes (Haugen 1966; Fishman 1972). We can therefore posit the existence of a distinctively Mozambican variety of Portuguese, which we can contrast with other national varieties (e.g., European and Brazilian Portuguese), notwithstanding the heterogeneity inherent to any language (Weinreich et al. 1968). While dialectal variation is acknowledged – the existence of different subvarieties of MP across Mozambique, as pointed out by Chimbutane (2018) – it does not challenge the existence of defining linguistic features that set MP apart from other national varieties. The Recipient passive construction seems to be one such idiosyncratic trait, as will be argued throughout this dissertation.

ongoing effort to address the “need for self-affirmation of the Mozambican variety” (Timbane 2017: 20). Specifically, it responds to the pressing need for increased academic output and the adoption of a novel research perspective that treats MP as an autonomous object of study. Such an endeavour is simultaneously a necessity, in order to further document the increasing pluricentricity of Portuguese and work towards its pluricentric standardisation (Soares da Silva 2024); a possibility enabled by the availability of a growing number of linguistic resources; and a fantastic opportunity. Advancing scholarly research on the Portuguese of Mozambique could furthermore yield tangible benefits of public interest, particularly in areas such as education, language planning, and language policy (Timbane 2017: 35).

The first motivation underlying the present work thus stems from the noticeable lack of descriptive and systematic studies on the evolution of Portuguese in postcolonial contexts, especially on the African continent – a striking observation, given that the role of Portuguese in Africa is expected to gain prominence in the near future. While such analyses have long been hindered by limited access to authentic data, the past two decades have seen the emergence of valuable resources, mostly in the form of corpora, such as the *Corpus África* (Bacelar do Nascimento et al. 2008), the *Corpus do Português* (Davies 2016) and the *Corpus PALMA* (Hagemeijer et al. 2022). The second motivation arises from the distinctive linguistic ecology in which Portuguese is evolving in Mozambique. Emerging varieties in postcolonial contexts, undergoing profound transformations, offer a fascinating laboratory to investigate the dynamics of language variation and change almost in real time (Schneider 2007).

In light of these motivations, this thesis aims to demonstrate how the Mozambican variety of Portuguese is following its own evolutionary course and proceeding towards full *nativisation*, displaying structural changes that significantly diverge from the two well-established European and Brazilian normative standards. In specific terms, it focuses on one case study, namely the emergence of a new grammatical construction typical of MP lacking equivalent in other varieties of Portuguese (especially EP and BP): the Recipient passive construction. As the name suggests, this new construction represents an alternative passive pattern that exclusively arises in ditransitive contexts, i.e., when the verb takes two internal object arguments traditionally labelled as direct and indirect object, corresponding to the semantic roles of Theme and Recipient respectively. Since passive constructions involve a reversal of the syntactic roles of subject and object, in ditransitive contexts, either object could theoretically assume the subject role in the passive. While EP and BP speakers alike would almost exclusively opt for a Theme-subject in such contexts, MP has developed the possibility of foregrounding a Recipient-subject, in line with languages such as English and, more notably,

southern Bantu languages. The two syntactic possibilities are illustrated in examples (1) and (2) below retrieved from the *Corpus do Português* (Web/Dialects).

(1) standard Theme passives – valid in all varieties of Portuguese:

a. *Decidi dar expressão ao conselho que **me foi dado** por aqueles jovens.*

(lit.) ‘I decided to put into practice the advice that was given to me by these young people.’

b. *Ninguém está satisfeito com as justificações que **nos são dadas** sobre a morte de Samora Machel.*

‘No one is satisfied with the justifications given to us about Samora Machel’s death.’

(2) Recipient passives – MP innovation:

a. ***Fui dado** a mão por quem libertou esta terra.*

(lit.) ‘I was given the hand by the one who freed this land.’

b. *Naquele tempo, fazer uma revista eram 20.000 meticais. Os tais 20.000 **fomos dados** pela Embaixada de Portugal.*

‘At that time, 20.000 meticais were necessary to publish a journal. We were given these 20.000 by the Portuguese embassy.’

The innovative construction in (2), known as *passiva dativa* ‘Dative passive’ in the Portuguese literature, has been acknowledged since the earliest studies on MP (Carvalho 1985, 1987; Gonçalves 1990, 1996), yet it has never been thoroughly explored in a comprehensive, in-depth investigation. Considering this oversight, we propose a detailed analysis of this Mozambican innovation along the lines of Construction Grammar – a theory of linguistic representation implemented by most cognitive-functionally oriented frameworks (Goldberg 1995, 2006; Diessel 2015, 2019) – and Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008), employing a combination of empirical methods, both corpus- and experiment-based, to approach the phenomenon from different angles. The main research hypothesis underpinning the present thesis is that the emergence of the Recipient passive construction is representative of the nativisation process that MP is currently undergoing.

This hypothesis led to the formulation of a set of more specific research questions and objectives. In this dissertation, we will specifically focus on three main issues, corresponding to three specific research hypotheses (**RH**): first, we hypothesise that the development of the Recipient passive construction in MP corresponds to a case of ongoing *constructionalisation*, i.e., the development of a new form-meaning pairing (Traugott & Trousdale 2013), in contrast to the derivational view that consider Recipient passives to be resulting from a change in the argument structure of verbs (Gonçalves 2010). Therefore, as a first goal, we will explore the formal and conceptual underpinnings of the Recipient passive construction. It will be shown that this construction emerges as a stable and conceptually interpretable innovation displaying

an internally coherent semantic structure (**RH1**, cf. Chapters 6 and 7). Our second hypothesis is that the Recipient passive construction integrated the constructional network of Portuguese as a new syntactic possibility *alongside* older, standard forms (such as Theme passives) and entered in complementary distribution rather than competition with them, giving rise to a constructional alternation (Pijpops 2020). The second research objective thus consists in identifying the relevant linguistic factors that structure the variation. Our analysis will reveal that pragmatic and conceptual variables such as discursive salience and conceptual perspectivisation (or *construal*, Langacker 2008) are the main drives of the alternation (**RH2**, cf. Chapter 8). Third and last, considering the existence of Recipient passive structures in Bantu languages and the situation of extensive language contact in Mozambique, we aim to elucidate the role of language contact in the formation of Recipient passives in MP. We hypothesise that Recipient passives were introduced into the grammar of MP through contact and stabilised over time, reinforced by analogical processes, ultimately becoming a token of the nativisation of Portuguese in Mozambique. It will be shown that Recipient passives are widely accepted by MP speakers with diverse sociolinguistic profiles, even by MP monolinguals, suggesting that they are not associated with particular social groups or restricted to L2 speakers of Portuguese (**RH3**, cf. Chapter 9).

To achieve these research goals and explore the related hypotheses, four interrelated studies were conducted, each representing a complementary aspect of the phenomenon under investigation and focusing on one specific objective, as will be presented in the next section. While each case study draws on distinct theoretical concepts to explore different facets of the variation, the whole research was carried out within the framework of Cognitive Sociolinguistics (Kristiansen & Dirven 2008, Geeraerts et al. 2010, Kristiansen et al. 2022). This theoretical approach integrates an interest in the social and cultural forces driving variation in human interaction with a dynamic view of language and grammar as a complex-adaptive system grounded in cognitive abilities and shaped by usage (Röthlisberger et al. 2017; Schmid 2020). Crucially, Cognitive Sociolinguistics seeks to achieve “a semantically enriched type of variationist research” that may adequately account for the three-way interaction between linguistic structure, conceptual content and cultural variation (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 11). Accordingly, this thesis embraces the Cognitive Linguistics (e.g., Geeraerts & Cuyckens 2007, Dąbrowska & Divjak 2015, Wen & Taylor 2021) assumption that conceptual motivations stand central to linguistic variation and change and adopts a semantic focus. Methodologically, this work builds on the advanced empirical methods developed by Cognitive Sociolinguistics to investigate the interplay of social and conceptual factors behind linguistic variation. More

specifically, it employs a mixed-methods design, combining corpus analysis and experimental data to strive for an understanding as comprehensive as possible of the constructionalisation process of Recipient passives in MP.

1.3. Structure of the dissertation

The present thesis is divided into two parts, each comprising four chapters. **Part I** establishes the theoretical and methodological framework, while the second part focuses on descriptive studies of our linguistic phenomenon. The chapters are organised as follows: following on this introductory chapter, which delineated the motivations, research hypotheses, objectives and focus of the study, namely the Recipient passive construction, **Chapter 2** provides an overview of Mozambique's postcolonial multilingual landscape and introduces Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model, a valuable framework for understanding language change in emerging varieties. **Chapter 3** outlines the general theoretical background in which the dissertation is framed. It first delineates the main tenets of Cognitive Linguistics and Cognitive Sociolinguistics, with special emphasis on the primacy of meaning and the interplay between conceptual, structural and social factors in language. Next, it discusses language contact, drawing parallels between the research of Palacios (e.g., 2011, 2021) and the framework of Cognitive Contact Linguistics (Zenner et al. 2019). **Chapter 4** presents the constructional models of grammar that underpin the analysis of the linguistic phenomenon under study, namely Cognitive Grammar, which conceptualises grammar as emerging from schematised patterns of conceptual structuring and symbolisation, and Construction Grammar, which views grammar as a network of interconnected constructions. Related notions such as constructionalisation and constructional alternations are likewise introduced. **Chapter 5** concludes the first part by outlining the methodological grounding of the dissertation. It starts with a discussion of the usage-based premise upon which the entire research is based, and subsequently details the two main designs employed, namely corpus techniques and acceptability judgments.

The following four chapters – **Part II** – form the hands-on section and empirical core of the dissertation. **Chapter 6** serves as an entry point into the second part by presenting a preliminary analysis of the Recipient passive construction. It revisits the literature and examines a derivational explanatory hypothesis underlying early studies about Recipient passives, namely the transitivisation hypothesis, which posits that MP (and more generally African varieties of Portuguese) tends to expand the category of direct transitive verbs (e.g., Gonçalves 2010). This

initial case study critically assesses the hypothesis and discusses its main problems based on authentic corpus examples and on an examination of the conceptual basis of transitivity, ultimately highlighting the need for a new theoretical premise.

Chapter 7 consists in an exploratory study that provides an initial approach to the Recipient passive under a constructional perspective. It begins by identifying the conceptual makeup of Recipient passives, highlighting key aspects of passive and ditransitive constructions that shaped their development based on the relevant literature, in line with the Cognitive Linguistics premise that variation is conceptually motivated. Through a corpus analysis, it then provides a detailed description of Recipient passives in MP and their contexts of occurrence, revealing that the variation is both systematic, unfolding within well-defined semantic contexts, and productive, extending across a broad range of ditransitive verbs. The study further argues for treating Recipient passives as an autonomous object of research and underscores the advantages of a constructional approach in capturing the observed variation, addressing the shortcomings of derivational approaches used in previous research.

Chapter 8 examines the relationship between the Recipient passive and its closest structural counterpart, the Theme passive, with the aim of identifying the linguistic factors that influence the choice between these two syntactic options. To do so, a multivariate statistical analysis, using random forests and conditional inference trees, was performed on corpus data. The results show that the constructional alternation is primarily driven by linguistic factors related to information structure and differences in construal, further supporting the claim that variation is conceptually and pragmatically motivated. The chapter also highlights the multidimensional nature of constructional changes, occurring across multiple levels within the constructional network, thus warning against oversimplifications.

Chapter 9 shifts the focus from linguistic to social factors, moving from a corpus-based approach to an experimental design, with the aim of providing new insights into the social distribution of Recipient passives and discussing the influence of language contact on their occurrence and formation. Drawing on data collected through an acceptability judgment task conducted during a ten-week fieldwork period in Mozambique, the study analyses responses from participants in four cities across different regions of the country. The findings reveal that Recipient passives consistently receive high acceptability ratings regardless of the participants' region of origin or mother tongue, suggesting broad acceptance across diverse linguistic and social backgrounds. This, in turn, suggests that the direct impact of the contact languages on the formation of these passives has significantly diminished, reinforcing the view that Recipient passives have become a fully nativised construction.

Chapter 10 provides, by way of conclusion, an overview of the most important findings from the four case studies, the key contributions of this dissertation to the study of emerging varieties and of constructional variation and change, as well as the main limitations and potential directions for future research.

Concluding this introductory chapter, it is worth emphasising that the present work only represents one facet of the broader task of recognising Mozambique's rich and complex linguistic heritage. While acknowledging the specificities of MP is essential for developing a new national standard and ultimately achieving multilateral management of Portuguese on the global stage, it is equally critical to recognise, study, describe, teach, value, and safeguard the Bantu languages of Mozambique as integral components of the country's centuries-old cultural heritage. There is an urgent need in contemporary Mozambique to invest significantly in elevating the status of indigenous national languages alongside Portuguese, and to develop concrete measures for establishing genuine multilingualism, for instance through the improvement of the bilingual education system. Such efforts are vital to curb the language shift tendency from Bantu towards Portuguese, i.e., to the ex-colonial language to the detriment of indigenous languages, frequent in diglossic postcolonial contexts (e.g., Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023). Ideally, the present dissertation should thus be complemented by a series of academic studies about Mozambique's indigenous languages, and will only achieve its full potential if it succeeds in rekindling academic interest and fostering greater engagement with Bantu Linguistics.

PART I

**Sociopolitical, theoretical and methodological
background**

2. The sociolinguistic landscape of Mozambique

2.1. A Dynamic Model for postcolonial varieties

Rather than an isolated case, the path of linguistic evolution followed by Portuguese in Mozambique appears as part of a broader global process of accommodation of ex-colonial languages in postcolonial contexts. The identification of this shared underlying evolutionary pattern in the development of New Englishes around the world has led Schneider (2003, 2007) to elaborate a model of language evolution that mirrors the historical, social and linguistic processes involved when a colonial language is introduced and gradually indigenised in a postcolonial setting. His Dynamic Model, which he summarises as a progression of five characteristic stages – *Foundation*, *Exonormative Stabilisation*, *Nativisation*, *Endonormative Stabilisation*, and *Differentiation* – describes this evolution “constrained by similar conditions and thus proceeding along similar paths in partially predictable⁵ and parallel ways” (Schneider 2003: 241). It is a process that is dynamic in nature, with each synchronic stage representing part of a diachronic process that unfolds across consecutive stages in an “evolutionary cycle”, where new identities are being constantly defined and renegotiated in response to the specific environment in which the variety develops.

Initially designed for World Englishes, Schneider’s five-stage developmental model can easily be extrapolated and adapted to other postcolonial contexts, as it relies on implications – sociopolitical and historical events and processes – that are in principle valid across colonial

⁵ The specific linguistic outcome is not predictable; rather, it is the path of historical evolution itself that is foreseeable, as it inevitably leads to the indigenisation of linguistic features and, consequently, to language change. As Schneider (2003: 274) puts it: “Even if New Englishes are the products of a relatively uniform underlying process, the outcomes of this process are anything but uniform”.

settings and independent of any specific languages.⁶ Schneider’s model provides insights into the multifaceted processes driving the development of national varieties in postcolonial contexts and is especially useful in understanding how Portuguese in Mozambique has evolved from an external language of power to a localised variety that reflects Mozambican identity (Firmino 2002; 2010; 2021; 2024).

The **initial stage** of the model, *Foundation*, involves the implantation of a colonial language into a new cultural and sociolinguistic environment, typically linked to communities of emigrants, trading posts or military outposts. It is characterised by language contact and marginal bilingualism within a small segment of the native population, resulting in a relatively restricted diffusion of the colonial language among the local speech communities. The foundational stage for MP can be traced back to the 16th century, with the arrival of the first Portuguese explorers and traders in the wake of Vasco da Gama’s landing in Mozambique in March 1498, the first European to reach the Indian Ocean by sea. Yet it was not until the 20th century that political measures aimed at effective colonisation were implemented, following the Portuguese military conquest of southern Mozambique initiated in 1895, which marked a significant step in consolidating Portuguese control and strengthening the presence of the Portuguese language in the territory. This process further intensified after the fall of the Portuguese monarchy in 1910 and the establishment of the authoritarian Estado Novo regime in 1933 (Farré 2015: 199; Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 15).

In the absence of a sufficient number of Portuguese settlers, the colonial administration relied on employing the native population, notably in the strategic port city of Lourenço Marques (renamed Maputo after independence). The colonisation process was built upon the economic exploitation and political exclusion of the majority of the indigenous population (Farré 2015: 200), a dynamic that was mirrored linguistically, with the Portuguese language becoming a central tool in service of colonial interests. A small elite of Afro-Europeans and Africans, known as *assimilados* ‘assimilated’, emerged during this foundational stage, in opposition to the *indigenas* ‘indigenous’, the majority of the local population who did not enjoy the same rights because they were not considered as ‘civilised’ (Farré 2015: 204). Granted Portuguese citizenship on the condition that they spoke Portuguese, these Mozambicans *assimilados* with close ties to colonial institutions constituted a small bilingual elite using Portuguese while continuing to use their local Bantu languages in daily life (Firmino 2024:

⁶ Scheider (2003: 241) claims that the underlying process “appears to operate whenever a language is transplanted” and suggests that “the linguistic ramifications of the colonial expansion of the Romance languages (Portuguese, Spanish, French)” be used as a testing ground for the generalisability of his model.

812–813). Ultimately, the maintenance and prevalence of Bantu languages as well as the presence of bilingual intermediaries prevented a process of creolisation from taking place (Timbane 2017: 28).

The Portuguese language thus played an instrumental role in the colonisation process as it soon became a requirement for collaboration with the colonial state and ultimately a gateway to a better economic and social status. Knowledge of Portuguese was directly associated to the ‘degree of civilisation’, whereas the indigenous languages were increasingly marginalised and even forbidden in most official contexts (Gerards & Meisnitzer 2024: 585). It turned into a symbol of privilege, and consequently a medium of social exclusion, underpinned by a racial and moral hierarchy that positioned Europeans at the top of the social structure (Farré 2015: 200).

Once the colonial language has become sufficiently anchored and starts being disseminated through educational, administrative, and legal systems, it gradually enters the model’s **second stage**: *Exonormative stabilisation*. In Mozambique, this stage reached its highest expression with independence in 1975. At that time, Portuguese, spoken mainly in urban centres by a minority elite group as an L2 learned in schools, was instituted as the official language and a primary symbol of national unity. As a marker of privilege, Portuguese continued to be associated with prestige and power, driving linguistic and cultural assimilation as well as large-scale second language acquisition among the indigenous population (Schneider 2003: 249). Under Portuguese rule, the European standard was upheld as the model to aim for, and the situation hardly changed after independence. Social elites continue to view EP as the “purest” way to speak Portuguese (Firmino 2024: 821). However, this standard, which is also the pedagogical norm, essentially remained an idealised norm with limited practical relevance for the local population, largely unfamiliar even to the teachers themselves, contrasting sharply with the Portuguese used by the majority of speakers (Timbane 2017: 28; Maciel 2021: 57-58).

Portuguese became the main language in public contexts, education, media, and among political, social, and cultural elites, and remained the only language permitted in state institutions (Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 15). During this phase, a still small but growing bilingual elite helped facilitate communication between the Mozambican state and the Bantu-speaking indigenous majority. Gradually, though, the officialisation and instrumentalisation of Portuguese as a strategy for internal territorial and social cohesion and its enduring prestige in Mozambique have led to its increased use in many domains, including more informal ones (Firmino 2024: 814), sowing the seeds for its subsequent *nativisation*.

The **third stage** of Schneider’s model – which, as argued throughout the present dissertation, characterises the current development of MP – is a pivotal phase that involves the cultural and linguistic transformation of the ex-colonial language. *Nativisation*, or indigenisation, is essentially an acculturation process through which a language often imposed from the outside (as is typically the case of colonial languages) becomes closer to the sociocultural context where it is spoken, which translates into the development of an extensive and diverse set of local indigenised linguistic features (Schneider 2007: 44-48; Chimbutane 2018: 92). In Mozambique, nativisation consists in the “mozambicanisation” of Portuguese, understood as the symbolic and structural transformation of the European standard norm into a new self-contained variety: Mozambican Portuguese (MP). This process therefore involves two different but complementary dimensions: a socio-symbolic one, with the emergence of new attitudes, ideologies and social functions of the Portuguese language; and a structural one, linguistically manifested through various phonological, morphosyntactic, syntactic and lexical deviations from EP (Firmino 2010: 12; Gonçalves 2010; Langa & Chaúque 2024; Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024). The nativisation stage is particularly interesting “because it illustrates how in the process of linguistic evolution a linguistic system may be modified” (Schneider 2003: 248).

The primary catalyst for the nativisation of MP was the association of the Portuguese language with the liberation war, and subsequently, its use as a tool for building national unity. Following Mozambique’s independence in 1975, the new nation faced the challenge of forging a cohesive national identity, and Portuguese was elected as the official language – considered as a neutral and unifying medium across the country’s many ethnic and linguistic groups. However, a notable downside was the association of the African languages with “tribalism and regionalism”, perceived as divisive forces counter to the ideals of the new nation (Ashby & Barbosa 2011: 5; Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 272).

The instrumentalisation of Portuguese as an effective strategy for fostering national awareness coupled to its social prestige have led, from the post-independence period to the present day, to a significant increase in Portuguese speakers in Mozambique. From 1980 to 2017, the percentage of Portuguese speakers rose from 1.2% to 16.6% as a first language (L1) and from 23.2% to 41.5% as a second language (L2) (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023; Soares da Silva 2024: 35). Based on the most recent data collected in 2017, 47.4% of Mozambicans report speaking Portuguese fluently, with this percentage significantly higher in urban areas (83.1%) compared to rural contexts (45.3%) (Firmino 2024: 810; Chimbutane et al. 2023: 30).

Since independence, the number of Portuguese speakers, both as a first (L1) and second language (L2), has thus steadily increased, as illustrated in Figure 1.

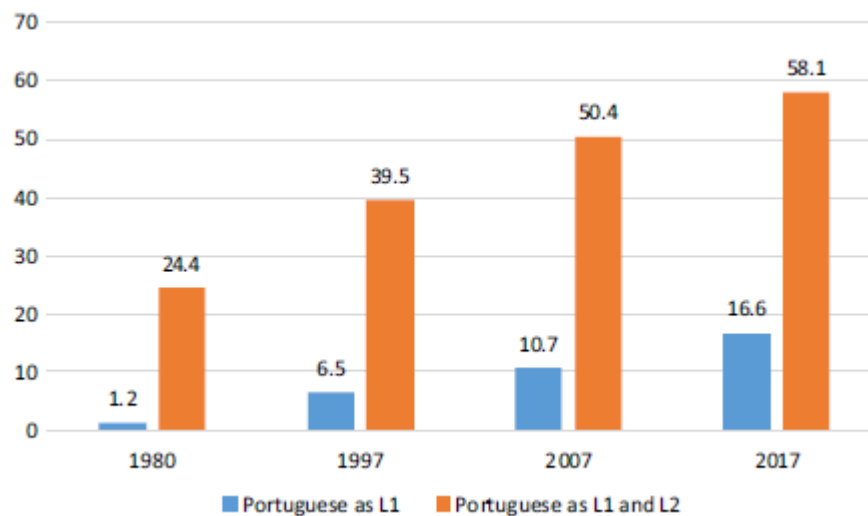


Figure 1. Distribution of L1 and L2 Portuguese speakers between 1980 and 2017 (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 274)

This ideological manipulation of languages' status by politicians resulted in a process of language shift "by decree" (Ashby & Barbosa 2011: 5). The use of Portuguese gradually expanded beyond elite circles while the number of bilingual speakers steadily grew, even causing some Mozambican families to shift language in favour of Portuguese (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023). Along with the rise of the bilingual population, Figure 1 also reveals the emergence of the first generations of monolingual native Portuguese speakers in the country (i.e., who do not speak any other local language), who are furthermore expected to acquire the nativised variety. This shift is particularly evident in urban areas and among younger generations, most notably in the capital, Maputo, where the percentage reaches 62.5% (Chimbutane et al. 2023: 26).

As more people spoke Portuguese, initially as a second then as a first language, it began to absorb characteristics from local Bantu languages, becoming a marker of local and national identity. Eventually, the main outcome of the nativisation process is the emergence of new linguistic forms and uses, accompanied by an identitarian perception of the social acceptability of these innovative forms and uses, which are no longer perceived as errors but as "productive and socially acceptable forms related to the new linguistic and cultural environment" (Firmino 2021: 165). These include phonological developments (Langa & Chaúque 2024), lexical borrowing from both Bantu languages and South African English (Timbane 2017), uses of the

dativic clitic in accusative contexts (Gonçalves et al. 2024), changes in the argument structure of verbs (Gonçalves 2010), to name a few. Such emergent linguistic features are further supported by five decades of a Mozambican political, economic and social reality, providing the necessary impetus for the development of a distinct local variety. For an overview of the structural features and usage patterns that attest to the autonomous development of MP, we refer to the article by Soares da Silva & Mevis (2024).⁷

The stabilisation, codification and symbolic affirmation of the new variety perceived as homogeneous, most conspicuous in the development of dictionaries and grammar as well as in its adoption by literary writers, are indicators of the **fourth stage** of *Endonormative stabilisation*. Although there are signs that MP is progressively moving toward the next stage, with many changes being currently increasingly recognised and institutionalised, albeit partially and informally, by public authorities, teachers and writers, endonormative stabilisation remains far from achieved (Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 16). New Mozambican forms and usages have not yet been officially sanctioned as local norms, and common structural patterns present in the everyday speech of speakers are still classified as deviations and often marginalised (Maciel 2021: 58). The lack of official resources such as dictionaries, grammars and textbooks furthermore hinders the standardisation process. Despite being characterised by unique phonetic, syntactic and lexical features that distinguish it from both European and Brazilian Portuguese, MP remains strongly influenced by the European standard, particularly in formal settings and official institutions. Schools continue to rely heavily on learning materials from Portugal (Maciel 2021: 59).⁸ This leads to a discrepancy between the increasingly obsolete EP standard and the linguistic reality of the Mozambican population.

The ongoing external influence from EP still prevents MP from fully transitioning from an exonormative to an endonormative orientation, as foreseen by the Dynamic Model (Schneider 2003: 273), and from being recognised as a legitimate new form of the language, with the development of adequate tools for its standardisation. A few notable initiatives are nevertheless worth mentioning, such as the ongoing “Dictionary of Portuguese of Mozambique” (DiPoMo) project, and codification of MP’s specificities has initiated, although it remains an incipient,

⁷ Naturally, the emergence of a distinctive, nativised variety of Portuguese in Mozambique – one that sets itself apart from other national varieties like EP and BP – should not obscure the fact that this new variety is itself inherently heterogeneous. Like any language, or national variety of a language, MP multifaceted entity encompassing a range of subvarieties “correlating with region, ethnicity, social status, or even the first language of the speakers” (Firmino 2024: 818; see also Chimbutane 2018).

⁸ It is important to note, however, that some important resources have already been developed, most of them available on the website “Cátedra do Português de Moçambique” of the Eduardo Mondlane University (<https://www.catedraportugues.uem.mz/>) (Maciel 2021: 61).

more lexical than grammatical process (Soares da Silva 2024: 36). Although it is expected that MP eventually reaches the stage of endonormative stabilisation, “adverse circumstances, the absence of adequate language policies, practical difficulties, economic and cultural convenience, and a lack of prestige, along with linguistic prejudices against the Mozambican variety and other African varieties” may ultimately hinder the establishment of the own norms of the new variety, in accordance with the vision of a dynamic model that may not reach its final stages (Soares da Silva 2024: 37). *Differentiation*, in turn, the **final stage** in Schneider’s model, appears to remain distant, as it necessitates a consolidated national identity and a sense of political and cultural self-sufficiency that have yet to fully emerge in contemporary Mozambique.

2.2. Pluricentric Portuguese: current dynamics of a global language

A pluricentric language is one that has grown into multiple varieties recognised as legitimate, each with their own norms reflecting the distinct linguistic, cultural and social identities of their speakers, and with their own specific status within a given region or country (Clyne 1992; Muhr 2016; Soares da Silva 2014). Pluricentricity can therefore be regarded as the natural outcome of Schneider’s five-stage Dynamic Model, arising when new varieties have reached the differentiation stage and achieved some degree of autonomy. However, the model does not ensure their automatic recognition and legitimisation by (local) authorities – which is essentially a political issue – meaning that these varieties are ultimately not treated on an equal footing. Pluricentricity ultimately involves questions of (national) identity and power, frequently resulting in asymmetries between varieties, divided between dominant and non-dominant ones, and competition among different normative models (Soares da Silva 2018: 113).

Pluricentricity has furthermore significant implications for applied issues such as the standardisation process of emerging varieties and language policy. To acknowledge a language as pluricentric represents a significant advancement in the legitimation and political validation of emerging, non-dominant varieties, as it helps them attain status and encourages them on the path of standardisation. Pluricentricity therefore provides a framework for recognising these new varieties as part of a larger linguistic ecosystem, shifting the perspective from a “deviation from the centre” to a “several interacting centres” approach that acknowledges these varieties

as legitimate new centres of the language (Clyne 1992).⁹ Achieving genuine pluricentricity is therefore also a matter of politics and depends on the implementation of adequate language policies that legitimise a new variety as an independent norm-setting centre. Summing up, pluricentricity is both a *de facto* situation resulting from the dynamic evolution of postcolonial varieties (as laid out in the Dynamic Model) as well as the product of language policies designed to address this reality effectively, and therefore brings top-down and bottom-up approaches together.

Present-day Portuguese currently faces the challenge of moving from a fundamentally bicentric to a truly pluricentric management of its linguistic norms (Soares da Silva 2018, 2024). Although the pluricentric nature of the Portuguese language has been politically acknowledged by the Dili Plan¹⁰, in practice it continues to be dominated by two standards: the European and the Brazilian (Maciel 2021: 57; Soares da Silva 2022: 138). Alongside these historically primary standards, however, a constellation of emerging varieties is beginning to take shape, particularly on the African continent. Most notably, Angolan and Mozambican Portuguese are gradually establishing themselves as distinct national standards, with their local norms already emerging as a result of nativisation, supported by significant population growth in Africa, as demographic projections indicate that by the end of the 21st century, Angola and Mozambique will account for around 60% of the global population of Portuguese-speaking countries, while Brazil's proportion is expected to drop from 74% (in 2015) to 35% (in 2100) (Soares da Silva 2022: 139).

This projected state of affairs reinforces the idea of an inevitable linguistic and geopolitical transformation in the Lusophone space (Soares da Silva 2018: 127), and emphasises the need for a more genuinely pluricentric approach to the standardisation of Portuguese, accompanying and accommodating the increasing linguistic diversity within the Lusophone world. The pluricentric model of standardisation appears as the most appropriate and necessary, and must precede the potential – and somewhat idealistic – search for a supranational or pan-Lusophone norm (Soares da Silva 2024: 45). Such an undertaking calls for a set of adequate and effective measures that should rest on three pillars: descriptive, normative and applied (Soares da Silva 2024: 38). One of the key applied challenges is to incorporate insights from the description of

⁹ However, the “deviation from the centre” paradigm is rather difficult to escape. Firmino (2021), for instance, resorts to expressions like *desvio* ‘deviation’, or *formas desviantes* ‘deviant forms’ in his descriptions of MP’s linguistic innovations, instead of more neutral terms.

¹⁰ The Dili Plan was adopted during the 22nd Ordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP), held on July 20, 2017. The plan was named after Dili, the capital of Timor-Leste (East Timor), where the meeting took place (Maciel 2021: 57).

pluricentric linguistic variation into official language policies, normative positions and educational practices (Soares da Silva 2021: 487). Pluricentricity must also enter the classroom, with the development of tools that allow to adequately deal with the teaching of different norms and to enhance intercomprehension and mutual intelligibility¹¹ among speakers of different varieties of Portuguese. In teaching, the challenge is therefore to overcome linguistic prejudice and implement a “variant awareness” approach instead of an “error detection” approach in the classroom (Maciel 2021: 61). The present work aims to contribute to the first pillar – the descriptive dimension – in the hope to pave the way for the following two pillars.

Currently, however, African varieties still have very little say in the standardisation process and continue to experience a tension between endogenous nativisation and exogenous normative pressure from EP. The recognition of African varieties as legitimate, independent varieties with their own standards is still far from achieved. The Lusophone community is more than ever facing the major challenge of a multilateral management of linguistic norms essential for achieving the much hoped-for pluricentric codification of Portuguese. While pluricentricity as a theoretical framework acknowledges these varieties as distinct entities with their own norms, their practical recognition and acceptance within the broader Portuguese-speaking community remains a work in progress.

2.3. Multilingual Mozambique: where Portuguese meets Bantu

The Dynamic Model provides a framework for understanding how contact scenarios drive language evolution in postcolonial settings. In other words, language contact is one of the primary drivers behind that five-stage model, when a language is transplanted into a new environment where it starts interacting with different speech communities. Schneider (2003: 271) emphasises this by stating that “the evolution of New Englishes [and postcolonial varieties in general] is regarded as a special type of contact-induced language change”. The model underscores that language contact is neither a static nor one-dimensional phenomenon; rather, it is an adaptive process shaped by complex social dynamics that reflect the dialectic relationship between the speech communities in contact and their respective languages. The

¹¹ “There is a set of characteristics that enable communication within the Lusophone world, which constitutes the system. It is within the system that the general rules of languages are stored. Therefore, we will continue speaking the Portuguese language and benefitting from the rules of its system. However, the norm will vary according to practical uses that originate from individual usage” (Timbane 2017: 36).

linguistic outcomes of contact situations are significantly shaped by the nature of the linguistic input each group provides, so that it is crucial to understand the type of contact situation that we are dealing with (Schneider 2003: 240). The following paragraphs therefore sketch the sociolinguistic panorama of Mozambique and the speech groups involved, along with demographic factors, social dynamics, and language attitudes and ideologies.

2.3.1. The Bantu languages of Mozambique

Mozambican society remains markedly multilingual and multicultural to this day (Langa & Chaúque 2024: 260). In Mozambique, language contact forms an integral part of the daily language experience of most speakers, continuously shaping the evolution of Portuguese within the country. Upon independence, Mozambique emerged as a young nation whose large territory was mainly a colonial legacy. Populations with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds were ‘unified’ under a new, and for the overwhelming majority, foreign language – Portuguese – imbued with fresh ideological significance by the leaders of the independence movement. Despite their differences, they increasingly shared a common linguistic experience as they interacted with(in) a shared geographic and political space. Over time, the intensive contact between Portuguese and the various African languages of Mozambique led to profound transformations in both language groups – both through the *mozambicanization* of Portuguese as well as through the incorporation of Portuguese elements into the local languages (e.g., Timbane & Berlinck 2019), highlighting the bidirectional nature of language contact.

As regards the linguistic panorama of Mozambique, most of the languages spoken in the country belong to the Bantu group, more specifically southern Bantu, a subbranch from the Niger-Congo family. The Bantu languages, commonly referred to as *línguas maternas* ‘mother tongues’, form the truly indigenous linguistic foundation of Mozambique and the primary stratum with which Portuguese has the most extensive contacts. They are prevalent both in terms of number of speakers and distribution across the territory, making them the most likely to exert structural influence on Portuguese (Langa 2019: 267). Additionally, Mozambique is home to several Asiatic languages including Gujarati, Memane, Hindu and Urdu, introduced through migration movements, particularly from the Indian subcontinent (aided by historic ties with the former Portuguese colony of Goa), and to Arabic, predominantly in the northern regions of the country where about half of the population practices Islam. Mozambique is furthermore surrounded by English-speaking countries (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Malawi,

Zambia and Tanzania) and maintains close economic ties with South Africa (Timbane 2017: 21; Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 273; Firmino 2024: 809).

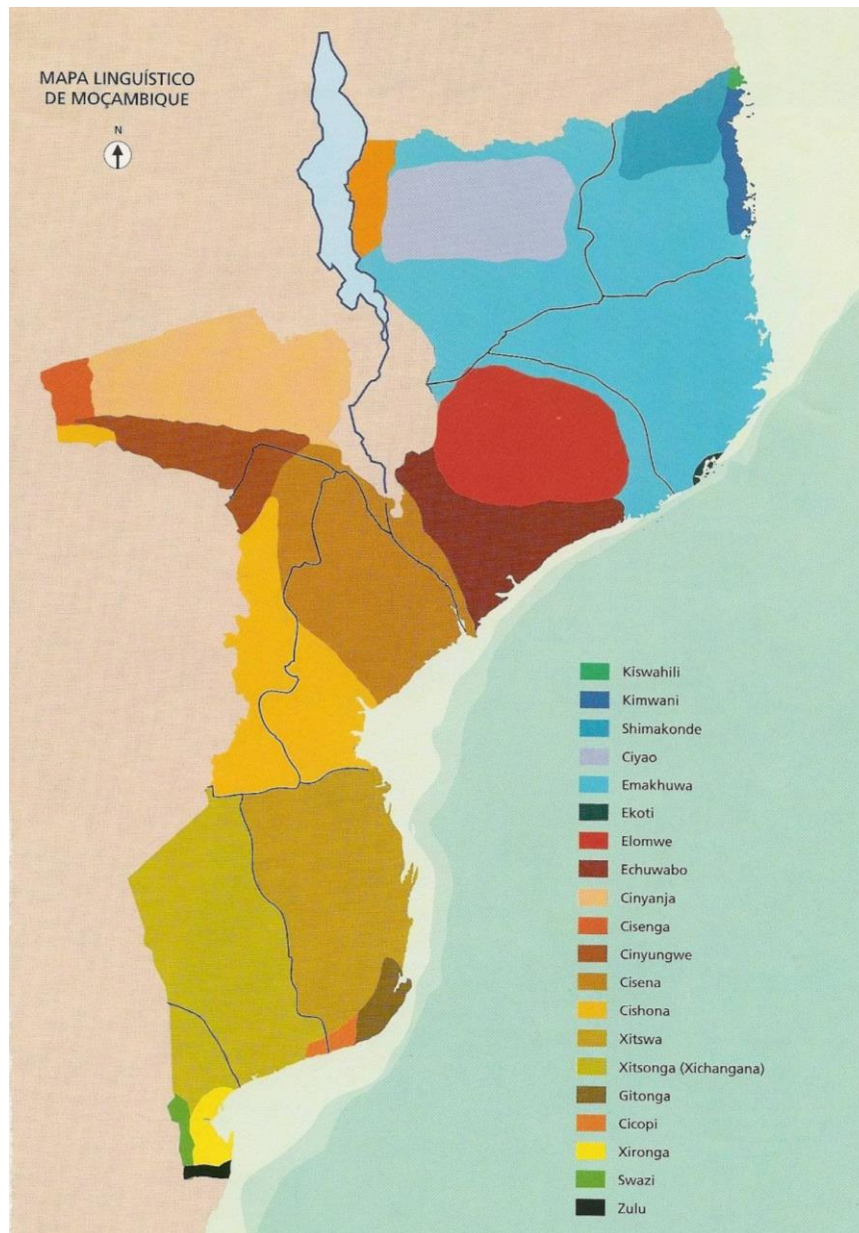


Figure 2. Ethnolinguistic map of Mozambique (from Macaire 1996)

According to the various censuses conducted by the National Institute of Statistics (INE) – in 1980, 1997, 2007 and 2017 – an estimated 21 Bantu languages are spoken in Mozambique (see Table 1), the spelling of which has undergone a process of standardisation (Ngunga et al. 2022), along with regional varieties of these languages without orthographic standardisation spoken by population groups scattered across the country, mainly in rural and isolated regions.¹²

¹² The *Ethnologue* (Eberhard et al. 2024), on the other hand, lists over 40 Bantu languages.

The most widely spoken Bantu language is Makhuwa in the north of the country, followed by Changana in the southern part of the country, chiefly in the region of the capital city Maputo.¹³ According to the well-known classification established by Guthrie (1967-71), the languages spoken in Mozambique fall into 3 groups, each identified by an alphabet letter: Zone N, Zone P, Zone S – to which Zone G can be added, composed mainly of Swahili (Firmino 2010: 1-2; Ashby & Barbosa 2011: 6).¹⁴

N°	Language	Speakers (%)	Provinces
1	Makhuwa	26.1	Nampula, Cabo Delgado, Niassa, Sofala, Zambézia
2	Changana	10.5	Gaza, Maputo, Inhambane, Niassa
3	Sena	7.8	Sofala, Manica, Tete, Zambézia
4	Lomwe	7.2	Zambézia, Nampula, Niassa
5	Nyanja	5.8	Tete, Niassa, Zambézia
6	Chuwabu	4.8	Zambézia, Nampula, Sofala
7	Ndau	4.5	Manica, Sofala
8	Tshwa	4.4	Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo, Sofala
9	Nyungwe	2.9	Tete, Manica
10	Yaawo (Yao)	2.2	Niassa, Cabo Delgado
11	Copi	1.9	Gaza, Inhambane, Maputo
12	Makonde	1.7	Cabo Delgado
13	Tewe	1.7	Manica
14	Rhonga	1.5	Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane
15	Gitonga	1.5	Inhambane, Gaza, Maputo
16	Manyika	0.9	Manica
17	Cibalke (Cibarwe)	0.7	Manica
18	Mwani	0.5	Cabo Delgado
19	Koti	0.4	Nampula
20	Shona	0.2	Manica
21	Swahili	0.1	Cabo Delgado

Table 1. The Bantu languages of Mozambique and their regional distribution (adapted from Langa 2019: 267-268)¹⁵

Some of these languages form groups of partly mutually intelligible varieties (such as Changana, Rhonga and Tshwa), and many of these languages are spoken across borders (e.g., the Nyanja language, also known as Chinyanja, Chewa or Chichewa (Bresnan & Mchombo 1897), is also spoken in parts of Malawi and Zambia). In other words, in Mozambique, as is the case in many parts of Africa, linguistic borders do not correspond to political ones (Timbane 2017: 21) – with the notable exception of Portuguese (Figure 2).

¹³ It should be noted that Bantu language names often include a class prefix – e.g., Emakhuwa or Xichangana, as can be seen in the captions from Figure 2. However, for clarity, we have chosen to use the ‘Western’ convention and refer to them by their stem form only.

¹⁴ By contrast, the Bantu languages of Angola fall under the letters H, K and R (Petter 2015: 61). The fact that the Bantu languages of Angola and Mozambique belong to different typological subgroups might in part explain the fact that Recipient passives are ultimately absent from Angolan Portuguese, although such a claim needs further empirical support.

¹⁵ The percentages provided are drawn from INE’s 2007 census; the current percentages are possibly slightly lower, but the global picture remains largely the same (see also Chimbutane et al. 2023: 12).

Belonging to the same typological family, Bantu languages share a set of linguistic characteristics. They are especially known for their complex noun class system and rich verbal morphology, making an extensive use of prefixes to mark number, class membership, as well as agreement on the verb (Ngunga & Simbine 2012: 157; Petter 2015). As regards syntactic features, Bantu languages are considered accusative languages, due to their person-marking alignment system. In a recent study, Madrid (2023: 2) observes that transitivity in Bantu resists traditional analyses of transitivity in the accusative typology. He therefore suggests that Bantu languages obey an event-oriented, rather than participant-oriented, transitivity strategy, which allows for a rather flexible morphosemantic encoding of the relation between participants and events (Madrid 2023: 19).

Regarding verb-object agreement, Bantu languages typically show robust agreement between the verb and its object, marked by noun class concord prefixes on the verb. This feature allows for flexible word order since grammatical relations are overtly marked. Interestingly, Bantu languages are characterised by a set of valency-changing operations that employ verbal extensions or affixes to alter the degree of transitivity of a construction. These extensions can moreover be combined: Ngunga & Simbine (2012: 157) note about Changana, a Bantu language spoken in southern Mozambique, that verbal extensions “can be affixed not only individually but also in combination with one another within the same root, provided that certain principles are observed”.

The most typical and widely shared verbal extensions across Bantu languages are the following: the applicative construction to introduce an additional argument, e.g., beneficiaries, instruments, or locations, resulting in ditransitive constructions; the causative construction allowing for the addition of an agent or a causer to the event, often marked by a specific causative suffix; and reflexive or reciprocal constructions that reduce the degree of transitivity by merging core arguments or emphasising self-directed action (Petter 2015; Madrid 2023). Another typical characteristic – which has important conceptual implications for the remainder of this dissertation – is the flexible and sometimes interchangeable status of direct and indirect objects, which may both be marked on the verb, with some languages favouring one over the other when multiple objects are present. Furthermore, the applicative extension permits to “change the status of an adjunct into an argument. In other words, an applicative construction changes an element that is an indirect participant (or not a participant at all) into a direct participant” (Madrid 2023: 13).

In Bantu, passivisation corresponds to a morphosyntactic process, as passive constructions are formed by adding a specific suffix (commonly *-w-*, *-iw-* or a similar morpheme) to the

verb stem. Consequently, the new subject (former object) agrees with the verb through noun class concord. Crucially, passivisation may interact with object marking, thereby affecting the hierarchy of arguments. Animacy or thematic roles may also come in to influence this hierarchy. This implies that indirect objects in applicative constructions may become subjects in the passive, thus forming Recipient passives. Further discussion of relevant features regarding passivisation in Bantu languages are provided in Chapter 9.

2.3.2. Asymmetric multilingualism: a “colonially manufactured” diglossia

Despite Mozambique’s multilingual reality, languages do not enjoy equal status. Portuguese maintains a dominant position over the indigenous Bantu languages, much reminiscent of the situation that prevailed in colonial times. While under the colonial regime, Portuguese was overtly associated with prestige and power, in post-independence Mozambique it remains a primary vehicle for upward social mobility, albeit in a more covert manner. This has resulted in a diglossic linguistic landscape in which different languages serve distinct functions that continues up to the present day.

As Mozambique’s sole official language, Portuguese dominates formal domains, including education, governance, administration and the media. It is predominantly an urban language, associated with modernity, capitalism and economic opportunity. In contrast, Bantu languages, which are excluded from formal settings and the educational system, are tied to rural life and to traditions often perceived as outdated. This diglossic distribution of languages closely mirrors the country’s urban-rural divide, with socioeconomic status playing a key role. Chimbutane et al. (2023: 18) identify a correlation between the use of Portuguese, urban residency, and higher socioeconomic standing, as opposed to the more widespread use of Bantu languages in rural areas among less privileged populations.

Ultimately, this linguistic imbalance reveals a striking paradox: despite its official status, Portuguese has not yet been entirely nationalised as it remains heavily reliant on the EP standard, i.e., it struggles to break free from the exonormative orientation. Conversely, while Bantu languages have now been acknowledged as national languages in the second constitution (C-MZ 1990, art. 5), they still lack official status, and language policies have largely overlooked their promotion and integration into formal domains (Macaringue 2017).

This situation of diglossia, modelled after the “one nation one language” ideology imported by the European colonizers, according to which a unified national identity is best achieved

through a single language, has perpetuated a monolingual bias that prioritises one dominant language, Portuguese, over the multilingual reality of the nation. Therefore, Portuguese, as the language of power, knowledge and upward social mobility, continues to be “evaluated as suiting more formal types of communication, while local Bantu languages generally connote a less sophisticated, more rural medium of communication” (Ashby & Barbosa 2011: 6).

This monolingual bias even led, in the aftermath of independence, to some radical attitudes and behaviours, such as parents forbidding their children or teachers forbidding their students from speaking in their Bantu mother tongue, allegedly because this would hinder the smooth acquisition of Portuguese (Ponso 2012: 131). The privileged status of Portuguese motivated many parents, especially from urban middle-class families, to socialise and educate their children exclusively in Portuguese. This approach, driven by the monoglotic belief that ‘stainless’¹⁶ fluency in Portuguese would secure them better professional opportunities, paved the way for a widespread process of language shift from Bantu languages to Portuguese¹⁷ (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 272). Middle-class families have thus become the new stage of the reproduction of this diglossia, with parents, pressured by political-ideological forces, prioritising the transmission of Portuguese to their children at the expense of Bantu languages. One conspicuous outcome of this process of language shift, however, is the emergence of new generations of monolingual L1 speakers of Portuguese, arguably the first to acquire a truly nativised variety.

The monoglotic ideology, along with its associated biases and the ensuing language shift, has undeniably proved detrimental for Bantu languages and poses a threat to their preservation (Ponso 2012: 124). Yet, these languages are not considered endangered, and Figure 3 serves as a useful reminder of the demographic importance of Bantu languages in contemporary Mozambique. In recent decades, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of safeguarding indigenous languages, increasingly regarded as essential components of cultural identity. In the revised 1990 Constitution, mention of the Mozambican languages was made for the first time, in the following statement: “the State promotes the development and increased use of Bantu languages in public life, including in formal education” (C-MZ 1990, art. 5; Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 272). One of the first initiatives in the sense of an enhanced

¹⁶ Another lingering stigma inherited from colonial times is the concept of *pretoguês* (from *preto* ‘black’) a derogatory term used to describe Bantu-influenced Portuguese, as opposed to its so-called ‘correct’ usage based on European norms. Accordingly, the monolingual bias entails that proper Portuguese must remain entirely free from any influence of indigenous languages – that is, a myth.

¹⁷ This process of language shift initiated by language policies and ideologies was further facilitated by inter-ethnic marriages and forced mobility in the aftermath of independence.

use of the Bantu languages was the introduction of bilingual education in selected primary schools from 2003 onwards (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 273). More recently, some radio and television programs have started being broadcast in local languages, whereas the written press remains the exclusive domain of Portuguese (Firmino 2024: 817).

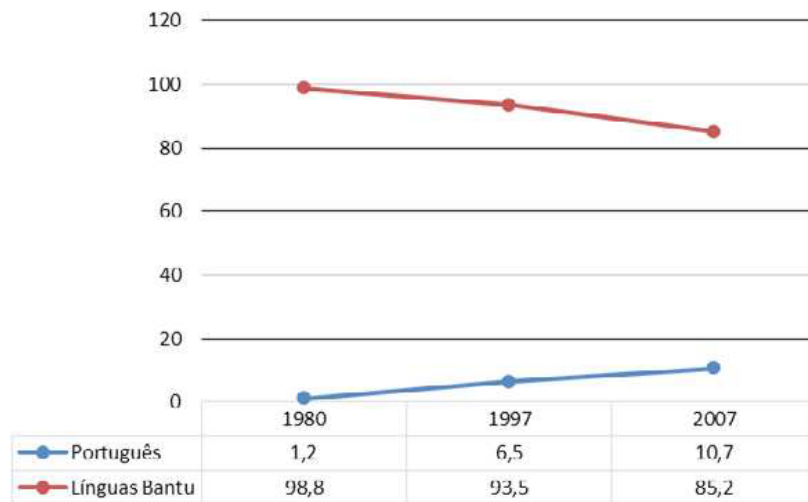


Figure 3. Evolution of the number of speakers of Portuguese and Bantu languages between 1980 and 2007 (Ponso 2012: 123)

With respect to language attitudes towards indigenous languages, research has shown that linguistic prejudice does not lead to outright rejection of these languages. A recent study among urban bilingual university students revealed that the respondents did not hold negative attitudes towards their Bantu languages and did not believe that speaking their Bantu mother tongue would undermine their national identity – on the contrary, speaking a Bantu language tended to make them feel more genuinely Mozambican. However, the respondents also tended to view individuals who do not speak Portuguese as less intelligent, reflecting the speakers’ belief – whether correct or not – in the limitations of these languages, especially regarding the transmission of knowledge (Langa 2019: 277-279).

The attitudinal study carried out by Langa (2019) reveals that mentalities are gradually changing. In particular, a generational transition can be observed: while the independence generation strongly adhered to exonormative attitudes about what is considered ‘correct’ Portuguese that prioritised European norms, the post-independence generation displays more positive attitudes both towards their own variety and towards indigenous languages. There is increasing covert prestige associated with MP, as reflected in the social rejection of the *sotaque de branco* (‘white accent’), that is, of a pronunciation regarded as trying to imitate the Portuguese people and perceived as artificial and affected (Firmino 2021: 184). The role of

writers and universities is also key in fostering recognition of the intrinsic value of the local variety as well as a renewed appreciation for Bantu languages as markers of cultural identity. Moreover, Ponso (2012: 133) revealed how certain cultural and social contexts still call for the exclusive use of Bantu languages, e.g., traditional ceremonies and visits to family members, often in more remote and rural areas of the country, demonstrating their continued relevance and resilience. Drawing on six months of ethnographic participant observation, the author notes: “it seems to me that the predominance of Portuguese occurs more at the socio-symbolic level and within the ‘privileged’ domains of language use rather than in the linguistic diversity of everyday practices in demographic terms” (Ponso 2012: 124-125).

It follows from the above that Mozambique stands at a crossroads, with the identification of significant opportunities for fostering and maintaining multilingualism. However, much remains to be done to fully integrate Bantu languages into Mozambican society and to achieve effective changes in language practices and attitudes. Bantu languages, deeply embedded in the nation’s cultural identity, nevertheless remain sidelined in public life and policy. Their growing recognition as cultural and national assets suggests a positive trajectory, but overcoming linguistic hierarchies and the monolingual bias requires sustained effort. Contemporary Mozambique remains plagued by a persistent discrepancy between fine rhetoric about the cultural value of Bantu languages and linguistic policies that fail to address the complex sociolinguistic realities on the ground (Ponso 2012; Macarique 2017; Patel 2022; Firmino 2024). The absence of adequate language policies represents a significant obstacle to endonormative stabilisation, as concluded in section 2.1.

There is an urgent need for robust language policies tailored to Mozambique’s unique multilingual and multicultural setting. These include the promotion of bilingual education¹⁸ and adequate teacher training with a strong focus on linguistic diversity, in an attempt to mitigate the “dilemmas and challenges faced by families in the management of multilingualism in diglossic postcolonial contexts” (Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023: 267). Importantly, these efforts must be developed according to two complementary strategies: through the recognition of the local variety, i.e., MP, on the one hand, as an essential step to achieve true linguistic emancipation, and through acknowledging the relevance of the Bantu languages of

¹⁸ In 2018, a new law was approved that recognises bilingual education as an official mode of teaching in Mozambique. Following this law, a Bilingual Education Expansion Strategy was developed for the period 2020-2029. However, despite significant steps being taken since bilingual education was introduced, this mode of teaching is still in its early and precarious stages, especially when compared to the monolingual Portuguese model. For example, there are about 7 million children in primary education, of which only 10% are enrolled in bilingual education (Patel 2022: 9).

Mozambique in shaping the local linguistic landscape. While the present work sees in the valorisation, study, and teaching of the nativised national variety (inevitably influenced by contact languages) a powerful instrument for civic participation (Soares da Silva 2024: 40), we also strongly believe in the importance of the revitalisation of Bantu languages. The implementation of language policies that enhance their use in the public sector, coupled with an awareness of MP's own intrinsic qualities, could pave the way for a more inclusive linguistic environment. Thus, the pluricentric standardisation of Portuguese globally must necessarily be accompanied at the level of individual nations with language policies that strengthen the role of local languages, reinforcing multilingual maintenance.

3. Cognitive (Socio)Linguistics: meaning, variation and cognition

While the previous chapter provided key insights into the sociohistorical backdrop necessary for interpreting the linguistic evolution of MP, the current chapter discusses the theoretical foundations of Cognitive Linguistics that underpin the present research. The three publications forming the core of the present dissertation all subscribe to this framework, although they each concentrate on different facets. Section 3.1 introduces the field of Cognitive Linguistics and its recent development into Cognitive Sociolinguistics, as a useful framework for exploring the dialectic relationship between language variation and change and the sociohistorical context. Section 3.2 provides a cognitive-functional (re)assessment of language contact phenomena, with a particular focus on postcolonial settings. The following chapter will then shift focus to the models of grammar that will offer suitable tools for the linguistic analysis proper, namely Cognitive Grammar and Construction Grammar.

3.1. Cognitive Linguistics: main tenets

3.1.1. Primacy of meaning

Cognitive Linguistics is essentially a meaning-oriented, experientialist and usage-based model of language that views language as an “instrument for organising, processing and conveying information” rooted in human cognition, grounded in experience and shaped by usage (Geeraerts 2016: 531). It fully subscribes to the theory of embodied and situated cognition, viewing language as grounded in the human body and sensory-motor experiences, as well as in

a specific sociocultural context (Langacker 1994, 1997; Geeraerts 2016; Schmid 2016). It therefore sustains that language should not be viewed as a separate cognitive faculty, but as integrated with general cognitive abilities.

This assumption is known as the *non-autonomy* (or embeddedness) and *non-modularity* of language, and encapsulated in the cognitive commitment as originally formulated by Lakoff (1990: 40) “to make one’s account of human language accord with what is generally known about the mind and the brain, from other disciplines as well as our own”. Cognitive Linguistics furthermore supports the view that language cannot be fully understood without considering its interaction with cultural, social, and environmental factors, challenging traditional formalist approaches that separate language from cognition and context. This has given rise to the so-called “sociosemiotic commitment” to complement the cognitive commitment, i.e., “to make one’s account of human language accord with the status of language [...] as an intersubjective, historically and socially variable tool (Geeraerts 2016: 537).

Cognitive Linguistics is notable for its strong focus on meaning. Its foundational principle, simply put, is that language is “all about meaning” (Geeraerts 2006a: 3), giving its importance back to semantics which had been backgrounded in formalist and derivational frameworks. Cognitive Linguistics thus makes a series of assumptions about the *nature* of meaning – viewed as product of usage and experience, non-autonomous and highly adaptive – which distinguishes it from other functional and semantic approaches to language. These assumptions about meaning are extendable to language, as meaning is a central and inseparable component of linguistic forms (see Geeraerts 2006a: 4–6).

First of all, meaning is *experiential*, i.e., it is grounded in embodied and sociocultural experiences of the world. Through every speech event, our experiences with the world – physical, mental, social – come to be encoded within the grammar, which, in turn, points to the importance of language use for linguistic knowledge. Since it emerges from experience, meaning is also encyclopaedic and *non-autonomous*, i.e., it is not separate nor separable from other forms of knowledge. Third, meaning is not static, but constantly subject to change. As the world evolves, so does meaning, being closely tied to our knowledge of the world. Meaning is thus *dynamic*, flexible and context-sensitive, influenced by speaker intention and listener interpretation, with each speech event. Over time, language changes and evolves to meet speakers’ communicative and cognitive needs. Last but not least, meaning is *perspectival*, i.e., it is not an objective representation of the outside world but embodies our perspective onto the world. Our access to (knowledge of) the world is thus mediated by our conceptualisations.

Language reflects how speakers conceptualise and construe reality, allowing for different perspectives on the same situation.

From these four main characteristics of linguistic meaning stem different concepts and theories that stand central to Cognitive Linguistics (Geeraerts 2006a: 19). Among the key notions that will be used throughout this dissertation, we may cite the following: from the perspectival nature of language, the crucial concept of *construal* can be derived (which will be further discussed in section 3.2.1). The dynamic and flexible nature of meaning is particularly well illustrated by *prototype theory*, a theory of categorisation that views categories as structured around central instances forming the prototypical core, with more peripheral instances at the margins sharing characteristics with members from other categories. This results in flexible and fuzzy boundaries and partial overlap between categories (Taylor 1995; Geeraerts 1997). The non-autonomous nature of grammar prompts the identification of the relevant domains of experience and *conceptual mappings* that lie at the basis of our conceptualisations in language, especially through mechanisms such as conceptual metaphor and metonymy, image schemas, frames and mental spaces. Finally, the experiential grounding of language calls for a *usage-based* model of grammar, which in turn informs and shapes the methodology employed (see Chapter 5).

3.1.2. Cognitive Sociolinguistics: a sociocognitive approach to variation

Recently, a plea has been made towards taking the social and cultural aspects of language more seriously, especially language variation, arising from an increasing awareness that ‘language as cognition’ also “encompasses shared and socially distributed knowledge and not just individual ideas and experiences” (Geeraerts 2016: 533; see also Schmid 2016). Embodying this important *social turn* in Cognitive Linguistics, a relatively novel and promising strand of research has emerged: Cognitive Sociolinguistics. This approach seeks to integrate the intra- and extralinguistic factors of language variation, bringing together the social and cognitive dimensions of language use (Kristiansen & Dirven 2008; Geeraerts et al. 2010; Kristiansen et al. 2022; Soares da Silva 2020). This sociocognitive framework thus strives to “achieve a convergence of Cognitive Linguistics and the tradition of sociolinguistics” (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 2), with the aim of introducing a richer semantic perspective into the study of language variation.

As a usage-based model, Cognitive Sociolinguistics aligns with variationist sociolinguistics in recognising linguistic variation and heterogeneity as the normal condition of any speech community. By approaching language in its actual usage and understanding linguistic structure (the grammar) as observable *regularities* inescapably opens the door to exceptions, hence to variation. Since in each speech interaction the speaker may choose to either reproduce or modify these regularities, variation emerges as an “immediate and inevitable consequence of language usage” (Soares da Silva 2020: 212). The changes introduced may reflect either socially- or conceptually-driven concerns, influenced by factors like the sociocultural context, the specific communicative needs of individual speakers, or the conceptual mappings and mental categories shared by the speech community.

While traditional sociolinguistics have dedicated much of their work to the analysis of the social meaning of the variation, Cognitive Sociolinguistics places more emphasis on the conceptual motivations driving variation. However, these two aspects should not be viewed as separate but rather as interwoven dimensions of linguistic variation, as “meaning does not exist in isolation: it is created in and transmitted through the interaction of people” (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 3). The meaning of words and constructions ultimately arise from “our individual, collective and historical experience”, giving rise to what is known as socially and culturally situated cognition (Soares da Silva 2020: 233). Cognitive Sociolinguistics thus acknowledges the “ternary relationship between form, meaning, and context” (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 8), which are to be understood as not merely juxtaposed but intertwined dimensions that all involve cognition. Their integration into the analysis is crucial for achieving a more accurate understanding of linguistic variation.

3.1.3. Meaningful variation

What motivates this convergence of the social and cognitive aspects of linguistic variation is ultimately the view that that all variation is necessarily meaningful and entails some degree of meaning change, both at the social and linguistic levels. Cognitive Linguistics, as a meaning-oriented approach to language, emphasises the centrality of semantics and highlights the conceptual shifts entailed by linguistic variation. Cognitive Sociolinguistics, in turn, underscores the necessity of exploring the correlation between social and conceptual aspects of linguistic variation, seriously taking into consideration conceptual variation (such as *construal*,

see next chapter) alongside more traditional sociolinguistic variables (Soares da Silva 2020: 228).

The present dissertation fully aligns with this perspective, aiming to uncover the interplay between the sociocultural and conceptual factors underlying the emergence of Recipient passives in MP. Notably, it prioritises the exploration of the conceptual dimensions of variation (see Chapters 7 and 8), marking a significant departure from earlier research which predominantly framed such phenomena as outcomes of contact-induced parameter transfer in contexts of second language acquisition (Gonçalves 2004, 2010; Nhatuve 2022; Gonçalves et al. 2022). While contact-induced transfer offers a partial explanation (as will be explored hereafter in section 3.2), the present work posits that this variation is also inherently meaningful, grounded in a solid cognitive and conceptual basis (see Chapter 7).

The emphasis on conceptual factors becomes particularly significant when examining meaning variation in pluricentric contexts. In fact, the sociocognitive research agenda for pluricentric languages addresses both the *variation of meaning*, especially the interplay between conceptual and social factors, and the *meaning of variation*, which refers to how pluricentric variation is cognitively represented in the language users' minds (Soares da Silva 2021: 480). The first aspect aims to solve the complex puzzle of how national linguistic differences correlate with conceptual differences, while the second positions language attitudes as a central object of study, particularly in relation to the cultural cognitive models underlying them. In the case of MP, this implies emphasising how new constructions carry meaning and reflect conceptual nuances while also highlighting the ideologies shaping language attitudes, which in turn may influence its standardisation process – as well as the preservation of indigenous languages.

An additional factor that must be considered in the case of MP is language contact, a defining characteristic of the variation of meaning in postcolonial settings. Linguistic changes in such scenarios are often reductively regarded as the byproducts of incomplete acquisition and/or interference from native languages, leading to a tendency to overlook the complex semantic and conceptual shifts at play. Furthermore, dominant and non-dominant varieties of pluricentric languages tend to correlate with positive and negative evaluations, respectively. Such attitudes are particularly pronounced in postcolonial contexts, where emerging varieties may be plagued by perceptions of inferiority (as reflected in the concept of incomplete acquisition or the use of pejorative labels such as *pretoguês*). These perceptions, in turn, pose a significant challenge to their endonormative development (see Chapter 2). Addressing these issues requires a robust theoretical framework that integrates sociocognitive and language contact perspectives. A promising approach in this regard is Cognitive Contact Linguistics, a

recent, specialised subbranch of Cognitive Sociolinguistics. This framework acknowledges both the pervasiveness of language contact phenomena and the necessity of incorporating a sociocognitive perspective into the study of contact-induced variation (Zenner et al. 2019; Winter-Froemel et al. 2023).

3.2. Towards a sociocognitive dynamic interpretation of contact-induced variation and change

As emerged from the sociolinguistic overview of Mozambique presented in Chapter 2, a discussion on language contact is required. Since postcolonial varieties typically arise in contact settings, a proper theory of language contact is essential for understanding language variation and change in such contexts. The monolingual bias hinted at earlier (see Chapter 2, section 2.3.2) along with misunderstandings about the workings of language contact have fuelled linguistic prejudice and led to an undervaluation of the linguistic and cultural richness of postcolonial varieties. (Timbane 2017: 36; Soares da Silva 2024: 41). Just as uncovering the evolutionary pattern behind the development of postcolonial varieties allowed for a natural understanding of the changes they have undergone (Schneider 2007; see Chapter 2, section 2.1), viewing language contact as a dynamic and multifaceted process involving varying degrees of interference, transfer and restructuring enables us to more fully appreciate emerging varieties and their intrinsic linguistic value.

3.2.1. Cognitive approaches to language contact

For a long time, monolingualism was regarded as the default state of both speakers and speech communities, guided by Western conceptions of the linguistic community. Yet recent studies have started to challenge this monolingual bias, arguing that all languages exist to some degree in contact with others – a perspective that aligns with the inherent heterogeneity of speech communities first acknowledged by variationist sociolinguistics (Weinreich et al. 1968). Echoing Weinreich’s early critique of the focus on monolingualism – “a linguistic community is never homogeneous and hardly ever self-contained” (Weinreich 1970: vii) – Cognitive Linguistics has devoted renewed attention to contact, with the recent development of a specialised subfield: Cognitive Contact Linguistics (Zenner et al. 2019; Winter-Froemel 2023).

The central aim of Cognitive Contact Linguistics is “to explore how the guiding principles of Cognitive Linguistics apply to the bi- or multilingual mind in its dynamic bi- and multilingual environment”, enabling a deeper understanding of “how the interaction between cognition and context results in contact-induced variation and change” (Zenner et al. 2019: 4). Crucially, this cognitive framework interprets contact-induced changes as involving transformations in the mental categorisation of speakers, with a strong empirical focus on meaning and conceptualisation (see section 3.1). In this perspective, language contact affects not only linguistic structures but also conceptual mappings and mental categories, so that “the conceptual system *eo ipso* becomes a locus of contact” (Zenner et al. 2019: 6). By influencing mental categorisation and conceptualisation, language contact also operates beyond – or “below the surface of” – the linguistic sign (Zenner et al. 2019: 6; Lemos de Souza 2020).

Grounded in two fundamental principles of Cognitive Linguistics, i.e., the non-modularity of language (its interaction with other cognitive capacities) and prototype theory (which defines categories in terms of a prototypical core and fuzzy boundaries rather than necessary and sufficient conditions), Cognitive Contact Linguistics does away with long-standing distinctions traditionally associated with language contact (Zenner et al. 2019: 4). Instead, it advocates for a continuum-based and prototype-based approach to language contact phenomena, particularly as regards the theoretical distinction between lexical borrowing and codeswitching, and between borrowing and interference (the latter mirroring the broader divide between grammar and lexicon).

A complementary framework of language contact can be found in the works of Palacios (2007, 2010, 2011, 2017, 2019, 2021). Her in-depth and comprehensive study of Spanish in contact with indigenous languages in various parts of Latin America provides a dynamic and gradient view of cross-fertilisation between the languages in contact. In line with Cognitive Contact Linguistics, her research also reveals how traditional dichotomies (such as borrowing versus interference) fail to capture the full complexity of contact phenomena, and instead emphasises the agency and creativity of local speakers. Palacios’ nuanced approach, which closely examines postcolonial contexts, was deemed particularly well-suited to address the complex contact setting of Mozambique.

Given its shared objectives and cognitive-functional orientation, Palacios’ framework aligns closely with Cognitive Contact Linguistics. Both approaches seek to unify research on contact-induced processes such as codeswitching, lexical borrowing and structural borrowing. The remainder of this section will therefore focus on Palacios’ framework, drawing parallels with Cognitive Contact Linguistics where relevant. Three key comparisons will be explored in

detail to illustrate these connections: in section 3.2.2, emphasis will be put on the conceptualisation of contact phenomena as a *continuum*, which entails a more dynamic and flexible approach to language contact, as well as on the importance of contact-induced *conceptual* changes. Section 3.2.3 shows how both frameworks – Palacios’ and Cognitive Contact Linguistics – adopt a perspective centred on the *speaker*.

3.2.2. Beyond dichotomies: a continuum view on contact phenomena

In her research, Palacios (2010; 2011; 2021) advocates for a cognitive and communicative approach to understanding language contact and contact-driven language change, grounded in the speakers’ communicative needs and linguistic resources (Palacios 2011: 20, 2021: 40), much in line with the research agenda of Cognitive Contact Linguistics which seeks to unravel “how cognitive and communicative principles determine the speakers’ linguistic behaviour in language-contact settings” (Winter-Froemel et al. 2023: 273). More specifically, Palacios developed two complementary dynamic models that lay emphasis on different facets of contact phenomena: the first focuses on the linguistic changes themselves and is primarily driven by cognitive processes, while the second, of a social nature, addresses the dissemination of the innovative linguistic features within the speech community. The present section introduces the first model which promotes a dynamic and gradient approach to contact-induced variation and change, while the sociolinguistic model will be presented in section 3.2.3.

Palacios’ cognitive-functional approach can be summarised through her own words: “en esos usos subyacen estrategias *cognitivas* de la lengua de contacto que el *hablante* explota para expresar de manera más efectiva aquello que necesita o quiere *comunicar*” (“underlying these uses are *cognitive* strategies of the contact language that the *speaker* leverages to express more effectively what they need or want to *communicate*”) (Palacios 2011: 34). This statement highlights three key elements underlying her framework. First, it centres on the speaker as the primary agent of variation, who gives rise to new uses in their everyday linguistic practices. Second, it emphasises that contact-induced variation stems mainly from communicative needs, as canonical forms may sometimes fail to achieve the desired communicative success, prompting speakers to devise innovative solutions (Palacios 2011: 20). Finally, the author acknowledges that these innovative solutions “involve changes in meaning, adaptations, blends, reorganisations of linguistic systems or subsystems, etc.”, underpinned by cognitive processes (Palacios 2011: 19).

She furthermore underscores the important role of conceptual factors in contact-induced changes by asserting that “ultimately, these are linguistic changes rooted in different ways of representing and conceiving the world” (Palacios 2011: 20). One example of such a contact-induced change in conceptual mappings can be found in the reorganisation of the locative prepositional system in the Spanish spoken in northeastern Argentina, a region of intense contact with Guaraní. Speakers from that area created a semantic contrast, absent from standard Spanish, between the preposition *en* meaning ‘inside’ or ‘within,’ and the preposition *por*, which increasingly came to mean ‘on the surface’ in that variety of Spanish. A similar analysis involving the categorization of prepositions can be found within the framework of Cognitive Contact Linguistics, and concerns the influence of Irish on Irish English on the cognition of space, reflected in the use of prepositions (Lucek 2019).

Concretely, Palacios (2011) designed a dynamic model of language contact (“un marco teórico dinámico del contacto lingüístico”) that puts emphasis on two types of contact-induced changes – direct and indirect – which are to be viewed as endpoints on a continuum rather than discrete categories. This continuum view can be compared to Cognitive Contact Linguistics’ proposal of a continuum ranging between “prototypical codeswitching” (direct) and “prototypical borrowing” (indirect) (Zenner et al. 2019: 4). Key features of the model put forward by Palacios include the following: (i) usage-based: the model focuses on the speakers, rather than the languages, in contact, with linguistic practices being individually negotiated in daily interactions (Palacios 2021: 43); (ii) dynamic: the model seeks to overcome rigid dichotomies and the perception of linguistic outcomes as static products; (iii) gradient: instead of a binary view of contact, the model posits varying degrees of influence along a continuum; (iv) bidirectional: the model acknowledges that the influence of language contact flows in both directions, with the languages in contact influencing one another, creating emergent solutions; and (v) neutral: the model seeks to eliminate linguistic prejudice and the negative stereotypes often associated with contact-driven changes, challenging the labelling of these changes as ‘errors’ resulting from incomplete learning or simplification (Palacios 2021: 43).

This dynamic model thus fully subscribes to a view of language as a *complex dynamic system*, fundamentally shaped by individual speakers with every language event (which ties in with the usage-based premise that will be introduced in section 5.1 of Chapter 5), and provides a more flexible and nuanced understanding of contact-induced changes, conceptualising them as diffuse points along a dynamic continuum that range from more to less direct forms of transfer between languages. While some outcomes stabilise over time (linguistic change), others remain transient and context-dependent (linguistic variation). By embracing this

continuum-based approach, the model aims for greater flexibility, moving beyond well-established dichotomies (such as borrowing versus interference) that have proven insufficient and inadequate to account for the complexity of contact-induced phenomena, especially in postcolonial settings such as Latin America and Africa (Palacios 2021: 43). The model therefore challenges some deeply rooted traditional distinctions in the field of language contact studies (e.g., van Coetsem 1988; Winford 2005), as well as the assumed unidirectionality of the changes (e.g., Heine & Kuteva 2005), and allows in particular for a reassessment of the somewhat controversial notion of structural (or constructional, or grammatical) borrowing (see also Zenner et al. 2019: 8; Boas & Höder 2021).

Traditional typologies of contact-induced changes introduce a distinction between borrowing and interference/imposition based on the type of change and the directionality of the contact language influence. While borrowing is assumed to be typically lexical and are brought about by symmetrical bilinguals with comparable proficiency in either language, linguistic interference, or imposition, mainly consists in morphosyntactic calques from the L1 into the L2 in the speech of asymmetrical bilinguals with limited proficiency in the L2 (Palacios 2010: 37, 51). In contrast, Palacios (2010) explores the bidirectional influences of Nahuatl and Spanish in contact in Mexico, Guaraní and Spanish in contact in Paraguay and Portuguese and Spanish in contact at the Brazilian-Uruguayan border and demonstrates by means of these various case studies across Latin America how language contact has left a deep imprint in the grammar of all the languages involved. She further underscores that in complex multilingual settings such as those found in Latin America or in Africa, it is extremely difficult to draw a line between cases of linguistic borrowing or interference, making such a distinction highly inadequate. Instead, she highlights the benefits of integrating both types into a dynamic and bidirectional continuum of contact-induced changes mirroring varying degrees of influence exerted by the contact language (Palacios 2010: 37).

Palacios (2021) further provides a compelling critique of the idea that structural borrowing results from incomplete or imperfect acquisition, as well as evidence against the alleged restrictions supposed to bear on such type of linguistic transfer, among which the typological relatedness requirement, the unidirectionality (from L1 to L2) and the fact that only isolated grammatical elements can be borrowed, not entire (sub)systems (Palacios 2010: 52). Among the case studies, she examines the restructuring of the pronominal system towards via gender neutralisation (a phenomenon known as “loísmo”) in Mexican Spanish under influence of the Nahuatl language, which does not distinguish gender morphologically (Palacios 2010: 40); the development of evidential values in the past tenses in Andean Spanish under influence of

Quechua, a grammatical category typical of the latter language unparalleled in standard Spanish (Palacios 2007: 270); and the emergence of a new construction for expressing the future tense in colloquial Paraguayan Spanish using the preposition *para* ‘for’, through a reinterpretation and approximation of the standard Spanish preposition to the morpheme *-rã* which expresses future value in Guaraní (Palacios 2010: 46).

Through these examples, she demonstrated that typological constraints are not as significant as often assumed and can easily be overcome by the intensity of the contact situation; that contact-driven variation and change are bidirectional processes (that is, indigenous languages of Latin America are equally strongly reshaped by contact with Spanish); and that such changes could lead to a reorganisation of a (part of a) grammatical system (e.g., pronominal systems, Palacios 2021). She further emphasises that language contact does not “merely import material or patterns from one language to another. Rather, it enables *novel solutions* based on perceived similarities within the linguistic repertoires of bilingual speakers” (Palacios 2021: 41). In other words, structural borrowing does not consist in the straightforward transfer *as such* of a given grammatical feature, but in a process of linguistic convergence between the two systems resulting in emergent solutions that cannot be fully attributed to either language in contact. As will be argued in Chapter 9, these findings are crucial for the investigation of the novel Recipient passive construction in MP. On the one hand, the innovative pattern typical of Bantu has been imported into Portuguese in spite of the typological distance between the languages; on the other hand, the conceptual convergence underlying the new constructions seems to have led to a reconfiguration of the dative category in MP.

It has become clear from the above that language contact may thus affect not only the lexicon but also different levels of grammar, provided that the necessary conditions of intense contact are met (Palacios 2010: 36). This, in turn, emphasises the irrelevance of creating strict boundaries between lexicon and syntax, which should instead be envisioned as a continuum, by virtue of being both submitted to the same domain-general processes (e.g., Langacker 1987, 2008; see Chapter 4). As pointed out by Cognitive (Contact) Linguistics, “the linguistic units language users have recourse to in order to convey meaning are of varying degrees of complexity”, ranging from less to more schematic (Zenner et al. 2019: 7). The boundaries of lexical and constructional borrowing are often unclear; in fact, contact-induced variation and change typically involve both concrete, lexical material (‘matter’) and more abstract patterns. Zenner et al. (2019: 8) therefore emphasise that contact-induced changes involve a combination of matter and pattern replication.

Palacios interprets this in terms of ‘directness’ of the transfer, referring to lexical borrowing as a more direct type of transfer than structural borrowing, the latter typically involving a process of accommodation where features from the source language gradually adjust within the structural framework of the receiving language. Ultimately, most contact-induced changes are indirect changes, because they involve a process of adaptation and “restructuring” within the receiving language (Walkden 2017: 416).

3.2.3. Multilingual minds: the speaker in focus

Crucially, both Palacios (2021: 43) and Cognitive Contact Linguistics (Zenner et al. 2019: 15) shift the focus from languages in contact to the speakers and their linguistic repertoires. Palacios (2021: 43) reminds that it is the speakers, not the languages, who engage in everyday linguistic practices, and who have the capacity to “choose, create, forget, or discard linguistic forms”. This perspective highlights the agency of speakers in shaping language in contact scenarios, in contrast to the ‘imperfect acquisition’ paradigm. A very important notion is thus that of *repertorio lingüístico* ‘linguistic repertoire’, which helps conceive of the language abilities of a plurilingual speaker as a pool of resources that would be activated at once: “it seems that in the bilinguals’ minds, there are no two separate linguistic systems, but rather a single linguistic repertoire with multiple resources that speakers have at their disposal to meet their communicative needs” (Palacios 2021: 41).

Language contact, most evidently manifested in the form of code-mixing or code-switching, therefore emerges as “the process of individual creation *par excellence*, as the speaker activates, at the moment of speech, procedures and resources from both grammars, either consciously or unconsciously, with semantic, pragmatic, functional, cognitive, or structural motivations” (Palacios 2010: 52). Cognitive Contact Linguistics also insists on the interaction between the different codes a multilingual speaker has in his/her repertoire, and claims that multilingual language users have both “a repository of language-specific constructions for each of the codes they master, but also, driven by the innate human need to categorise elements that are similar as forming a category, more schematic constructions that are shared across these codes” (Zenner et al. 2019: 8 – see also Boas & Höder 2021).¹⁹

¹⁹ The specific structure of this mental repertoire in the multilingual mind nevertheless remains a matter of debate (Zenner et al. 2019: 6).

The tendency of some researchers to view language contact in postcolonial contexts through the lens of incomplete acquisition stems from the fact that the process of formation of new varieties in these settings often involved large-scale L2 acquisition processes (Baxter 2018: 307), giving rise to initially non-native varieties (Gonçalves 2004). The situation of bi-/multilingualism in postcolonial contexts is nevertheless far more complex than in most Western societies, which calls for a reassessment of traditional paradigms and an appreciation of the specific ecological and social contexts within which contact occurs. In the case of present-day Mozambique, where diglossic bilingualism is the norm, the traditional distinction between L1 and L2 has become increasingly blurred. The bilingual speaker embodies the complex interplay between language knowledge and language use, so that it is once again challenging to define the boundaries between interference and borrowing (Palacios 2010: 37), as well as between language use and language attitudes, echoing Ponso's (2012: 128) observation of how intricate it is to measure linguistic attitudes in such complex multilingual situations, where a speaker with language A as a substrate interacts in Portuguese with others who have languages B, C, D, etc. as substrates, with varying combinations and degrees of proficiency.

In order to deal more adequately with the sociolinguistic dynamics of language contact in such complex multilingual postcolonial settings, Palacios (2011) developed another model, consisting in a continuum of speech modalities that take into account the different proficiency levels of the population, but also crucially the synergies between them, as illustrated in Figure 4 below. This second model is equally bidirectional and dynamic: the different modalities do not exist as separate, static categories, but overlap and coexist within multilingual societies. Every speaker, with their varying degrees of proficiency, engage with each other in everyday interactions. Bilingual speakers' modalities display the greatest range of variation due to their dynamic and gradual nature, so that language change often originates in the speech of bilingual speakers (Palacios 2021: 39).

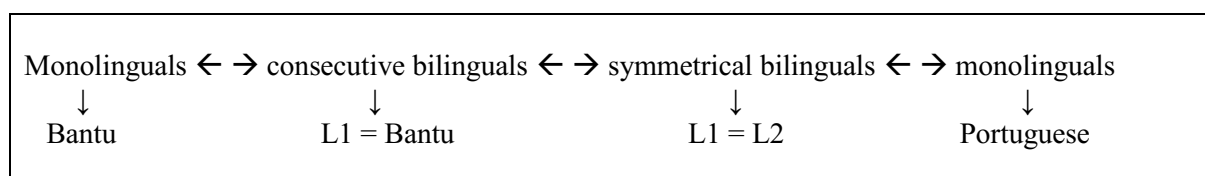


Figure 4. Continuum of linguistic modalities in contact situations: the case of Mozambique (adapted from Palacios 2011: 20)

All types of contact-induced changes described in the literature are expected to fit within this dynamic continuum (Palacios 2011: 20). The sociolinguistic model proposed by Palacios

is better aligned with the complex linguistic realities of postcolonial contexts and allow for more nuanced explanations of language contact, overcoming the paradigm of incomplete acquisition often associated with language contact. Palacios (2021) emphasises that while extralinguistic factors such as degree of bilingualism and educational background are highly significant, they alone cannot account for the full range of observed linguistic phenomena. For example, in a study about the restructuring of the pronominal system in Mexican Spanish, she showed that “all groups (mono- and bilinguals), to varying degrees, exhibit both local solutions (the so-called *loísmos*) and etymological ones”. Although local solutions were shown to occur more frequently in the speech of bilingual speakers with a dominant indigenous language and lower levels of education, the findings also revealed that a significant proportion of symmetric bilinguals (70.9%), and even Spanish monolinguals (19.2%) also made use of the innovative structures (Palacios 2021: 40).

In fact, contact-induced changes arise as dynamic solutions shaped by shared linguistic experiences that reflect speakers’ innovative responses to their multilingual environments. They offer evidence of “how speakers rely on language to express their subjective experience of the world” (Zenner et al. 2019: 5). All this emphasises the need to move beyond traditional frameworks that simplify language acquisition to mere deficiencies or errors and shift the focus towards the creativity of speakers and their ability to navigate multiple languages and contexts. Ultimately, this model gives the power back to the speakers by recognising their capacity to effectively tap into the communicative resources of all the languages they master, in pursuit of more effective communication (Palacios 2010: 52).

3.2.4. Relevance to the Mozambican context

The two dynamic models of language contact outlined above – Cognitive Contact Linguistics as well as the framework developed by Palacios – prove particularly well-suited to Mozambique’s linguistic reality, where the dynamic interaction between Portuguese and Bantu languages mirrors the bidirectional influence Palacios describes between Spanish and Amerindian languages. Stable bilingualism, identified by Palacios (2010: 34) as a fertile ground for linguistic innovation, finds a parallel in Mozambique’s diglossic environment, where children acquire Portuguese at an increasingly early age. This challenges traditional distinctions of (a)grammaticality and (in)complete acquisition, highlighting a more adaptive and context-

sensitive linguistic evolution as the EP norm in Mozambique lacks cultural resonance for them, making strict adherence to it unnecessary.

Furthermore, the Recipient passive construction – our object of study – emerges as an emblematic case of grammatical borrowing where a syntactic pattern common in Bantu languages is adapted in accordance with Portuguese’s structural possibilities.²⁰ This adaptation exemplifies contact-induced change as a creative process, shaped by both the internal possibilities of Portuguese and external influences from Bantu languages. Over time, some of these changes move beyond transient variation to become nativised, as in the case of Recipient passives: they eventually enter the receiving language’s system and start being acquired by the new generations of monolingual speakers (as will be further discussed in Chapter 9). Such enduring incorporation reflects how contact-induced features, initially tied to bilingual contexts, diffuse broadly across the community to the point where they are no longer perceived as foreign elements (Palacios 2011: 34).

This is not to say that every instance of language change in MP is necessarily contact-induced, nor is all variation solely a function of language contact with Bantu languages. However, language contact in Mozambique is undeniably pervasive, and remains therefore a significant driver of change. Both Palacios’ gradient models and Cognitive Contact Linguistics provide a nuanced framework for understanding this influence, positioning language contact as one of several key factors accounting for variation and change: “language contact needs to be understood as an interface phenomenon, characterised by a complex interplay of internal and external” factors (Winter-Froemel et al. 2023: 282). And “it is precisely the interplay of these factors that makes it possible to explain these changes” (Palacios 2007: 276).

While each sociocultural context undeniably possesses unique characteristics shaping language behaviour (Timbane 2017: 36), which makes it paramount to consider the specific postcolonial setting characterised by scenarios of language contact and language shift in which the MP is developing (see Chapter 2), it is equally crucial to take into account the cognitive and conceptual principles that underlie the transfer of features from Bantu languages to Portuguese, and the resulting meaning nuances in the new grammatical structures. In the social interaction between multilingual speakers, different worldviews, conceptual mappings and patterns of

²⁰ Given the prevalence of Recipient Passive constructions in English, one might wonder whether English played a role in the emergence of this linguistic innovation in MP. However, it is highly unlikely that English was a causal factor, as the conditions of stable and widespread historical bilingualism with English – required for effective contact-induced innovations (Palacios 2010) – are not met in Mozambique. That said, English could still function as a reinforcing or strengthening factor, amplifying the adoption or frequency of such constructions in the long run.

experience come into contact and are subtly reframed through cognitive processes (such as pattern reanalysis, 46ecategorization and construal operations).

Over time, these social and cognitive processes – all resulting from the speakers’ continuous negotiation of meaning in a broad sense in daily communication – result in subtle shifts in grammatical structures, alterations of syntactic patterns or of the constraints bearing on such patterns. When modified patterns are used with sufficient frequency, they eventually become entrenched in the speakers’ memory, leading to the “indigenisation” of grammatical patterns (Röthlisberger et al. 2017). Large-scale indigenisation corresponds to the process of nativisation identified in section 2.1 (see Chapter 2), which in the long run fosters regional grammatical variation and yields variety-specific grammars that increase the pluricentricity of the language.

Additionally, contact-induced changes do not necessarily result in the direct substitution of old forms or lead to linguistic loss. In many cases, the traditional normative system coexists with local solutions – as illustrated in the maintenance of the standard Theme passive construction alongside the innovative Recipient passive pattern –, the use of each being conditioned by both intra- and extralinguistic factors (as explored in Chapter 8). Most contact-driven changes are in fact not direct transfers but *emergent* solutions, adaptive to the unique dynamics of each language. They often involve a reorganisation of linguistic subsystems in a movement of “conceptual convergence” (Otheguy 2013), which may lead for instance to the modification of syntactic constraints or to an increase in the frequency of certain structures (Palacios 2007: 276; Röthlisberger et al. 2017).

Through the sociocognitive lens, the present study ultimately aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of linguistic variation, especially in contexts of nativisation and language contact, highlighting the convergence of various dimensions in shaping language use, variation and change. It seeks to demonstrate that the emergence of grammatical patterns such as Recipient passives is not only a byproduct of external contact and transfer of syntactic features, but that conceptual motivations play an equally critical role in that process.

4. Cognitive models of grammar: Cognitive Grammar & Construction Grammar

The previous chapter has outlined the sociocognitive perspective that will guide the analysis and interpretation of the results. As a next step, in order to effectively come to grips with the linguistic phenomenon under investigation, we need a theory of grammar that adequately accounts for how linguistic structures are organised, represented, and stored in memory. The present thesis adopts the framework of both Cognitive Grammar and Construction Grammar,²¹ which offer a comprehensive, usage-based model of grammar well suited to address complex grammatical phenomena. Emerging as an alternative to generative and formalist models, Cognitive Grammar emphasises that grammar arises from our experience with the world, helping us make sense of it through conceptualisation. The constructional approach, in turn, introduces two practical concepts essential to the analyses in this dissertation: the conceptualisation of grammar as a *network* and the *schema* as unit of analysis, rather than the rule. Cognitive and Construction Grammar's tenets align seamlessly with the sociocognitive perspective established earlier, ensuring a cohesive analytical framework for the study at hand.

4.1. Grammar as symbolisation and conceptualisation

Cognitive Grammar, mainly theorised by Ronald Langacker (1987, 1991, 2008), is a prominent framework within the broader field of Cognitive Linguistics. Sharing the premise that language is a fundamental aspect of human cognition, deeply integrated with general cognitive processes, it aims to demonstrate how linguistic phenomena are consistent with and shaped by universal

²¹ A strict separation between both frameworks is unnecessary, as Cognitive Grammar is also conceived of as a grammar of constructions (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2005). However, not all analyses in the framework of Construction Grammar equally pay attention to conceptual factors.

cognitive mechanisms, paying special attention to the conceptual basis of grammar. Langacker (2008: 16) identifies four basic cognitive phenomena that play a central role in grammar, i.e., association (or analogy), automatisisation (or routinisation), schematisation (or abstraction) and categorisation, which vouch for the psychological plausibility of Cognitive Grammar. While it shares with functional linguistics a focus on meaning, usage and the pragmatic functions of language (i.e., viewing linguistic structures as tools for conveying meaning and fulfilling communicative purposes in context), it places a stronger emphasis on the cognitive and conceptual aspects of grammar and language.

Cognitive Grammar contrasts sharply with Chomsky's Generative Grammar and other formalist approaches, especially with regard to the nature of grammar: while Cognitive Grammar considers grammar as non-modular, embedded in general human cognition and evolving through (linguistic) experience, rejecting a strong distinction between lexicon and grammar; Generative Grammar conceives it as an abstract, rule-based system centred on syntax (rather than lexicon), independent of meaning or usage. As a result, Chomskyan linguistic analyses are detached from usage and context, focusing on an idealised speaker. Furthermore, Generative Grammar posits an innate Universal Grammar (UG), an autonomous mental module that operates independently of other cognitive abilities and underlies all languages. Cognitive Grammar therefore puts two aspects of grammar that had been largely disregarded by generative grammar at the centre of attention, namely meaning and usage.

In the generative paradigm, meaning is secondary to syntax in explaining linguistic structure, with syntax operating independently of semantics. Grammar is thus regarded as an abstract, formal system devoid of meaning, simply organising words into coherent sentences. Cognitive Grammar reverses this perspective, placing meaning at the core of grammar and emphasising how linguistic structures actually reflect how speakers *conceptualise* reality (events, relationships and structures in the world). Grammatical patterns are meaningful too, although the type of meaning conveyed finds itself on the schematic and structural side. They provide a conceptual framework, or "scaffolding" that organises and frames the lexically specified material (Talmy 2006: 69). The key concept that best represents this view is *construal*, or conceptual perspectivisation, developed primarily by Langacker (1987, 1991, 2008), Talmy (2000, 2006) and Croft and Cruse (2004) – see Bien (2021) for a recent overview.

Construal is both a basic human cognitive ability (akin to, e.g., categorisation and schematisation) and an important part of the meaning of constructions. It refers to the speaker's capacity to construe the same situation in different ways, selecting specific linguistic forms to highlight particular aspects of meaning. This ability manifests in various construal operations,

or focal adjustments (Langacker 1987). Construal thus corresponds to the specific way a given situation is conceptualised, or in Langacker's terms (2008: 55): "what we choose to look at, which elements we pay most attention to, and where we view it from". Differences in grammatical structure thus arise to emphasise different facets of the situation depicted, along dimensions including (but not restricted to) specificity, focusing, prominence and perspective (Langacker 2008: 55). Consequently, any change in syntactic form inevitably entails, to a greater or lesser extent, a change in meaning, if only to impart a different perspective onto the conceptual content of the referred scene.²²

Conceptualisation emerges as an intrinsic part of meaning in general (including linguistic meaning), that is also reflected in the grammar. Cognitive Grammar thus emphasises that linguistic meaning is inherently perspectival, not just an objective reflection of the outside world, which ties in with the nature of meaning as defined by Cognitive Linguistics outlined in the previous chapter. The emphasis on *grammar as conceptualisation* and on the conceptual motivations that underlie the speaker's choice for alternate linguistic structures is a key principle of Cognitive Grammar and underscores its unique position with respect to other functional approaches.

Grammar as symbolisation is another foundational concept put forward by Langacker (2008: 14). He suggests that all linguistic units and structures at several levels of abstraction – ranging from morphemes to complex grammatical constructions – are fundamentally symbolic in nature, consisting of two poles: a semantic and a phonological one. Linguistic structures and their associated meanings emerge from and reflect the speakers' experience with the world, and are subsequently encoded into the grammar through the symbolic mapping of a semantic pole (meaning) and a phonological pole (form), thereby "permitting meanings to be symbolised phonologically" (Langacker 2008: 15). This conceptualisation of grammar as a mental inventory of symbolic units varying in degrees of schematicity, that can be assembled to form more complex symbolic structures, reflects and fulfils the "basic semiological function of language". Moreover, such an organisation of grammar removes any rigid division between grammar and lexicon, viewing them as part of the same symbolic system (Langacker 2008: 15).

²² Construal is not only found in the grammar, as any linguistic expression involves conceptualisation to some extent, but it is nonetheless particularly relevant for grammatical constructions as their meaning is more schematic and provide a conceptual framework for the interpretation of the lexically specified material (Talmy 2006: 69).

4.2. The schema as main unit of analysis

Both Cognitive Grammar and Construction Grammar take the *construction*, defined as a symbolic pairing of form and meaning (or function), as the basic unit of analysis and building block of language (Langacker 2008: 161; Goldberg 2006: 5). It is conceived of as a *schema* in which the form represents a structural pattern, while the meaning comprises a conceptual structure that may include more diffuse aspects of meaning such as construal and pragmatic uses (Croft & Cruse 2004; Goldberg 2006; Traugott 2022: 26). This schema-based perspective is a founding principle of Construction Grammar and contrasts sharply with the derivational, rule-based approach typical of generative models of grammar, bringing with it five main implications – likewise shared by Cognitive Grammar – for the study of language and grammatical structure.

First, by viewing language as primarily composed of patterns or regularities observable in usage rather than strict rules, Construction Grammar acknowledges the crucial role that *variation* plays in the grammar, in contrast to rule-based approaches (as argued in Chapter 3). Second, by prioritising form-meaning pairings over abstract syntactic rules, a schema-based approach allows for a deeper exploration of *meaning*. In constructions, formal and semantic aspects are so deeply intertwined that constructional approaches to grammar unequivocally endorse the theoretical assumption that variation in form necessarily entails variation in meaning. This perspective shifts the focus of grammatical analysis toward semantics, as advocated by Cognitive Sociolinguistics (see previous chapter).

Third, instead of conceptualising language as a collection of discrete elements bound together by rules, Construction Grammar conceives the architecture of language as a *network* of constructions, with various types of relationships holding between them, embodying the syntax-lexicon continuum. Fourth, the network view underscores the *dynamic* nature of language, which is not conceived as a static set of rules but as a flexible and evolving system “where constructions interact and influence each other in the process of communication” (Van Hulle 2024: 32).

Finally, Construction Grammar complies with the cognitive commitment (Lakoff 1990) by aiming to integrate the linguistic theory of grammar in a general theory of cognition, providing a description of linguistic structure in line with the workings of human cognition.²³ The capacity

²³ Not all models of Construction Grammar are equally cognitively committed. Hoffman (2017), for instance, identifies seven distinct constructional approaches, among which some lean more towards a functional perspective, while others adopt a more distinctively cognitive orientation.

to create linguistic schemas or constructions – language patterning – is viewed as a human competence drawing on other cognitive abilities such as analogisation, schematisation, chunking, automatization, etc. (Langacker 2008; Bybee 2010; Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 50). Diessel (2019: 36) goes further in the characterisation of these domain-general cognitive processes and divide them into three basic types: (i) processes of social cognition (e.g., joint attention and common ground) (ii) processes of conceptualisation (e.g., construal operations, metaphor, deixis) and (iii) memory-related processes (e.g., priming, abstraction, analogy and automatisisation, to which spreading activation can be added (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 54)). These various cognitive processes can either reinforce each other or enter in competition, and ultimately lie at the basis of the relationships that hold between constructions.

4.3. Grammar as a network of constructions

The second key tenet of Construction Grammar arises from the view that the building blocks of language (i.e., constructions) should not be seen as isolated entities but as integral components of a larger system of interconnected patterns operating at multiple levels of abstraction. More specifically, the architecture of grammar is conceptualised as a *network* of interrelated constructions, that captures the entirety of our linguistic knowledge (Goldberg 2003: 219; Diessel 2023). This network perspective serves both as a theoretical framework for understanding linguistic organisation, and as a cognitive model of linguistic representation, with constructions stored in memory as part of a mental network (Goldberg 2006). Consequently, a construction is understood not only as an abstract pattern useful for linguistic analysis but also as a cognitive unit within the speaker’s mental linguistic inventory (Langacker 2008: 222). This perspective on language structure aligns closely with research in cognitive psychology, which has demonstrated that other domains of knowledge and aspects of cognition are also organised as networks (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 9, 50).

Crucial to the network model are “such concepts as nodes and the links between nodes”, where nodes represent constructions and links the various kinds of motivated relations among constructions (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 9). Types of links are often divided into vertical and horizontal relationships, but recent research emphasises the importance of adopting a multidimensional approach, in which constructions are interrelated by multiple types of associations (Diessel 2023). Diessel (2019: 249) claims that each node should also be analysed “as some kind of network” and advocates a dynamic “network model of grammar in which all

linguistic concepts, including basic grammatical categories, are defined in terms of associations between different aspects of linguistic knowledge”. In what follows some of these connections will be explored, focusing in turn on the motivated relationships *between* nodes (section 4.3.1) and on the symbolic relationship holding *within* a single node (section 4.3.2).

4.3.1. A hierarchical and interconnected system

The constructional network – sometimes referred to as the “constructicon” (Diessel 2023) – is a hierarchical and interconnected system that captures both vertical and horizontal relationships between the different constructions of a language (Goldberg 2006; Langacker 2008; Diessel 2023). Overall, Diessel (2019: 250) identifies three primary types of relationships within the constructional network, that define any node/construction: (i) *taxonomic* relations, which specify connections between linguistic patterns at different levels of abstraction, (ii) *sequential* relations, which connect linguistic elements that appear in linear order, and (iii) *symbolic* relations, which connect a certain form or structure with a particular function or meaning and define the essential nature of constructions (see section 4.3.2 below). These three types are complemented by a series of associative and/or contrastive relations between nodes/constructions that are motivated by conceptual mechanisms (e.g., metaphor, analogy, categorisation) and processing constraints (e.g., priming, automatisisation).

The constructicon is commonly conceived as an inheritance network of taxonomically related grammatical patterns at varying levels of schematicity, in which more specific constructions inherit the properties of their related, more general schemas. These taxonomic relationships within the constructicon allow to capture both generalisations across constructions as well as subregularities and exceptions (Goldberg 1995: 67). Constructions typically combine substantive and schematic elements to varying degrees, ranging from fully lexically specified instances (or constructs, i.e., context-specific realisations of a schema) to entirely schematic constructional templates (such as the passive or the transitive construction). There is a whole spectrum of variation between these two ends, from macro- to meso- and micro-constructions, reflecting gradience between schematic and lexically filled structures (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 16-17). In turn, this interplay between concrete and abstract linguistic material – of which *filler-slot* relations are representative (Diessel 2019) – within the constructional network along a taxonomic dimension is “indicative of the syntax-lexicon continuum and of the impossibility of establishing fixed limits between lexicon and grammar” (García-Miguel 2007: 757).

However, constructions are not exclusively defined in terms of their degree of specificity and/or schematicity. In addition to taxonomic (or vertical) relationships, the constructional network also involves horizontal or lateral relations between semantically or formally similar constructions at the same level of abstraction (Diessel 2019: 199; Afonso & Soares da Silva 2024: 10). Various scholars highlight these constructional links in different ways: Goldberg (1995) identifies polysemy, metaphorical extension, subpart, and instance links, while Langacker (2008) emphasises elaboration, extension, and instantiation. Traugott & Trousdale (2013: 59), in turn, refer to *relational* links that can be of several kinds. Diessel (2019: 250) broadly refers to them as constructional relations that “specify associative connections between similar and contrastive constructions”. Additionally, Diessel (2019: 63) devotes renewed attention to language as a linear medium. He underscores the importance of *sequential* relations, which connect linguistic elements that appear in linear order. These relations emerge through frequent co-occurrence of linguistic elements, leading to the emergence of linguistic units or “chunks” (Bybee 2010: 7). Diessel (2019: 64) further highlights the interdependence “between sequential processing and the taxonomic organisation of linguistic knowledge”, as chunks can be combined to form larger units.

The constructional network, with its multiple links and associations between nodes and flexible structure, reflects the dynamic and multidimensional nature of linguistic knowledge (Soares da Silva 2020: 233). The network model contrasts sharply with other approaches to linguistic structure, particularly some formalisms, Saussurean structuralism, modular approaches that establish boundaries between linguistic subsystems and syntactic tree representations typical of Generative Grammar (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 10-11). In addition, this model can be applied to every aspect or subdomain of language, as form-meaning correspondences operate across all levels of linguistic structure, from morphemes to fully schematic constructions (Gildea & Barðdal 2023; Van Hulle 2024). Importantly, meaning emerges at all levels of the constructional network, including at more abstract levels. Construction Grammar acknowledges that certain semantic properties may be “linked to the entire grammatical pattern [e.g., passive] rather than to particular components” (Diessel 2015: 299), forming what can be referred to as “constructional meaning”. Therefore, Construction Grammar also appears as particularly well-suited to deal with interactions between lexically specific verb meanings and more schematic argument structure constructions, as is the case for the Recipient passive construction (see section 4.4.1).

4.3.2. Symbolic constructions: the role of conventionalisation

Construction Grammar thus aims to “model speakers’ knowledge of language as a large, interconnected network of symbolic units” (Hilpert & Diessel 2017: 57). These connections consist in a variety of motivated links (horizontal and vertical), as previously shown. However, in addition to these inter-constructional links, another fundamental relationship in the constructional network is the one that exists *within* each node, specifically the symbolic and conventional(ised) pairing of form and meaning. This idea echoes Cognitive Grammar’s foundational principle, initially formulated by Langacker (1987), of grammar as symbolisation (see section 4.1).

Constructions function as templates stored in memory forming a mental network, accessible for both comprehension and production (Goldberg 2006). Their true functionality, however, hinges on their shared recognition within a linguistic community, which collectively agrees on associating specific forms with particular meanings. This symbolic relationship underscores the nature of language as a symbolic mediator between the speaker and their sociocultural environment, aligning with Langacker’s (2008: 222) definition of language as a “structured inventory of conventional linguistic units” and Traugott’s (2022: 21) characterisation of language as a “symbolic sign system”. The form-meaning link within constructions is thus established as a shared convention within a given speech community, enabling their effective use in communication. Constructions are therefore considered arbitrary insofar as the symbolic correspondence between form and meaning is chiefly a matter of social and historical convention (Traugott 2022: 27).

Constructions thus serve as conventional tools for communication in specific linguistic communities. Importantly, convention arises from usage: repeated exposure to specific form-meaning pairings fosters tacit agreement on their significance. Usage-based models (e.g., Bybee 2010; Langacker 2008) emphasise that schematic constructions develop through abstraction from concrete usage events. Through repetition of the same patterns, speakers create cognitive routines that strengthen the symbolic association between form and meaning, ensuring their entrenchment in memory. Entrenchment is understood as a “process that strengthens knowledge” (including linguistic knowledge) and refers to the cognitive aspect of the processing of constructions. With every usage event, speakers update their mental representations of the constructions in the network. Depending on their frequency, each node or connection in the network displays different degrees of entrenchment (Hilpert & Diessel 2017: 57). Conventionalisation emerges as the social side of the coin and refers to the

dissemination of these patterns within a given community. This dynamic interplay between individual usage and collective conventionalisation has been elaborated as the Entrenchment-and-Conventionalisation model (Schmid 2020). It illustrates how constructions emerge, evolve, adapt and spread, forming a network of entrenched-in-memory and conventionalised-in-society symbolic units that serve as the foundational elements of linguistic structure and use.

4.4. The Recipient passive construction

In our view, the network model provides a suitable framework for the analysis of Recipient passives in MP, offering fresh perspectives on a grammatical phenomenon that has thus far predominantly been examined through the prism of generative grammar (Gonçalves 1990; 1996; 2010; Ngunga 2012; Gonçalves et al. 2022; Nhatuve & Mavota 2021; Nhatuve 2022). Echoing the five implications for linguistic analysis discussed earlier (section 4.2), adopting a constructional approach to the Recipient passive construction in MP comes with practical consequences, as it entails several shifts in perspective.

First, by adopting the schema as central unit of analysis, the network approach makes derivation unnecessary and cancels the assumption that the passive is secondary to the active. Instead, this model positions any node as a valid starting point for analysis, granting the passive the status of an autonomous construction worthy of scholarly attention. Second, by considering the interconnections between constructions, the network model facilitates a more comprehensive account of the change. While previous studies on MP have primarily interpreted the formation of Recipient passives as resulting from changes in the argument selection properties of individual verbs, postulating a constructional level enables the integration of phenomena that prior research treated as distinct, as argued in Chapter 7. The network approach thus allows to analyse seemingly unrelated micro-constructions as instantiations of an overarching constructional schema.

Third, the constructional schema itself exhibits a network structure, composed of subschemas, some more central and prototypical than others, as will be made clear further on in Part II. The network model highlights the dynamic and flexible nature of meaning, naturally accounting for semantic extensions of the Recipient passive schema. Finally, by understanding constructions as form-meaning pairings, the network approach devotes more attention to meaning, offering deeper insights into the conceptual underpinnings of the innovative linguistic pattern. While Recipient passives have traditionally been interpreted as syntactic movements

within a derivational model of linguistic structure (e.g., Gonçalves 2010), the present work shifts the focus towards their conceptual basis, with the notion of TRANSFER being central to their analysis.

4.4.1. A brief description of the constructional schema

Concretely, Recipient passives are related to argument structure constructions (Goldberg 1995; Perek 2015). Argument structure, or argument realisation, is the part of grammar that determines how participants to verbal events are expressed in the clause (Perek 2015: 1). Importantly, in a usage-based constructional approach, argument structure is not an exclusive property of verbs (although verbs are the prototypical argument-taking words) but also applies to constructional patterns. Another crucial point is that argument structure does not merely consist in a string of words in a given sequential order, but also “produces meaning”: verbs typically occur with more than one argument structure, with systematic variations in meaning (Perek 2015: 3). As a result, argument structure typically involves *alternations*, a topic that will be further explored in the next section (4.4.2).

Specifically, the Recipient passive construction ‘merges’ two distinct types of argument structure, namely ditransitive and passive constructions. While ditransitive structures feature two central participants in the event (typically a theme/direct object and a recipient/indirect object), passive constructions involve a shift in perspective whereby the event’s end result is put in focus. With respect to its formal features, the Recipient passive construction can be characterised as a type of eventive (*versus* stative) passive (Duarte 2013), composed of the auxiliary *ser* (‘to be’) which agrees in gender and number with the recipient participant featuring as subject, followed by the past participle (PPL) of a (typically) ditransitive verb. Finally, the theme participant is expressed as a direct object, adjacent to the past participle. From a semantic perspective, the construction denotes a TRANSFER event affecting both the recipient and theme and apprehended from its terminal point, with particular emphasis on the *affectedness* of the Recipient and on the *result* of the transfer (see Chapters 7 and 8 for a more detailed semantic description). The constructional schema can be represented as follows:

Sem	< Recipient	BE	V _{TRANSFER}	Theme >
Syn	< SUBJ	V _{AUX}	V _{PPL}	OBJ >

Figure 5. Representation of the Recipient passive constructional schema
(based on Goldberg 1995: 52)

Constructions, as form-meaning pairings (cf. Syn-Sem in Figure 5), are typically composed of a schematic structure with one or more open slot(s), which can be filled with a more or less restrictive set of words. A slot can be defined as a position within a construction that accommodates specific linguistic elements. The openness of the slots may vary substantially from one construction to the other: slots may be either be submitted to rigid constraints or represent open positions that can be filled by a diversity of linguistic elements, while the overall meaning and structure of the construction remains unaltered (Golberg 1995, 2006; Van Hulle 2024: 27). This reflects the gradience between schematic and lexically filled structures in constructional templates hinted at above (section 4.3.1).

As can be seen from Figure 5, the construction is formally composed of four distinct slots, namely the Recipient-subject slot [SUBJ], the auxiliary slot [V_{AUX}], the past participle slot [V_{PPL}] and the Theme-object slot [OBJ]. Within the taxonomic network, the Recipient passive constructional schema represents an instance of *meso*-construction, a specific subtype of the more abstract passive macro-construction being composed of the auxiliary *ser* ‘to be’ [BE_{AUX}] and the past participle [V_{PPL}]. Although it does not require obligatory lexical elements (apart from the ‘be’ auxiliary), it imposes stricter semantic constraints on its slots than the macro passive construction. The defining slot of the Recipient passive constructional schema is the [V_{PPL}] slot, that must be filled with ditransitive verbs that specifically denote a TRANSFER event. However, Chapter 7 discuss three additional semantic restrictions bearing on that slot, that have to do with (i) the centrality of the participants, (ii) the functional *versus* spatial dimension of transfer and (iii) the manner component lexicalised by the verbs. Table 2 presents the set of 54 verbs that were found in the Recipient passive construction in the *Corpus do Português* and that will provide the empirical basis for the subsequent corpus analysis. While Chapter 7 focuses on the (productivity of) the [V_{PPL}] slot, the second paper pays due attention to the features of the recipient and theme participants (Chapter 8).

Prototypical transfer	Dar ‘give’ <i>Atribuir</i> ‘assign’; <i>conceder</i> ‘concede’; <i>concessionar</i> ‘franchise’; <i>confiar</i> ‘entrust’; <i>dever</i> ‘owe’; <i>devolver</i> ‘give back’; <i>distribuir</i> ‘distribute’; <i>entregar</i> ‘deliver’; <i>fornecer</i> ‘provide’; <i>oferecer</i> ‘offer’; <i>outorgar</i> ‘grant’; <i>pagar</i> ‘pay’; <i>proporcionar</i> ‘provide’; <i>restituir</i> ‘restitute’; <i>servir</i> ‘serve’.
Communicative transfer	Dizer ‘say, tell’ <i>Apresentar</i> ‘present’; <i>colocar (pergunta)</i> ‘ask a question’; <i>comunicar</i> ‘communicate’; <i>ensinar</i> ‘teach’; <i>explicar</i> ‘explain’; <i>mostrar</i> ‘show’; <i>perguntar</i> ‘ask’; <i>prometer</i> ‘promise’; <i>responder</i> ‘reply’.
Negative transfer	Negar ‘deny’ <i>Arrancar</i> ‘rip’; <i>cobrar</i> ‘charge’; <i>cortar</i> ‘cut’; <i>descontar</i> ‘discount’; <i>esconder</i> ‘hide’; <i>interditar</i> ‘forbid’; <i>levar</i> ‘take’; <i>recusar</i> ‘refuse’; <i>rescindir</i> ‘rescind’; <i>roubar</i> ‘steal’; <i>saquear</i> ‘plunder’; <i>tirar</i> ‘take away’; <i>vedar</i> ‘seal’.
Directive transfer	Exigir ‘require’ <i>Aconselhar</i> ‘advise’; <i>ordenar</i> ‘order’; <i>pedir</i> ‘ask’; <i>permitir</i> ‘allow’; <i>recomendar</i> ‘recommend’; <i>requerer</i> ‘request’; <i>responsabilizar</i> ‘be made responsible’; <i>solicitar</i> ‘request’; <i>sugerir</i> ‘suggest’; <i>supor</i> ‘suppose’.
Semantic extensions	<i>Amarrar</i> ‘tie’; <i>apontar</i> ‘point out’; <i>atear</i> ‘kindle’.

Table 2. 54 verbs identified in the Recipient passive construction (source: *Corpus do Português*)

Crucially in Construction Grammar, meaning is not confined to individual lexical items but can also arise at the constructional level (i.e., constructional meaning). Regarding Recipient passives, it appears particularly challenging to determine whether the TRANSFER meaning originates from the verb itself or from the construction as a whole. This question underscores the complex interactions between lexical and constructional semantics, making it hard and eventually pointless to determine which has the upper hand. However, the fact that the construction itself carries a TRANSFER meaning becomes evident with the identification of semantic extensions, i.e., cases where Recipient passives are formed with verbs that are neither prototypically associated with TRANSFER nor even classified as ditransitive, as illustrated in the three examples below extracted from the Mozambican subsection of the *Corpus do Português* (cf. last category in Table 2).

- (1) *Quando tentava pedir socorro, foi amarrado a boca com recurso a uma gravata.* (CP)
‘When he tried to call for help, his mouth was tied shut (lit. he was tied the mouth) with a tie.’
- (2) *Eu não posso ser apontado dedo quando não tenho culpa.* (CP)
‘I cannot be blamed (lit. be pointed the finger) when I am not at fault.’
- (3) *Faltou pouco para que este cidadão não fosse ateado fogo.* (CP)
‘This citizen was nearly set on fire (lit. was set fire to).’

The fact that certain non-transfer verbs can, in certain circumstances, acquire a TRANSFER reading when inserted within the constructional slot, also known as “constructional coercion”, is a compelling argument in favour of constructional meaning. This suggests that the abstract constructional schema imposes its meaning on the lexical item (i.e., the verb), overriding apparent mismatches between the semantics of the verb and the construction (Lauwers & Willems 2011; Van Hulle 2024). However, for a construction to attract an increasingly diverse set of lexical items, it must first achieve a certain degree of semantic homogeneity (Barðdal 2008: 27). In other words, as the constructional meaning strengthens, it facilitates the attraction and integration of new – sometimes unrelated – verbs, which, in turn, lose parts of their original meaning (semantic bleaching) to adopt the constructional interpretation.

By embracing the syntax-lexicon continuum, Construction Grammar facilitates an examination of the interplay between the lexical semantics of individual verbs and the higher-level, more schematic argument structure constructions. From a formalist perspective, one of the main challenges in accounting for the development of Recipient passives in MP is the omission or loss of the preposition *a* ‘to’, typically required in standard EP for governing indirect object arguments. However, within a constructional approach, this issue is unproblematic, as the phenomenon involves the creation of a new form-meaning mapping resulting in a new structural pattern to which verbs accordingly adjust their meanings – a process known as constructionalisation.

4.4.2. Constructionalisation, constructional alternations and allostructions

The development of Recipient passives in MP corresponds to an instance of *constructionalisation*, i.e., a process of language change involving “the creation of a new form-meaning pairing as a new node in the constructional network” (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 22), and in its subsequent diffusion within the speech community. More recently, Traugott (2022: 49) provided an updated definition of constructionalisation as “the establishment of a new symbolic link between form and meaning which has been replicated across a network of language users, and which involves an addition to the constructicon”. Constructionalisation is usually accompanied by changes in the degree of schematicity and productivity of the new node and its related constructions, known as “constructional changes”, as it makes its way into the constructional network (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 22). In this thesis, we argue that the constructionalisation process of the Recipient passive schema is still in progress in MP, having

not yet achieved the status of a new endogenous norm, especially due to continuous normative pressure from EP.

In contrast to MP, other varieties of Portuguese lack the Recipient passive node in their own network and must rely on alternate formal templates to convey a similar meaning (or perform a similar function). There is, in Portuguese, a set of other constructional variants that encode the same propositional meaning, as illustrated below. The most straightforward equivalent across all varieties is the Theme passive construction, as exemplified by the hypothetical example in (4). In Portuguese, like in most Romance languages, passivisation is typically restricted to the theme participant. However, facilitated by language contact influences (see previous chapters), the Mozambican variety has developed the possibility to passivise the recipient participant (5), introducing an additional strategy that complements the other standard options. Other formally distinct constructional alternatives performing similar functions include the fronting or topicalisation of the recipient participant introduced by the preposition *a* ('to') in the Theme passive construction, where the verb agrees with the theme participant (6), the active third-person plural impersonal construction (7), or even the use of the verb *receber* 'to receive' (8).

(4) *Um livro foi dado à Flávia.*
'A book was given to Flávia.'

(5) *A Flávia foi dada um livro.*
'Flávia was given a book.'

(6) *À Flávia foi dado um livro.*
'To Flávia a book was given.'

(7) *Deram um livro à Flávia.*
'They gave a book to Flávia.'

(8) *A Flávia recebeu um livro.*
'Flávia received a book.'

All these constructions exist side-by-side in the MP network, connected by horizontal links of similarity. Among them, Recipient and Theme passives exhibit the greatest distributional overlap due to their closely related forms and meanings. The constructionalisation of Recipient passives has thus led to the development of a *constructional alternation*, defined as the

availability of competing grammatical options to express the same propositional content or the same referential situation in nuanced and subtly distinct ways (Pijpops 2019, 2020).²⁴

More specifically, due to their close resemblance, Recipient and Theme passives can be described as *allostructions*, that is, “variant structural realisations of a construction that is left partially underspecified” (Cappelle 2006: 18; Perek 2015: 153). Allostructions involve a type of taxonomic relation, with allostructions inheriting their form and function from a more abstract constructeme at the top, which is partially underspecified for form (Cappelle 2006; Afonso & Soares da Silva 2024: 7). In the present case, the Recipient and Theme passive constructional variants inherit the propositional or referential meaning from the constructeme (a ditransitive passive) and instantiate the form (which is partially underspecified in the constructeme).

Perek (2015: 153) further states that “the constructemes capture the level at which constructions are semantically equivalent and the allostructions specify exactly how these constructions differ”. This echoes the core principle of Construction Grammar – and more widely Cognitive Linguistics – that a change in syntactic form necessarily entails a change in meaning, however subtle. This idea is encapsulated in Goldberg’s (1995: 67) “Principle of No Synonymy”, which states that “if two constructions are syntactically distinct, they must be semantically or pragmatically distinct”, as well as in Langacker’s (1987, 2008) concept of construal (see section 4.1). Consequently, it is expected that two related yet formally distinct constructions will frame the same scene from different viewpoints. However, the perspectival differences observed between variants (which motivate their existence in the first place) do not compromise the referential or propositional meaning conveyed by the constructeme (Afonso & Soares da Silva 2024: 10).

In essence, then, the choice of a specific construction by a speaker is not arbitrary; it is driven by conceptual and/or pragmatic motivations aimed at conveying a particular nuance or perspective. Each syntactic option serves a well-defined function within the constructional network, so that any new addition contributes to its semantic enrichment. As discussed in the previous chapter as well as in section 4.1, linguistic variation is fundamentally motivated by semantics, underscoring the meaningfulness of constructional choices. The specific linguistic motivations behind the speakers’ choice for either a Recipient or a Theme passive in MP form the object of analysis of Chapter 8. Overall, constructional variants and alternations reveal how

²⁴ The Recipient-Theme passive alternation is by no means the only possible alternation; other options could also have been considered, especially if the comparison between constructional variants is made based on functions rather than forms (see examples (4)-(8) above).

argument structure varies in meaningful ways, “capturing the fact that the grammar provides several ways to encode a given category of events (Perek 2015: 145).

4.4.3. Multidimensionality

Constructionalisation is neither a linear nor a once-and-for-all process. Rather, it is illustrative of the multidimensional evolution that takes place within an ever-changing constructional network, with the many interactions among constructions constantly shaping and reshaping the system. While traditionally conceived as a hierarchical inheritance system of related grammatical patterns, recent research has reconceptualised this classical model into a more complex, multifaceted model in which constructions are interconnected through multiple types of associations that extend beyond traditional taxonomic links, highlighting the intricate web of relationships of different natures that shape linguistic structures (Diessel 2023). By framing the linguistic system as a network, Construction Grammar effectively operationalises the view of language as a *complex dynamic system*.

Traugott & Trousdale (2013: 51) emphasise that “each node is linked in various ways to other nodes in the network” and that “links are possible in multiple different directions between the semantics, pragmatics, discourse function, syntax, morphology, and phonology of any node”. A multidimensional network approach to grammar thus captures relationships of various kinds and across varying levels of schematicity, emphasising interactions not only between closely related constructions, like Recipient and Theme passives and other constructional variants, but also across a broader spectrum of interrelated patterns within the construction, that can trigger analogisation processes. Regarding Recipient passives, although Bantu influence is assumed throughout this thesis to have played a pivotal role in their emergence, the constructionalisation process entails a restructuring within – and in alignment with – the Portuguese linguistic network. Neighbouring nodes within the own linguistic system of MP should therefore not be overlooked.

Analogy is a powerful mechanism of language change (Traugott & Trousdale 2013; Diessel 2019; Van Hulle 2024). This is because “relational links typically exist between reasonably closely related concepts, and closely related concepts prime one another in a conceptual network (Hudson 2010: 76; Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 60). Analogical processes at play in the constructionalisation of Recipient passives are examined in Chapter 8, but we can already highlight the significant overlap between the category of ‘directive transfer’ (9) (cf. Table 2)

and Portuguese directive verbs in general (10); as well as between the related concepts of ‘caused possession’ (underlying ditransitive constructions) and ‘inherent possession’, motivating the semantic extension of the Recipient passive towards an inherent possession reading (11).

- (9) *Fomos recomendados a apresentar as nossas preocupações por escrito.* (CP – Mozambique)
‘We were advised to submit our concerns in writing.’
- (10) *Fomos obrigados a tomar esta decisão.* (CP – Portugal)
‘We were forced to make this decision.’
- (11) *Eu não posso ser **apontado dedo** quando não tenho culpa.* (CP – Mozambique)
‘I cannot be blamed [lit. be pointed the finger] when I am not at fault.’

The continuous reconfiguration of the constructicon, with new links and nodes continually emerging and evolving over time (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 9), does not exclusively operate within the boundaries of the constructional network, but is also shaped from the outside, since the particular “geography, setting and social situation of the speech community will impact on the state of development of the grammar in time and space” (Tagliamonte 2012: 351). Constructionalisation therefore emerges as a multidimensional, but also multicausal process, driven by a combination of internal linguistic dynamics and external sociocultural influences (Palacios 2007).

The circle is now complete: the insights gained in Chapters 2, 3, and 4 have led to a comprehensive understanding of (contact-induced) language variation and change as a multidimensional process, shaped by the dynamic interplay of grammatical structures, linguistic ecology and the socio-cognitive mechanisms of speakers. The contact-induced constructionalisation of the Recipient passive schema in MP unfolded through bottom-up innovations, even in the face of normative pressures. This reflects the creativity and agency of Mozambican speakers and illustrates the remarkable plasticity and adaptability of language to its environment. The network perspective naturally accommodates this flexibility, demonstrating how the various nodes in the network continually adapt as a response to external stimuli perceived in the environment. As a result, different varieties of a language may eventually develop partly distinct constructional networks, resulting in variety-specific constructions and regionally nuanced grammars.

5. Data and methodology

5.1. The usage-based premise and its methodological consequences

Both Cognitive (Socio)Linguistics and Cognitive and Construction Grammar are defined as experiential, *usage-based* models of language that build on the premise of the dialectic relationship between system and use – a theoretical principle that has direct methodological consequences and will thus naturally inform our methodology (Geeraerts 2006a: 17; Geeraerts et al. 2010: 4). In a usage-based approach to grammar – conceived of as a network of constructions –, the language system emerges from language use, that is, every single speech event contributes, even minimally, to shape the system, either by affecting the constructions themselves or the many existing connections between them.

A usage-based model of grammar therefore introduces more variation into the grammar, as the system (i.e., grammar) is being constantly reshaped by usage. However, variation is fundamentally structured (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 44). Structure in language emerges from the regularity of patterning which stems from repeated and conventionalised usage events within a speech community (Schmid 2020). These recurring patterns form the system’s core, while simultaneously allowing for a great deal of flexibility and “considerable variation at all levels” (Bybee 2010: 1). This observation also lies at the basis of the development of variationist sociolinguistics whose central claim is that “the normal condition of the speech community is a heterogeneous one” (Weinreich et al. 1968: 17).

Usage-based models fully subscribe to the view of language as a *complex dynamic system*, which calls for a reassessment – or a “desystematisation” – of the notion of linguistic system (Soares da Silva 2020: 228). With language structure being deeply intertwined with language use, the system should not be considered an absolute entity but a gradient construct continually reorganised by actual language use. It is best understood as “a secondary abstraction”, hence

not directly accessible, which allows to account for the regularities observed in language use (Soares da Silva 2020: 213). The system can therefore only be accessed and studied through the analysis of the regularities of actual speech events. The linguistic system, while abstract, can nevertheless be considered socially real, as speakers align their language practices through intersubjective mechanisms in each communicative interaction. These include cooperative imitation and adaptation, joint attention, identity negotiation, or, conversely, differentiation driven by a desire for distinctiveness. It is also psychologically plausible, as language use is governed by general cognitive abilities that are non-linguistic in nature such as categorisation, generalisation, abstraction, analogy, frequency effects, memorisation, etc.

The dialectic relationship between system and use implies that the choices we make when using language do not just passively reflect the linguistic system but contribute to shape it. Language change therefore happens gradually with every speech event and is driven by repetition. Frequent use of certain structures leads over time to increased entrenchment in memory and to the formation of internal representations of these regularities (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 5). Moreover, as speech events and the meaning they convey are grounded in specific sociocultural contexts, with repeated use, this experiential meaning comes to be anchored into the system, which brings the usage-based premise one step further: language use not only reflects a speech community's experience and understanding of reality, but also actively shapes and ultimately encodes them into the grammar (Bybee 2010; Langacker 2008).

Consequently, the system also takes an active part in guiding language use, by offering ready-made patterns and cues that facilitate language processing. The speakers' linguistic behaviour is also guided by existing conventions (Zenner et al. 2019: 9-10). Frequency effects create expectations, influencing what is likely to occur next in communication. A set of both language-external and language-internal factors probabilistically affect the choice for one or another grammatical construction, yet such constraints are not static and may subtly evolve over time as usage frequencies shift (Röthlisberger et al. 2017). The probabilistic nature of grammar illustrates once more the two-way relationship between system and use, between grammar and utterances, where each shapes and is shaped by the other (Langacker 2008: 222).

The usage-based model carries two major methodological implications, both of which are thoroughly addressed in this work. First, since the system can only be accessed through actual language use, *usage* must serve as the starting point of the investigation. This represents a significant departure of Cognitive Linguistics from the principles of generative grammar. While the latter favours a top-down approach, proposing universal principles used to derive specific phenomena, Cognitive and Construction Grammar adopt a bottom-up approach, building

generalisations from observed patterns. As Soares da Silva (2020: 212) points out, “the primary fact of linguistic study is the linguistic behaviour of speakers”, which encompasses actual utterances and conversations (Geeraerts 2006a: 6). To study authentic language use by real speakers, collecting empirical data is essential, with corpora being among the most widely used tools for this purpose. Examining such empirical data ultimately allows to get a glimpse into the linguistic system, considering that “the usage data constitute the empirical foundation from which general patterns can be abstracted” (Geeraerts et al. 2010: 4).

Second, acknowledging the multifactorial structure of the linguistic system – i.e., “that meaning, structure, discourse and social variation all codetermine language phenomena” (Soares da Silva 2020: 233) – requires the use of *multivariate methods* capable of addressing these multiple dimensions. Accordingly, the empirical part of the investigation – Part II – carries out multifactorial analyses aligned with a usage-based and probabilistic model of grammar, that rely on multivariate quantitative methods, namely random forests, conditional inference trees and logistic regression. This thesis furthermore adopts a mixed-methods design, combining the use of empirical data of different natures and multivariate statistical tools, with the aim of reaching a more comprehensive understanding of the grammatical phenomenon. Concretely, two distinct empirical research designs were employed in the present dissertation. Section 5.2 presents the corpus data that form the basis of the three subsequent chapters (Chapters 6, 7 and 8), while section 5.3 outlines the survey-based acceptability judgement task used in Chapter 9. Finally, section 5.4 discusses the multifactorial and multivariate methodological grounding of the dissertation, providing more details about the steps and tools used in the analysis proper.

5.2. Corpus data

The primary tool employed in this dissertation is the web-based *Corpus do Português*, specifically its “Web/Dialects” subsection (Davies 2016). To our knowledge, this corpus represents the most extensive database available for the Mozambican variety of Portuguese to date, with over 27 million tokens. This valuable online resource enables a broader scope of analysis compared to earlier studies, which relied on smaller corpora. The *Corpus do Português* (hereafter CP) provides authentic written data sourced from the Internet covering the period 2007–2013, including written material found on forums and social media platforms overlapping to some extent with spoken language, offering unique insights into more democratic and informal writing styles. 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. An additional characterisation of the corpus is presented in Chapters 7 and 8.

The availability of a tool like the CP represents a major step forward in the investigation of emerging varieties. Until now, research on African varieties of Portuguese has been limited, in both the number of empirical studies and the availability of dedicated corpora, compared to EP and BP. For many years, the lack of linguistic resources posed considerable challenges to the investigation of these varieties. However, this limitation is slowly being overcome with the development of increasingly larger datasets, enabled by recent technological advancements.

Several other corpora, though narrower in scope, have contributed valuable data for the study of both spoken and written MP, some of which were made available as early as 1986 (Gonçalves & Justino 2020a: 61). Early resources include the spoken corpus collected and analysed by Gonçalves (1990) in her doctoral dissertation, consisting of 40 interviews, amounting to 14 hours of recordings and approximately 140,000 transcribed words; the PPOM project (*Panorama do Português Oral de Maputo*) launched in 1993 with the aim of documenting the dialectal evolution of the Portuguese spoken in Maputo by means of semi-structured interviews; and the elaboration of two written corpora of university students' productions, a project entitled *A Competência em Português dos Estudantes Universitários em Moçambique* and conducted by the Eduardo Mondlane University first in Maputo, then in other universities across the country (namely in the cities of Quelimane, Beira, and Nampula). These written corpora contain approximately 30,000 words each and were collected in 2002-2003 and 2008-2009, respectively.

In 2006, the creation of the *Corpus África* (Bacelar do Nascimento et al. 2008), consisting of five parallel subcorpora comparable in terms of size and content, was an important advancement in the study of pluricentric Portuguese. Despite its unprecedented extension – 600,000 words per national variety –, the corpus predominantly features written material (96%), with up to 70% drawn from highly monitored registers, such as literary and journalistic texts (Bacelar do Nascimento et al. 2008: 40). Recently, a new corpus compilation effort was undertaken to make up for this bias towards written language. The *PALMA Corpora of African Varieties of Portuguese* (Hagemeyer et al. 2022) includes three comparable subcorpora of spoken urban Portuguese from Angola, Mozambique and São Tomé. It is composed of semi-

structured interviews, with a set of speakers balanced as much as possible according to education level, age and gender, both within each subcorpus and across the three corpora. For MP, the PALMA corpus contains approximately 381,000 tokens of spoken data, consisting of 70 interviews, corresponding to 42 hours of recording (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 8). Finally, the *Corpus Moçambique*, compiled by Vieira & Pissurno (2017) at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), is another noteworthy database, consisting of 35 interviews carried out in Maputo in 2016-2017.

Despite their important contributions, a closer examination of each of these corpora revealed significant limitations in regard of our purposes, especially due to their limited size. It is a well-known fact among corpus linguists that corpus frequency can serve as an indicator of the vitality of a given construction, as a parameter of language use (Divjak 2019).²⁵ However, Recipient passive constructions were found to occur with relatively low frequency across corpora, an observation that even led some researchers to conclude against the productivity of these constructions (e.g., Gonçalves et al. 2022: 11). This frequency effect, however, can be readily explained: passive constructions are significantly less frequent than active sentences, and ditransitive contexts are similarly less common than monotransitive ones (Nhatuve 2022: 22).²⁶

Passives are moreover more frequent in written productions than in oral speech – which explains why they are not so frequent in the PALMA corpus (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 11). These corpora therefore proved too small to lend themselves to an adequate analysis of this construction, underscoring the necessity of working with larger datasets like the CP that facilitate large-scale investigation. It is nevertheless worth highlighting the presence of Recipient passive constructions in each of the aforementioned corpora, as illustrated by examples (1) to (4) below, retrieved from Gonçalves’ corpus (1990), the *Corpus África* (2006), the *Corpus Moçambique* (2017) and the PALMA corpus (2022), respectively.

- (1) *A melhor coisa é chegar cedo porque de noite não vale a pena, serás levada tudo o que pensas me oferecer.* (Corpus UEM, Beira/Nampula/Quelimane)
‘It is better if you arrive early because at night it’s not worth it, you will be robbed from everything you might want to offer me.’

²⁵ However, corpus frequency as such is by no means a reliable gauge, raw counts of occurrence and co-occurrence are no longer considered sufficient measures (Divjak 2019: 70). It should be borne in mind that frequencies should always be weighted and considered in the light of the specific construction that is being examined.

²⁶ On a total of 233 passive sentences analysed by the author, only 4 corresponded to ditransitive contexts. Overall, thus, monotransitive passives are overwhelmingly more frequent than ditransitive passives.

- (2) *Deus [...]. Nome no qual em troca os indivíduos são prometidos paraísos e ameaçados inferno.* (Corpus África)
 ‘God [...], in whose name individuals are promised heavens and threatened with hell.’
- (3) *L: é um chapa sim. São aqueles menores... então foram atribuídos esse nome, de ratos pequenos, porque podem ludibriar na estrada.* (Corpus Moçambique)
 ‘L (interviewee): Yes, it is a ‘chapa’. They are the smaller ones, which is why they were given this name of small rats, because they can cheat on the road.’
- (4) *Mas eu fui oferecida ali grinalda e ramo para poder me casar.* (Corpus PALMA)
 ‘But I was offered a wreath and a bouquet in be able to marry.’

5.3. Experimental data

While the corpus-based study permitted to get valuable insights into the underlying grammatical structure of the Recipient passive construction, unveiling both its semantic coherence and syntactic productivity, it still lacked crucial sociolinguistic insights about the speakers most likely to produce such constructions. Since the CP does not provide access to sociolinguistic profiles, we sought to address this gap through an experimental investigation, conducted during a 10-week fieldwork period in Mozambique. Fieldwork was regarded as an essential undertaking and the key to more insightful and informed research. Experimental data was gathered in the form of an acceptability judgment task to examine whether the occurrence of Recipient passive constructions could be linked to specific informant profiles, particularly regarding their first language and region of origin, with the aim of enhancing our understanding of sociolinguistic patterns.

Overall, the experimental study aimed to complement the corpus-based analysis, by collecting data of another nature, as well as to overcome limitations of previous research, especially the regional bias towards Maputo. The study therefore tackled the challenge of expanding the scope of the findings beyond Maputo, assessing their relevance and applicability across all of Mozambique. The survey, composed of 45 items following a 15 x 3 design, was distributed across four cities in Mozambique, namely Maputo, Chòkwé, Quelimane and Nampula. The resulting data was subsequently anonymised and stored for analysis using logistic regression (see Chapter 9). While this approach offers valuable perspectives into the social distribution of Recipient passives, it also presents its own inherent shortcomings: the survey put emphasis on the *perception* rather than the production of the Recipient passive construction, and relied on elicited rather than spontaneous, and (still) written rather than

spoken, data. Additionally, the sample of informants, consisting of 220 participants, was restricted to university students.

The fieldwork consisted of two complementary parts: while the survey-based study aimed to explore the relationship between the occurrence of Recipient passives and sociolinguistic profiles; interviews were conducted in order to gather spoken data that would complement written corpus data. However, time constraints prevented their inclusion in the present dissertation, leaving their detailed analysis as a direction for future work. These interviews, along with participant observation during the fieldwork period, nevertheless provided valuable and authentic examples of Recipient passives in natural speech (see Appendix V).

5.4. Multifactorial and multivariate methods in linguistic research

The analyses presented in the three publications, particularly in Chapters 8 and 9, utilise a combination of multifactorial and multivariate methods that blend qualitative and quantitative approaches. These methods aim to unravel the complex interactions between various linguistic, cognitive, social and contextual factors, in line with the principles of Cognitive Sociolinguistics. Multifactorial, profile-based methods involve analysing how multiple variables contribute to understanding a particular linguistic phenomenon, typically requiring classifying each occurrence based on a set of predefined factors (e.g., structural, conceptual, pragmatic, sociolinguistic). Multivariate quantitative methods, in turn, refer to statistical techniques used to analyse data involving multiple variables simultaneously, usually to identify patterns, relationships, interactions or underlying structures within the data. These methods are commonly employed to explore complex datasets.

Concretely, each of the three publications addresses a different aspect of the Recipient passive construction, with the objective of providing a comprehensive understanding of this innovative constructional pattern. While Chapters 6 and 7 are essentially exploratory and qualitative studies aimed at conceptually characterising the construction, identifying its semantic features and delimitating contexts of occurrence, Chapters 8 and 9 build on the hypotheses raised in the two preceding chapters. Each nevertheless focused on different facets: Chapter 8 exclusively investigates intralinguistic factors, while Chapter 9 includes sociolinguistic variables into the analysis. The distinct aims of each case study thus necessitated different sets of methods.

The first step of the analysis involved manually retrieving all instances of the Recipient passive construction, to proceed to its characterisation (Chapter 7). Building on both the literature and the detailed descriptive analysis of Recipient passives presented in Chapter 7, a set of relevant defining factors (linguistic variables) was identified. The second step therefore consisted in compiling a representative and balanced dataset for the constructional alternation, extracting relevant instances of the Theme passive construction to complement the Recipient passive sample. This was followed by the manual and systematic annotation of the linguistic features identified earlier in the process. Upon completion of the annotation process, a multivariate quantitative analysis was performed using statistical techniques to assess the relative weight of the identified factors on the variation. These steps are reminiscent of Behavioural Profile Analysis (Gries & Divjak 2009; Van Hulle 2024), which “combines a fine-grained manual annotation of a set of predefined parameters characterising each occurrence in the corpus with multivariate exploratory statistics in order to reveal structuring groups of near-synonyms” (Van Hulle 2024: 89). In this case, the near-synonyms consist of two constructional patterns, namely Recipient and Theme passives. Specifically, random forests and conditional inference trees were employed, two statistical tools well-suited for uncovering correlations among multiple predictor variables (Chapter 8).

Random forests use a collection of decision trees, each trained on a random subset of the data, to make predictions. The final classification is based on the majority vote or average prediction across all trees. Conditional inference trees are decision trees that employ statistical hypothesis testing to select splits, ensuring that the analysis avoids overfitting and selection bias. This method is valuable for understanding complex relationships between predictors and outcomes while identifying the most significant variables in the process (Levshina 2015: 291-292). Both methods allow for the simultaneous analysis of multiple variables, providing insights into the most influential factors in the data (random forests) and helping to uncover intricate patterns of interaction between predictors (conditional inference trees). In Chapter 8, we use these multivariate methods to examine how linguistic variables – such as pragmatic salience (topicality), animacy, affectedness, construal, and structural factors – influence the syntactic choice between Recipient and Theme passives.

Finally, Chapter 9 shifts the focus towards external variables, seeking to bring more sociolinguistics into the picture and addressing a corpus lacuna: the absence of information related to the sociolinguistic background of the speakers. Following a 10-week period of fieldwork, experimental data were collected in the form of an acceptability judgement task (and its related sociolinguistic questionnaire). The data were subsequently stored in an anonymised

fashion then analysed using regression analysis. Regression models are typical of multifactorial approaches, placing greater emphasis on the relative importance of each factor, by estimating coefficients and odds ratios that indicate the weight of each factor. In contrast, multivariate techniques provide a broader assessment of the combined influence of various factors.

Logistic regression is a widely used statistical method for modelling the relationship between a categorical dependent variable (outcome) and one or more independent variables (predictors), and evaluates how predictor variables are associated with the probability of a particular outcome (Levshina 2015: 253-254; Garcia 2021). It is particularly popular in sociolinguistic research for analysing the effect of external, social variables on linguistic variation. Logistic regression works particularly well with binary outcomes (like “acceptable” or “not acceptable” in an acceptability judgement task). However, it has limitations, such as sensitivity to outliers and multicollinearity, and it may not capture complex interactions between predictors as effectively as conditional inference trees. In Chapter 9, we applied this multifactorial approach to explore how factors such as the speaker’s first language and region of origin, and verb type (as well as type of transfer) influence the acceptability of the Recipient passive construction.

PART II

USAGE-BASED CASE STUDIES

6. The transitivisation hypothesis

While Recipient passives are not a recent discovery – having been noted as early as the 1980’s (Carvalho 1985, 1987) – their analysis has so far primarily been conducted within derivational linguistic frameworks. Moreover, linguists continue to debate the stability and productivity of these passives as well as how they should be integrated into a unified theory of linguistic change in emerging varieties of Portuguese (e.g., Petter 2009a; Álvarez-López et al. 2018; Gonçalves et al. 2022). One notable attempt to provide a unifying explanation for the occurrence of non-standard passives in the Mozambican variety of Portuguese was made by Gonçalves (1990; 1996). According to the author, “the ‘strange’ syntactic movements with regards to EP could be interpreted as evidence for a more general tendency towards the ‘transitivisation’ of Portuguese verbs” (Gonçalves 1996: 54). Gonçalves further suggested that these changes in transitivity might be extrapolated to other African varieties of Portuguese (Gonçalves 2013).

Despite its theoretical appeal, this “transitivisation hypothesis” grounded in the framework of generative grammar has not yet been empirically tested. In the following sections, we offer an overview and a brief evaluation of this hypothesis using corpus data retrieved from the *Corpus do Português* (CP). Although we do not conduct extensive descriptive and statistical analyses, our findings reveal that the hypothesis, while based on genuine observations, lacks the systematicity it claims. It will be shown that the three processes of transitivisation identified are not equally productive and that the well-balanced theoretical picture falters when confronted with real corpus data.

6.1. Early studies on Recipient passives

Carvalho (1985, 1987) was among the first authors to report on Recipient passives, conducting a brief contrastive study of passive structures in the Portuguese spoken in Mozambique (MP) and Portugal (EP). Her findings already highlight several key observations, leading her to conclude that the use of such passives is unique to the Mozambican variety (Carvalho 1987: 108). Regarding passive structures in general (not restricted to ditransitive contexts), she notes that passive constructions are not only less frequent overall in EP but also of another semantic nature. In EP, passives primarily emphasise actions where the agent is either unknown or of minimal relevance. Conversely, in MP, passives tend to highlight the *affectedness* of the patient – preferably a human participant (Carvalho 1987: 111). Another notable distinction that the author identifies is the grammatical person typically used in passive constructions. While passive constructions in EP predominantly appear in the 3rd person (e.g., *foram obrigados* ‘they were forced’, *foi um caso muito falado* ‘it was a much-talked-about case’), 1st-person passives are more frequent in MP (e.g., *fui obrigado* ‘I was forced’, *fui dito* ‘I was told’, *fomos exigidos* ‘we were required’) (Carvalho 1987: 109).

In subsequent work, Gonçalves (1990; 1996; 2010) looked into argument structure in MP with particular emphasis on these innovative passive structures, introducing the label *passivas dativas* (‘dative passives’) to refer to Recipient passives. Gonçalves proposes an analysis mainly in terms of syntactic movements within a derivational framework, interpreted as the result of Bantu language interference in second-language acquisition contexts. Gonçalves thus places less emphasis on the semantic aspects alluded to by Carvalho (1987) and instead explores changes in argument structure, which formed the core of her doctoral dissertation (Gonçalves 1990). To account for what she termed “strange syntactic movements” in MP (Gonçalves 1996: 54), she suggests that these are part of a broader process of change at the level of verbs, more specifically in the sense of their *transitivisation*. In other words, MP verbs tend to exhibit an inclination towards higher degrees of transitivity, by taking a direct object complement.

Although initially developed for MP, Gonçalves later suggested that her analysis might also potentially apply to Angolan Portuguese (AP). She notes: “in MP and in AP, a significant increase in the number of transitive structures can be noted. A syntactic consequence of this phenomenon is the possibility to form passive sentences in cases in which this option would not be available in EP” (Gonçalves 2013: 168). While linguists studying AP, such as Chavagne (2005) and Adriano (2014), have equally observed alterations in the argument structure of verbs, they did not seek to integrate their findings into a unified account of the variation.

Overall, it remains unclear whether these changes in transitivity, in both AP and MP, represent a change in progress or merely reflect the fast-paced and therefore slightly chaotic nativisation process of these varieties, which inherently involves a substantial amount of variation (Hagemeijer 2016: 49). Furthermore, this area of grammar (i.e., argument structure) is known as a diachronically unstable one, having undergone significant changes throughout the histories of both EP and BP (Chavagne 2005: 227; Bagno 2011: 527-538).²⁷ Since this thesis focuses on MP, the following sections will restrict their scope to MP data and the transitivisation processes at play in that variety exclusively. While comparisons will be drawn between AP and MP where relevant, no claims will be made regarding the Angolan variety. The next two chapters will offer further insights into more recent research on MP's Recipient passives (Chapters 7 and 8).

6.2. Three transitivisation processes identified

The transitivisation hypothesis identifies three processes through which verbs in MP eventually acquire increasing degrees of transitivity (Gonçalves 1996: 62-63). Transitivisation is understood as a movement towards the prototype of transitivity, resulting in an expansion of the class of direct transitive verb which syntactically encode the direct object without the mediation of a preposition. Two main mechanisms are involved in this change: the deletion of prepositions and the emergence of a transitive variant of originally intransitive verbs, resulting in a causative alternation. Further exploration of the notion of transitivity under a cognitive perspective will be addressed later (see section 6.4).

According to Gonçalves (1996), transitivisation translates into the following three processes, illustrated in Figure 6: (i) emergence of a transitive variant for some EP unaccusative verbs, such as *nascer* 'to be born' (e.g., *nascer um filho* 'give birth to a child'); (ii) the realisation of EP prepositional complements as noun phrases in MP (e.g., *bater as pessoas* instead of *bater nas pessoas* 'to beat people'); and (iii) the expression of both direct and indirect objects as noun phrases in ditransitive contexts, giving rise to Double Object constructions (DOC) (e.g., *dar os meus filhos aquilo que eu não tive* instead of *dar aos meus filhos aquilo que eu não tive* 'give my children what I never had myself', or *ensinar os outros a Bíblia* instead of *ensinar aos*

²⁷ Bagno (520-521), for instance, identifies a range of Portuguese verbs whose argument structure has evolved over time, either through the addition of a preposition (*acertar de* becoming *acertar* 'settle' or *desejar dela* becoming *desejar* 'desire') or its omission (from *começar* shifting to *começar a* 'begin' or *resistir* to *resistir a* 'resist').

outros a Bíblia ‘teach the Bible to the others’ (from Gonçalves et al. 2022: 10)). Gonçalves’ analysis, grounded in a derivational model of grammar, posits that each of these processes would *automatically* generate a passive counterpart, as exemplified in Figure 6.

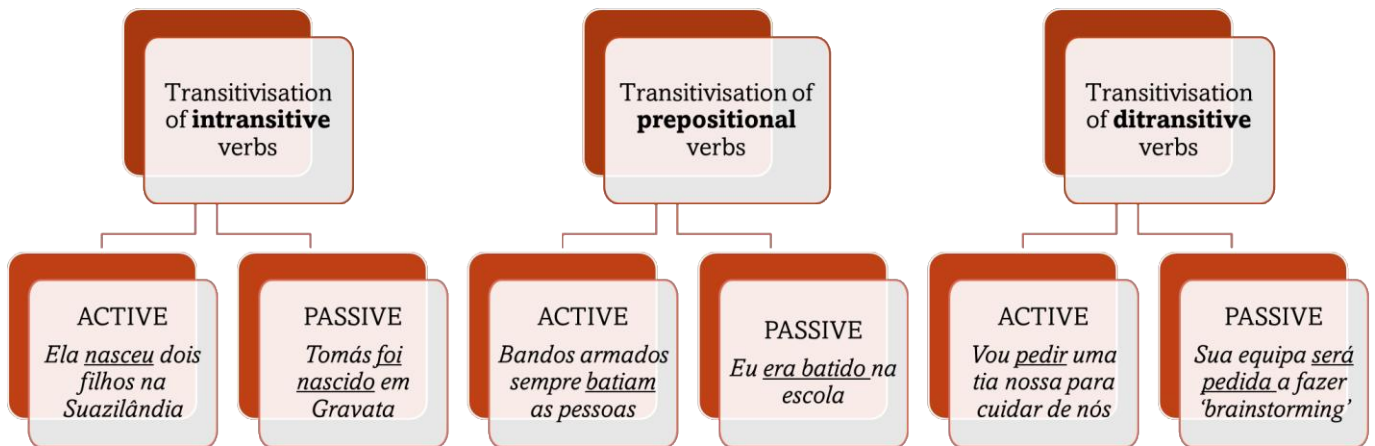


Figure 6. Three transitivity processes in MP (adapted from Gonçalves 1996: 62-63), illustrated with data from the *Corpus do Português*

These three processes are governed by two primary syntactic mechanisms. While the introduction of a transitive variant for EP intransitive verbs underpins the first process, preposition drop governs the latter two processes, transforming EP prepositional complements – whether indirect objects or oblique complements – into direct objects expressed as noun phrases. Both mechanisms would contribute to the same overarching result: the expansion of the category of direct transitive verbs in MP. Following this hypothesis, Recipient passives are thus understood as being part of a broader tendency of MP verbs towards increased transitivity. In other words, they are interpreted as one possible outcome of the transitivity movement resulting from changes in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs (cf. lower-right corner of Figure 6). More specifically, it is argued that MP ditransitive verbs display a strong tendency to select two bare noun phrases as direct and indirect objects, whereas EP equivalents categorically encode indirect objects as prepositional phrases headed by the preposition *a* ‘to’.

6.3. Problems with the transitivity hypothesis

Gonçalves’ (1996: 49) transitivity hypothesis appears to provide an economical model that captures the regularities of the variation based on a small set of syntactic mechanisms, resulting in a well-balanced picture (Figure 6). When taking a closer look, however, several issues arise.

First, it has not been empirically tested by means of a quantitative corpus-based analysis. To our knowledge, no studies have examined this hypothesis in any of the African varieties of Portuguese: researchers often limit themselves to acknowledging the differences without systematically testing them. Petter (2009b: 215), for instance, observes that “there are various cases in which the syntactic structure of the verb in EP differs from the structure found in AP, BP and MP”, but does not provide empirical evidence to further substantiate this claim.

A closer examination of linguistic data reveals significant grounds to question the presumed equivalence between active and passive constructions, as well as the uniformity across the three processes. The dataset on which Gonçalves based her analysis was moreover relatively limited in size. Second, the productivity of the three transitivity phenomena is uneven, as will be shown in the next sections. An opposite trend has furthermore been documented, namely the insertion of prepositions in contexts where they are not required in EP, resulting in a form of *Differential Object Marking* (DOM). Specifically, there is a strong tendency in MP to insert the preposition *a* with animate, preferably human complements that EP usually codes as direct objects (Gonçalves et al. 2024; Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024). A related phenomenon is the use of the dative clitic form *lhe* where the accusative clitic *a/o* is generally required in EP, known as *lheísmo* (e.g., Bacelar do Nascimento et al. 2008: 52; Gonçalves 2010: 49; Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 22 – also in AP, see Chavagne 2005: 227; Adriano 2014: 353).²⁸ These changes seem to run counter to the expected direction of transitivity, and may ultimately be linked to a broader conceptual shift, reflecting a tendency in MP to increasingly treat indirect objects as core arguments – a hypothesis that nevertheless requires further empirical investigation (see Chapter 9; Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 23).

Third and last, the hypothesis relies on a derivational model that assumes the active voice as the starting point for analysing passive constructions. Such an approach consistently interprets passive structures in terms of their hypothetical active counterparts, even when such counterparts must be inferred or invented. Yet the derivational model, with its reliance on syntactic rules to derive constructions through the manipulation of underlying forms and the structural parallelism it entails, hardly resists a closer corpus-based scrutiny. Considering these limitations, it is evident that the transitivity hypothesis leaves several issues unresolved.

²⁸ Examples include the following: *Eu ia casar para ajudar a Raúl* ‘I was going to marry to help Raul’; *Motivou que eu fosse às machambas dos colonos para apoiar-lhe* ‘Therefore I went to the fields of the colonisers, to support him’ (Corpus África).

Eu sempre ajudei ao meu sobrinho quando não trabalhava ‘I always helped my nephew when he didn’t have a job’; *O Mondlane apoiou a todos os que queriam estudar* ‘Mondlane supported everyone who wanted to study’ (Corpus do Português).

This situation thus raises compelling research questions that warrant further exploration through an in-depth corpus-based analysis. Given the presence of multiple types of variation, it becomes essential to investigate their nature and underlying mechanisms systematically, more specifically: (i) which transitivity processes are the most productive or systematic, (ii) which verb classes and prepositions are involved, and (iii) how both syntactic and semantic roles are affected. In what follows, each transitivity process will come under careful examination, with the support of empirical corpus data from the CP. It will be shown that the balanced model presented in Figure 6 does not correspond to what can be observed in actual data; that the three transitivity types do not have equal status; and that among these, Recipient passives occupy an outstanding position.

6.4. A brief assessment of the transitivity hypothesis

This section embarks on a descriptive analysis to assess the relative productivity of the three transitivity processes identified in MP. Before delving into empirical data, it is necessary to clarify the theoretical concept of transitivity underpinning the analysis, namely a view of transitivity as both a conceptual model and a prototype (Taylor 1995). Unlike the traditional dichotomous classification of verbs as either transitive or intransitive, this study adheres to the view of transitivity as a continuum organised around a prototype, as first proposed by Hopper and Thompson (1980), who conceptualised transitivity as a gradient and multifactorial property more adequately described as a property of an entire clause rather than of individual verbs. Semantically, transitivity is interpreted as the most common syntactic pattern for encoding direct causation, denoting an event in which an Agent acts upon a Patient, causing him to undergo a change of state. *Causality* therefore constitutes the conceptual underpinning of transitivity.

Rather than an either-or classification, Hopper and Thompson (1980: 252) thus propose a transitivity scale “according to which clauses can be ranked”. To formalise their view, the authors identify ten parameters that allow to measure more explicitly the degree of transitivity of a clause, each highlighting a distinct facet of the “effectiveness or intensity with which the action is transferred from one participant to another”.²⁹ One immediate consequence of this

²⁹ The ten parameters include: Participants, Kinesis, Aspect, Punctuality, Volitionality, Affirmation, Mode, Agency, Affectedness of Object, Individuation of Object (Hopper & Thompson 1980: 252).

multifactorial approach to transitivity is the recognition that some constructions traditionally labelled as intransitive (such as ergative or middle constructions) may in fact exhibit some degree of transitivity. In Hopper & Thompson's own terms (1980: 266): "because transitivity is not dichotomous, but is a continuum, it follows that clauses lacking an overt O[bject] must be locatable somewhere on this continuum; but it does not necessarily follow that such clauses are situated at the extreme intransitive end". This gradient view perfectly aligns with a constructional approach which considers transitivity as a (highly schematic) construction with multiple subschemas instantiating it.

Prototypical transitive clauses necessarily involve two participants in an asymmetric energetic (inter)action, typically an agent (energy source) and a patient (energy sink), where the former effectively affects the latter, modifying it in some way (Langacker 2008: 103, 356). This cognitive grammar view of the prototype of transitivity is underpinned by a force-dynamic model of causality. Prototypical transitivity thus designates a concrete, perceptible action and is typically represented by verbs denoting physical and dynamic actions (e.g., *kill*, *break*, *kick* – see verb *bater* in section 6.4.2). From this central sense, the domain of transitivity extends further to include mental and perceptual processes (e.g., *like*, *forget*, *regret*, *see*, *watch*), allowing the transitive construction to encode other cognitive domains (García-Miguel 2007: 764-765).

This gradient and cognitive view of the grammatical category of transitivity enables us to fine-tune the concept of *transitivisation*, interpreted as the process of approximation towards the prototype of transitivity consisting of an agent acting directly onto a patient syntactically encoded as a direct object (without the use of any preposition). The continuum view and prototypical structure underscore the inherent flexibility of transitivity, and naturally accommodate the fact that transitivity is both a diachronically unstable and synchronically variable category, particularly in the context of nativisation affecting African varieties of Portuguese. In the remainder of this section, each process of transitivisation will be analysed in turn, namely transitivisation of intransitive verbs (6.4.1), transitivisation of prepositional³⁰ verbs (6.4.2) and transitivisation of ditransitive verbs (6.4.3), with the aim of assessing their relative productivity (6.5).

³⁰ Gonçalves (2010) generally refers to them as *transitivos indirectos* (i.e., verbs selecting a complement headed by a preposition with the syntactic function of either indirect object or oblique complement). However, we find this terminology somewhat confusing and want to establish a clear distinction between *prepositional* and *ditransitive* verbs, the main distinction being that the former category takes one single complement headed by a preposition, whereas the latter takes two object complements, a NP traditionally labelled 'direct object' and a prepositional complement always headed by the same preposition (*a* 'to') traditionally labelled 'indirect object'.

6.4.1. Intransitive verbs

There is a tendency in MP to create transitive counterparts for verbs that are typically intransitive in EP (Gonçalves 2010: 47-48). This process is particularly evident with unaccusative verbs,³¹ a subclass of intransitives whose grammatical subjects semantically resemble the patient/theme of a transitive verb (e.g., *adormecer* ‘to fall asleep,’ *morrer* ‘to die,’ *nascer* ‘to be born’) (Raposo 2013: 387). These verbs, in principle never found with a direct object, thus start functioning as verbs of causative alternation (Gonçalves 2013: 167). The verb *nascer* ‘to be born’ exemplifies this process most vividly in MP, where it frequently appears in a transitive form (1), including in passive constructions (2), which suggests its full transitivity. Transitivity of the verb *nascer* is also attested in AP (3).

- (1) *Amanheceu lembrando das mulheres que me nasceram como profissional.* (from Facebook)
‘I woke up remembering all the women who helped me be born again as a professional.’
- (2) *Tomás foi nascido em Gravata, na Gorongosa, filho de um caçador e camponesa.* (CP)
‘Thomas was born in Gravata, Gorongosa, the son of a hunter and a woman from the countryside.’
- (3) (AP) *Tu também podes nascer um filho como eu.* (Gonçalves 2013: 168)
‘You too can give birth to a son, just like I did.’

The origins of this change, in sharp contrast with conventional uses in EP, can rather straightforwardly be traced to Bantu influence, since the verb for ‘being born’ is inherently transitive in many Bantu languages (Ngunga 2012: 16). Portuguese *nascer* therefore seems to have been analogically modelled on the Bantu verb, with the perceived semantic similarities causing convergence of the forms. Yet it is also possible to provide a conceptual account for this change: *nascer* ‘be born’ may have been reinterpreted as an agentive verb (reflecting an action typically carried out by women), which legitimises its ability to take a direct object (i.e., the entity brought into the world, semantically akin to a patient). The passive form further aligns with the patient’s affectedness and lack of control. This contact-induced transitivity of *nascer* appears to be a one-off instance of grammatical interference, likely a calque from Bantu

³¹ Unaccusative verbs stand in contrast with inergative verbs (like *brincar* ‘to play, to have fun’ or *dançar* ‘to dance’), also intransitive, but whose subject is typically agentive, in the sense that it has some kind of control on the situation denoted by the verb.

argument structure indicative of a more direct type of transfer from Bantu languages to MP (Palacios 2011).

Similar transitivity patterns were observed in the CP with verbs such as *evoluir* ‘to evolve’ (4)-(6) and *crescer* ‘to grow’ (7)-(8), which can acquire transitive meanings in MP. While in EP these verbs typically require the causative auxiliary *fazer* ‘to do’ to introduce a direct object, giving rise to causative constructions; in MP, they may take on this function independently. These verbs are therefore reinterpreted as having an agentive component that can be foregrounded as syntactic subject.³² Once again the influence of the contact languages can be observed, as these causative alternations seem to mirror the typical Bantu causative morphology, consisting in causative extensions attaching to the verb stem. In Bantu, verbal extensions play a crucial role in the expression (and modifications) of transitivity relations (Ngunga & Simbine 2012: 154). In Changana (as in many other Bantu languages), the causative morpheme takes the form *-is-*, which, when attached to the verb, triggers a causative reading as in (9). This helps explain why MP speakers, under influence of the contact languages, may replicate the Bantu causative alternation into Portuguese without explicit marking, resulting in the transitivity of intransitive verbs.

- (4) *A malária tem sido um ‘pé no saco’ por tanto tempo, que nossos corpos até evoluíram formas de combatê-la.* (CP)
‘Malaria has been a ‘pain in the ass’ for so long that our bodies even developed forms of fighting it.’
- (5) *O índice de corrupção em Moçambique subiu, de acordo com o último relatório da Transparência Internacional. Esta ONG indica que o nosso país evoluiu 14 lugares, passando da anterior 130^a posição para 116^a.* (CP)
‘The corruption index in Mozambique increased, according to the last report from *International Transparency*. This NGO indicates that our country jumped forward 14 positions, going from the 130th to the 116th place.’
- (6) *Normas são regras de comportamento que foram evoluídas dentro da competição.* (CP)
‘Norms are behaviour rules that were developed within the competition.’
- (7) *Estou contente contigo Compatriota Gwembe, felicidades sobre todo por seu último discurso. Entre todos ajudemos a crescer o nosso País.* (CP)
‘I am happy for you, fellow countryman Gwembe, congratulations above all for your last speech. We are helping to make our country grow.’
- (8) *Mas, para a UA para ser capaz de cultivar ‘uma África unida’, terá de primeiro que crescer dentes de aço.* (CP)

³² In all examples provided excepted for (5), the verbs *evoluir* and *crescer* would be replaced by the verb *desenvolver* in standard EP.

‘But for the African Union being able to cultivate a ‘united Africa’, it will first have to develop teeth made of steel.’

(9) *Mama amuyetlel-is-ile* (Ngunga & Simbine 2012: 154)

EP: ‘A mãe fez dormir a criança.’

MP (potentially): ‘A mãe adormeceu a criança.’

‘The mother had the child sleep.’

The overall productivity of this first process, however, appears to be quite limited. While Gonçalves (1996, 2010, 2013) argues that assigning transitive equivalents to EP intransitive verbs should be considered a property typical of MP, documented instances of such transitive forms remain rare, predominantly occurring in the active voice – with the notable exception of the verb *nascer* which is frequently attested in its transitive form in both active and passive constructions (Gonçalves & Justino 2020a: 69). Transitive instances of *evoluir* and *crescer* were only sporadic in the CP, with the large majority of uses still following the EP intransitive pattern, although one interesting example of the verb *evoluir* in the passive voice was found (6). The range of verbs participating in this new pattern of causative alternation is also rather small, highlighting further restrictions.

Despite apparent low productivity, this quick overview of the data nevertheless suggests that this transitivity type in MP might be more systematic than initially thought. The pattern seems to predominantly affect unaccusative verbs, prompting a potential refinement of the hypothesis. It might therefore be interesting to cast a wider net in search for other potential verb candidates, possibly guided by Pedroso’s (2019) list of unaccusative verbs. A comprehensive corpus analysis would be necessary to confirm this trend and uncover additional examples. Interestingly, Bagno (2011: 630-632) describes a parallel process in BP, involving the reanalysis of formerly unaccusative verbs like *nascer* ‘to be born’ (10), *crescer* ‘to grow’ (11), *cabere* ‘to fit’ (12) as transitive, with their direct object corresponding to the subjects of the classic unaccusative constructions. Bagno associates this shift to BP’s strong preference for SVO word order and tendency to assign agent-like properties to subjects.

(10) *Meu bebê está nascendo os dentes.* (Bagno 2011: 631)
[lit.] ‘My baby is growing the teeth.’

(11) *Qual é o nome do shampoo que cresce o cabelo?*
[lit.] ‘What is the name of the shampoo that grows the hair?’

(12) *Esse carro cabe muita coisa apesar do tamanho.*
[lit.] ‘This car fits many things despite its size.’

Despite the apparent similarities, however, caution is warranted when comparing varieties. Key differences exist between these seemingly analogous changes in transitivity in BP and MP. The first has to do with the divergent transitivisation process of *nascer* in the two varieties, as MP speakers use *nascer* transitively and passively in ways that BP speakers do not or would not (for instance, examples (1)-(3) above would likely be deemed unacceptable by a BP speaker). The other concerns passivisation: Bagno (2011: 632) notes that BP transitive constructions with traditionally intransitive verbs are not passivisable, while MP allows passivisation (e.g., (2) and (6) above). In MP, transitivisation is furthermore shaped by language contact with Bantu languages, which display a marked preference for human subjects (Nhatuve 2022).

6.4.2. Prepositional verbs

This section focuses on the transitivisation of prepositional verbs in MP, a process that chiefly entails the deletion of the prepositions traditionally required by the argument structure of the verb, as exemplified in (13). In contrast to the small set of intransitive verbs identified above, this second process spans a wider range of verb-preposition combinations, including but not limited to the following prepositions (see Gonçalves & Justino 2020a: 91 for MP; Adriano 2014: 332 for AP):

- **a** ‘to’: e.g., *assistir (a)* ‘to watch’, *responder (a)* ‘to answer’, *renunciar (a)* ‘to renounce’;
- **de** ‘of’: e.g., *abusar (de)* ‘to abuse’, *(des)confiar (de)* ‘to (dis)trust’, *gostar (de)* ‘to like’;
- **em** ‘in’: e.g., *bater (em)* ‘to hit’, *pegar (em)* ‘to grab’, *pensar (em)* ‘to think’;
- less common, or more lexical prepositions include **com** ‘with’, **por** ‘by’, **sobre** ‘about’, and **contra** ‘against’.

- (13) (EP) *Ele bateu **no** menino. Ela confia **no** amigo.*
 (MP) *Ele bateu **o** menino. Ela confia **o** amigo.*
 ‘He hit the boy. She trusts the friend.’

At first glance more productive than that of intransitive verbs, this transitivisation process nevertheless reveals itself to be significantly more variable and complex. A cursory review of corpus data confirms a high degree of variation, making it challenging to identify consistent syntactic or semantic regularities. As Gonçalves & Justino (2020a: 69) note, “the variation characterising some verb classes were only partially explored, not allowing to capture the whole

set of lexical properties and the wealth of syntactic patterns of each specific verb”. As a result, it remains unclear whether this transitivity type is better analysed as a change in argument structure or whether new constructional patterns are beginning to emerge.

Verbs such as *pegar* ‘to grab’ and *bater* ‘to hit’ are often cited as prime examples of this process, as they frequently drop the preposition *em*, in both MP (14)-(15) and AP (16). This change is nonetheless semantically predictable as these verbs denote direct physical actions, aligning closely with the prototype of transitivity. For other verbs like *confiar* ‘to trust’, the semantic motivation for the loss of the preposition is less transparent, as their meanings do not inherently imply physical action on an object. Yet this verb does feature an agent performing an action that directly affects a patient, albeit within the cognitive domain (see examples (17)-(19) below). Interestingly, this process facilitates the creation of passive forms that are not permissible in EP or BP (examples (15) and (19)). This syntactic flexibility suggests that these innovations are conceptually motivated, bringing MP verbs closer to the prototype of transitivity.

- (14) *Até há filhos que batem os pais* (Gonçalves 2013: 167)
 ‘There are even children who beat their parents.’
- (15) *O Líder falou de 20 anos de sacrificio em que todos os dias fomos amarrados, batidos, roubados, chamboqueados, massacrados e atacados militarmente.* (CP)
 ‘The leader spoke about 20 years of sacrifice during which every single day we were tied up, beaten, stolen, slaughtered and attacked by the military.’
- (16) (AP) *O executivo não ataca as causas deste fenómeno, vai atacando as senhoras, a policia vai batendo as pessoas.* (CP)
 ‘The executive does not address the causes of this phenomenon, he goes on assaulting women; the police goes on beating the people.’
- (17) *“Já nos confiam”, assinalou Nyusi, lembrando que “era chamado presidente de país de ladrões”.* (from Twitter)
 ‘‘They already trust us’, signalled Nyusi, reminding that “he was called president of a country of thieves”.’
- (18) *Caso isso aconteça, o partido no poder, a Frelimo, estará de algum modo a desacreditar-se pelo facto de deixar de confiar indivíduos pelos quais apostou.* (CP)
 ‘If this happens, the ruling party, Frelimo, would somehow be discrediting itself, as a result of no longer trusting individuals whom they capitalised on.’
- (19) *Seria bom que os presidentes dos conselhos municipais das cidades não esquecessem que foram confiados para representarem condignamente o povo e não usar o cargo para o benefício próprio.* (CP)
 ‘It would be good if the chairs of city councils did not forget that they have been trusted to decently represent the people, instead of using the office for their own benefit.’

Among other mechanisms motivating and facilitating this conceptual shift of MP verbs towards the prototype of transitivity, analogy seems to play a substantial role. As Bagno (2011: 528) argues for BP, the loss of prepositions may stem from syntactic analogy among semantically related verbs that are inherently transitive. For instance, *assistir (a)* ‘to watch’ may drop the preposition *a* due to its resemblance to fully transitive verbs like *ver* ‘to see’. Bagno further provides the following examples of BP verbs that have similarly lost the preposition *a* due to semantic-syntactic analogy with related verbs, thereby becoming fully transitive themselves, e.g., *agradar* ‘to please’ (< *alegrar* ‘to rejoice’, *aprazer* ‘to please’, *contentar* ‘to satisfy’, *deleitar* ‘to delight’); *assistir* ‘to watch’ (< *contemprar* ‘to contemplate’, *observar* ‘to observe’, *presenciar* ‘to witness’, *ver* ‘to see’); *obedecer* ‘to obey’ (< *acatar* ‘to abide by’, *cumprir* ‘to comply with’, *respeitar* ‘to respect’); *suceder* ‘to follow’ (< *substituir* ‘to replace’).

This “constructional contamination” proceeding analogically (Pijpops & Van de Velde 2016) illustrates how form and meaning are deeply intertwined, with structures influencing one another both syntactically and conceptually within the linguistic system. This, in turn, hints at internal tendencies within Portuguese, indicating that the language already contains the potential for syntactic change (see Chapter 8). However, language contact also seems to play a significant role, especially regarding the preference of Bantu languages for direct objects, human subjects and topic prominence (Nhatuve 2022). As Gonçalves (2013: 168) notes, “agentive verbs in Bantu typically select a direct object complement”. The lack of a clear distinction between prepositional and transitive verbs in many Bantu languages, where a wide range of prefixes and affixes (rather than prepositions) fulfil syntactic roles, ultimately also influences MP’s argument structure.

6.4.3. Ditransitive verbs

This section explores the third and last transitivisation type, related to ditransitive verbs. This process is thought to underlie the formation of Recipient passives, the central topic of the present investigation, which represent a syntactic innovation involving both conceptual and pragmatic shifts. However, it will be shown that transitivisation ultimately appears as unnecessary to the emergence of these passives, especially considering that ditransitivity is already a subtype of transitivity.

Ditransitivity is, thus, a special type of transitivity characterised by the presence of two object complements that are both directly affected by the action of the agent: the direct object (theme) and the indirect object (recipient or dative participant). The model of causality entailed is that of CAUSED POSSESSION (conveyed by verbs like *dar* ‘to give’ or *enviar* ‘to send’). In many languages, the semantics of CAUSED POSSESSION often overlaps with that of CAUSED MOTION (Geeraerts 2006b; Soares da Silva 2006). Ditransitive verbs are furthermore distinct from prepositional verbs because of the semantic characteristics of their complements. In contrast to prepositional oblique complements, the indirect object – whether introduced or not by a preposition – stands out as a more central, typically human participant, highly affected by the event denoted by the verb (Langacker 1991: 328). More attention will be devoted to this complex and multifaceted participant in Chapter 7.

Considering that ditransitive verbs are inherently transitive, one might question the specific meaning of transitivisation in this context. Traditionally, in Portuguese, the direct object is realised as a noun phrase, while the indirect object is introduced by the preposition *a* ‘to’. From a syntactic(ist) perspective, it has been argued that because of the obligatory presence of this preposition, the Portuguese indirect object cannot undergo passivisation. Thus, *transitivisation* refers here to the loss of the preposition *a* marking the indirect object, which from a formal point of view removes the syntactic distinction between direct and indirect objects. As a result, both arguments are treated as direct objects, leading to the formation of Double Object constructions (DOCs).

This change occurring in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs, which allows the indirect object to be expressed as a noun phrase without a preposition, is believed to enable its promotion to subject position in a passive clause, leading to the emergence of Recipient passive constructions, as illustrated in the simplified example (20) below. In other words, it is this purely syntactic process of transitivisation that ultimately enables passivisation (Gonçalves 1996: 50-51). Within the derivational model in which the transitivisation hypothesis is framed, Recipient passives are thus considered dependent on the existence of DOCs, in which both objects are expressed as noun phrases, as in the following hypothetical example: *O professor enviou o aluno a carta* ‘The teacher sent the student the letter’. The claim that Recipient passives derive from DOCs has since then been assumed in many studies on MP (e.g., Firmino 2010: 18; Ngunga 2012: 17; Petter 2009b: 215), up until very recently, with Gonçalves and colleagues (2022: 11) stating that “the use of dative passives is contingent upon grammars that license DOCs”.

- (20) (EP) *A carta foi enviada pelo professor.*
 ‘The letter was sent by the teacher.’
 (MP) *O aluno foi enviado a carta pelo professor.*
 ‘The student was sent the letter by the teacher.’

This claim, however, lacks solid empirical support, and a search through the CP unveiled an imbalance between the frequency of DOCs and Recipient passives. Contrary to the claim that in MP, the indirect object would be preferentially expressed by a noun phrase (Gonçalves 2010: 47-48), data from the CP clearly indicates that the preposition *a* remains in current use in MP, in some cases even extending to contexts where this preposition is not required in EP, thereby giving rise to a form of Differential Object Marking (DOM) (see section 6.3). Moreover, Recipient passives were shown to systematically outnumber DOCs in terms of frequency. The collection and analysis of a randomly retrieved sample of data based on five ditransitive verbs in both active and passive clauses in the CP (namely *dar* ‘to give’; *oferecer* ‘to offer’; *negar* ‘to deny’; *pedir* ‘to ask’; *ordenar* ‘to demand’) consistently revealed higher proportion of Recipient passives compared to DOCs. Although a register effect may be at play – with passives being more typical of written language and DOCs more common in spoken, spontaneous speech – the numbers presented in Tables 3 to 7 below still provide a reliable indicator of no direct correspondence between active and passive forms. The absence of active voice equivalents, also noted by Carvalho (1987: 111), suggests that Recipient passives may constitute an independent pattern in MP, and that their emergence should be attributed to different causes (Chapter 7).³³

Active			Passive		
FORM	nr.	%	FORM	nr.	%
Preposition <i>a</i>	150	65.8	Theme passive	178	87.7
DOC	5	2.2	Recipient passive	19	9.4
Pronominal	73	32	<i>unclear cases</i>	6	3
TOTAL	228	100	TOTAL	203	100

Table 3. *dar* ‘give’

³³ Other examples of non-correspondence between active and passive constructions are also found in other varieties of Portuguese. Bagno (2011: 582) highlights that some transitive uses of BP verbs resist conversion to passive voice (e.g., passivisation of the sentence found in (21) would sound odd to a BP native speaker: **os dentes estão sendo nascidos pelo meu bebê*). For the Portuguese of São Tomé, Gonçalves et al. (2022: 17) note that while DOCs are characteristic of that variety, Recipient passives are remarkably absent.

Active		
FORM	nr.	%
Preposition <i>a</i>	75	47.8
DOC	6	3.8
Pronominal	76	48.4
TOTAL	157	100

Passive		
FORM	nr.	%
Theme passive	84	87.5
Recipient passive	8	8.3
<i>unclear cases</i>	4	4.2
TOTAL	96	100

Table 4. *oferecer* ‘offer’

Active		
FORM	nr.	%
Preposition <i>a</i>	28	41.8
DOC	1	1.5
Pronominal	38	56.7
TOTAL	67	100

Passive		
FORM	nr.	%
Theme passive	29	80.6
Recipient passive	6	16.7
<i>unclear cases</i>	1	2.8
TOTAL	36	100

Table 5. *negar* ‘deny’

Active		
FORM	nr.	%
Preposition <i>a</i>	97	54.5
DOC	8	4.5
Pronominal	75	41
TOTAL	178	100

Passive		
FORM	nr.	%
Theme passive	37	88.1
Recipient passive	3	7.1
<i>unclear cases</i>	2	4.8
TOTAL	42	100

Table 6. *pedir* ‘ask, ask for’

Active		
FORM	nr.	%
Preposition <i>a</i>	58	44.3
DOC	27	20.6
Pronominal	46	35.1
TOTAL	131	100

Passive		
FORM	nr.	%
Theme passive	14	41.2
Recipient passive	19	55.9
<i>unclear cases</i>	1	2.9
TOTAL	34	100

Table 7. *ordenar* ‘order, demand’

In fact, Recipient passives appear to resist any kind of analysis in terms of transitivisation only. Rather, they represent a broader constructional innovation that necessitates expanding the scope of analysis to include conceptual and functional motivations. To fully capture the regularities of Recipient passives, a more comprehensive approach is required, moving beyond individual verbs to examine the phenomenon at the constructional level. Adopting a Construction Grammar perspective allows to draw generalisations across related micro-constructions, providing a more thorough account of the range of Recipient passive examples observed in the corpus, such as (21)-(24) below. This perspective also allows to shift the focus towards the passive voice, as in Construction Grammar, any construction within the constructional network can serve as a starting point for linguistic analysis.

- (21) *Joaquim Chissano, antigo chefe do Estado, foi ontem outorgado o título de Doutor Honoris Causa.* (CP)
 ‘Joaquim Chissano, former President, was yesterday awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa.’
- (22) *Estes trabalhadores recebem trabalho de subcontratantes e são pagos uma taxa por cada trabalho, de acordo com o número de itens produzidos.* (CP)
 ‘These workers receive work from subcontractors, and are paid a percentage for each job done, according to the number of items produced.’
- (23) *Aproximadamente 50 milhões de crianças que vivem em países afectados por conflitos no mundo estão sendo negadas a oportunidade de ir à escola.* (CP)
 ‘Approximately 50 million children who live in conflicted affected countries around the world are being denied the opportunity to go to school.’
- (24) *Pelas infracções cometidas, a empresa foi ordenada a parar de laborar sem a perda de salários por parte dos trabalhadores, e foi multada em quase 136 mil meticais.* (CP)
 ‘Due to infringements committed, the company was ordered to stop its activities without any loss of wages and was fined about 136 thousand meticals.’

An analysis of passive constructions solely in relation to their purported active counterparts completely overlooks their distinct semantic contributions, principally in terms of profiling and information structure. The use of the passive is not the result of the application of some syntactic rule but reflects the speaker’s intentionality in pursuing specific discursive and conceptual purposes. This, in turn, underscores that the passive voice obeys its own discursive and conceptual functions. The passive construction is mainly used in contexts where the patient’s topicality takes precedence over the agent’s role, shifting the focus towards the most affected participant. The passive primarily serves a topicalisation function: the affected participant, usually syntactically backgrounded, is turned into a topic by being promoted from object to subject position. A pragmatic consequence consists in its enhanced discursive emphasis, while semantically, its affectedness or change of state is profiled. The novelty introduced by MP in contrast to other varieties of Portuguese is that this object could be either the direct or indirect object. Chapter 7 discusses in greater depth the conceptual underpinnings of the passive construction.

While Bantu substrate influence is undeniable, the Portuguese linguistic system itself also provides a systemic potential for change, with certain verbs such as *ensinar* ‘to teach’ displaying increasing passive flexibility (25), as Bagno (2011) similarly observed for BP. Analogical processes with related ditransitive verbs appear to be at play: Recipient passives with verbs like

permitir ‘to allow’ (26) may have been calqued onto structural patterns from semantically closely similar verbs such as *autorizar* ‘to authorise’, which naturally takes a recipient-like subject in the passive across varieties of Portuguese. Chapter 8 includes a discussion of these and related analogical processes.

(25) *Eu fui ensinado que devia construir a nação por cima de todas as outras identidades.* (CP)

‘I was taught that the nation should be built on top of any other possible identity.’

(26) *Tornou-se presidente em 1994 – na primeira eleição em que negros sul-africanos foram permitidos votar – e deixou o cargo cinco anos depois.* (CP)

‘He became president in 1994 – after the first election in which Black South Africans were allowed to vote – and left office 5 years later.’

Recipient passives in MP thus emerge as a peculiar linguistic phenomenon deserving of an analysis on its own terms, irrespective of any alleged active counterpart. Corpus data furthermore made it clear that this change is taking place first and foremost in the passive. These innovative passive constructions are unique in several respects. First, they are exclusive to MP, not observed (or very marginally so) in other varieties, including EP, BP but also other African varieties such as Angolan³⁴ or Santomean Portuguese. Second, unlike with intransitive and prepositional verbs, these ditransitive passives display degrees of productivity and systematicity: Recipient passives exhibit a consistent and systematic pattern, indicating an emerging constructional change in MP that transcends the level of individual verbs, as will be further explored in the next chapter. Finally, while the influence of language contact is clearly discernible, conceptual and pragmatic factors are also at play in further stabilising the construction. It will be shown that Recipient passives are linked to the topicality of a very affected recipient participant in the discourse space, reflecting a pragmatic emphasis on the affectedness of animate participants that aligns with the preferences observed in local Bantu languages (Nhatuve 2022).

³⁴ AP displays another Bantu-influenced strategy for the expression of the indirect object, where instead of preposition drop, we find preposition substitution. Under the influence of the Kimbundo preposition *ku*, which functions both as a locative marker and a preposition for introducing indirect objects, in AP, the preposition *a* ‘to’ has been replaced by the locative preposition *em* ‘in’ (Brito 2011: 33), such as in the following examples retrieved from Chavagne (2005: 224-225): (a) *Dai eles entregarem **numa** moça* ‘Then they gave it to a girl’; (b) *Deu **na** mãe a outra metade* ‘He gave the second half to his mother’; (c) *Telefonar **na** policia* ‘Call the police’; (d) *Explicar **no** povo* ‘Explain to the people’. From these observations derives the following hypothesis: the use of the preposition *em* ‘in’ to introduce recipients seems to indicate an overlap between the event schemas of caused possession and caused motion, with the recipient being conceptualised as a Goal (Brito 2021:166). This in turn may turn out to block the formation of Recipient passives in that variety, which require a recipient conceived of as a more autonomous participant.

6.5. Conclusion: three transitivity types with different status

This cursory analysis of the transitivity hypothesis proposed by Gonçalves (1990, 1996, 2010) has revealed that each transitivity type varies in productivity, systematicity and complexity, challenging the structural parallelism suggested in Figure 6. Instead of three well-defined and symmetrical processes, it seems more appropriate to conceptualise transitivity as a continuum able to accommodate a diverse range of changes. This perspective naturally integrates prototypicality effects, with some patterns more productive than others. While the first couple of transitivity processes are characterised by a substantial amount of variation, Recipient passives emerged as a stable and systematic phenomenon, with a discernible pattern extending across similar contexts, suggesting an ongoing process of *constructionalisation*.

The transitivity of intransitive verbs in MP appears to result primarily from grammatical interference with Bantu languages. Its limited productivity suggests a pattern more reflective of contact-induced change than of a broader grammatical shift. On the other hand, the transitivity of prepositional verbs displays greater productivity, but also higher variability. Overall, it reflects a broad, albeit chaotic, shift towards prototypical transitivity, chiefly through the loss of prepositions. Preposition drop appears as semantically motivated in many cases but less so in others, resulting in a phenomenon marked by high unpredictability and low systematicity. This process is influenced by a combination of both internal dynamics such as analogy, and external factors like language contact. For both transitivity types, further research is necessary to determine whether these changes represent isolated shifts in individual verbs or emerging constructional trends; and whether transitive uses of some verbs represent ad-hoc adjustments made in context or changes in progress.

By contrast, the third process, which culminates in the emergence of Recipient passive constructions, illustrates a more profound and systematic linguistic innovation. Unlike the other two processes, these passives reveal a stable pattern that transcends individual verbs, encompassing various related contexts. Recipient passives challenge derivational expectations of active-passive correspondence, highlighting the need to trade these frameworks for a constructional approach. Rooted in both substrate influence from local Bantu languages and internal dynamics of Portuguese, this change embodies the interplay of both external and internal factors. The Recipient passive construction in MP thus exemplifies an instance of contact-induced transfer sustained by conceptual factors, and underscores MP's unique linguistic evolution, in accordance with its current nativisation.

The variation observed across all three processes highlights the limitations of interpreting them solely as changes in verb argument structure. Instead, adopting a constructional perspective allows for a more unified and comprehensive analysis (see Chapter 7). This does not mean that transitivity should be altogether discarded. In fact, transitivity as model of causality is inherently linked to the voice system as it specifies the relationship between the action and its participants, which can be envisioned from both ends. An active transitive construction implies an action fully performed by an agent on a patient. In passives, this relationship is reversed, foregrounding the patient and emphasising outcomes over actions. Within the constructional network, active and passive constructions are thus interrelated, chiefly through the notion of transitivity. However, the nature of this link is of a conceptual rather than structural nature, and does not necessarily imply structural parallelism across the voice system (see Chapter 9 for further discussion).

Adopting a cognitive stance on transitivity – understood as a prototypical category that provides a conceptual model of causality – allows to account for conceptual shifts while also naturally accommodating variability in argument structure. This approach further implies that changes in transitivity are conceptually motivated, since (contact-induced) shifts in MP's argument structure seem to align with the prototype of transitivity. Such shifts often emerge as speakers seek to approximate forms to familiar patterns and representations of causality, influenced by their linguistic and cultural experiences (e.g., importing Bantu conceptualisations into Portuguese). Ultimately, viewing transitivity through a conceptual lens offers a valuable framework for understanding the motivations behind constructional changes, revealing meaningful patterns even within highly variable structures. Some of these changes may result in new constructions, while others represent more transient variations, shaped by both the inherent properties of transitivity and the unique ecological language-contact dynamics of MP.

While it has been suggested that these changes in transitivity extend beyond MP as part of a broader trend across African varieties of Portuguese, such a claim warrants caution. Postcolonial varieties do share similar developmental conditions, including extensive language contact and large-scale L2 acquisition, as acknowledged in a theoretical framework known as the *Afro-Brazilian continuum* (Petter 2009a; Álvarez-López et al. 2018). However, each variety also evolves within a distinct ecological context that shapes its unique linguistic features. More fine-grained linguistic analyses within each specific variety often reveal idiosyncrasies that challenge broad generalisations. Further research, particularly quantitative corpus-based studies, is therefore necessary to assess the generalisability of the trend towards increased transitivity in African varieties of Portuguese, and to identify potential shared patterns.

7. Exploring the productivity and systematicity of the Recipient passive construction

This chapter builds on the previous discussion (Chapter 6) and continues exploring the literature to further investigate the Recipient passive construction in MP under a constructional prism. It aims to bridge a gap in the literature by providing a thorough and systematic description of this grammatical structure, identifying its semantic characteristics and the contexts in which it occurs. Additionally, it highlights the advantages of the constructional perspective in analysing this change, which offers a more integrated view of the phenomenon at hand. Finally, it briefly examines the constructional alternation between Recipient and Theme passives, showing how semantic factors play an important part in guiding the speaker's choice between these variants. Section 7.1 reviews the latest findings in the literature, identifying unresolved questions. Section 7.2 delves into the basic conceptual ingredients underlying the formation of Recipient passives, analysing them along the lines of Cognitive Grammar. Section 7.3 introduces the corpus data and methodology used for the study. Section 7.4 presents the descriptive analysis, followed by section 7.5 which discusses the main findings.

7.1. Unresolved questions: challenges and opportunities

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 (Álvarez-López et al. 2018). Substrate influence is still very lively on the African continent, where Portuguese coexists alongside a wide variety of local languages from the Bantu group. However, 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 distinct regional contexts that shape linguistic variation at the local level (Hagemeyer 2016: 63). Within this global picture, the Mozambican variety stands out due to the presence of Recipient passives – a grammatical innovation absent from other African varieties such as Angolan and Santomean Portuguese (Gonçalves 2017; Gonçalves et al. 2022).

Better known as *passivas dativas* ‘Dative passives’ in the Portuguese literature, Recipient passives have intrigued linguists since the 1980s. Carvalho (1987) was among the first to document them in a brief contrastive study of passive structures in Mozambican and European Portuguese. Subsequent work by Gonçalves (1990, 1996, 2010) provided more detailed syntactic analyses, proposing that these structures result from Bantu language interference within a second-language acquisition context (see also Ngunga 2012). Specifically, within a Generative Grammar framework, Gonçalves (1996: 49) characterised these “strange passives” as arising from changes in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs: while EP encodes indirect objects with the preposition *a* ‘to’, MP ditransitive verbs were proposed to allow Double Object constructions (DOCs), where both objects appear as bare noun phrases. However, as shown in the analysis carried out in Chapter 6, the claim that Recipient passives derive from DOCs lacks empirical support.

Over the past two decades, Recipient passives have received only passing mentions in the literature, with no in-depth descriptions. However, two recent studies (Gonçalves et al. 2022; Nhatuve 2022) provide fresh insights and raise new questions. Notably, both acknowledge the presence of Recipient passives in recently collected data (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 9; Nhatuve 2022: 14). The authors, however, make use of different type of data produced by different profiles of informants. While Nhatuve analysed written texts by students who have a Bantu language as mother tongue, Gonçalves et al. gathered a corpus of spoken interviews with informants from different ages and diverse educational backgrounds, most of whom have Portuguese as a first language. Furthermore, whereas Nhatuve focused exclusively on passive constructions, Gonçalves et al. took the active structures as their starting point.

Interestingly, despite their shared assumption that DOCs underlie Recipient passives, these studies diverge in their assessment of the construction’s current status in MP. Gonçalves et al. (2022: 11) suggest that while DOCs and Recipient passives persist, they have become less frequent and more restricted compared to data from the 1990s. In contrast, Nhatuve (2022: 7) argues that Recipient passives in MP turn out to be widespread and stable, occurring across different speaker groups. Given these differing perspectives regarding the status of Recipient

passives in present-day MP, several questions remain open and will be addressed in the following sections.

7.2. The conceptual foundations of an emerging construction

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: 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.

7.2.1. 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: 834). Petré (*forthcoming*: 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: 55) and in terms of perspective or *viewing arrangement* (Langacker 2008: 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 (Seoane 1999 and Kaltenbach 2020 can be cited among the exceptions).³⁵ 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: 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: 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: 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 contrast English, Changana³⁶ and MP with respect to the different types of less prototypical passive constructions they admit (or not).

(1) Changana

Recipient passive (from Gonçalves 1996: 43)

Vatsongwana va-nyik-iw-ile mali.

‘Children were given money’.

Beneficiary passive (from Ngunga et al. 2016: 348)

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

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

(2) English

Recipient passive (from Kaltenbach 2020: 77)

Mary is given the book (by the teacher).

Beneficiary passive (from Guerrero Medina 2020)

??I was cooked a delicious dinner.

³⁵ Likewise, the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in English has received relatively little academic attention, compared to the extensive literature on its active counterpart, the Dative Alternation (e.g., Bresnan et al. 2007; Rappaport-Hovav & Levin 2008; Szendrői et al. 2016).

³⁶ Bantu language spoken in the provinces of Maputo and Gaza (south of Mozambique).

(3) 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 (1)-(3) 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-* in the second example should be noted), while in MP, the possibility of forming Beneficiary passives seems to be blocked.³⁷ In English, Beneficiary passives appear only marginally acceptable.³⁸

7.2.2. 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

³⁷ 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: 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.

³⁸ 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.

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 (2006b) 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 (TRANSFER as a process with specific effects for the recipient), or on the *spatial* aspects of the transfer (TRANSFER as a material change of place of an object)” (Geeraerts 2006b: 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 (2006b) 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: 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.

7.2.3. 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.³⁹ 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: 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: 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, as well as between subject and object. Davidse (1998) insists on the need to distinguish between these two layers of grammatical organisation in the clause,⁴⁰ 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: 179). In this light, a recipient-subject appears as a natural coding strategy.

³⁹ 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.

⁴⁰ 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: 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.

Different languages make different choices as to the manner of instantiating these different patterns (Langacker 1991: 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.

7.3. 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 previous works relied on relatively little data,⁴¹ and considering that ditransitives occur with relatively low frequency – even lower for passive⁴² ditransitives – it would be interesting to work with bigger amounts of data. Fortunately, this is made possible with the *Corpus do Português – Web/Dialects* (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 study are retrieved from the CP.

⁴¹ For reference, Nhatuve's (2022) corpus is composed of 233 passive sentences, while Gonçalves *et al.* (2022) analysed a total of 142 ditransitive structures, both active and passive, for MP.

⁴² Maldonado (2007: 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.

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 (see Chapter 4).

Finally, the last step prior to description and analysis was to build the dataset that will constitute the basis of this study, with the retrieval as exhaustive as possible of all Recipient passives in the Mozambican subsection of the CP. Attention was restricted to ditransitive contexts in which all three participants were overtly expressed (i.e., the variable context identified above), so as to maximise subsequent comparability with Theme passives. Cases where the direct object was a complement clause were also considered. A total of 589 Recipient passives were collected.

Before moving on to the description of these passive structures typical of MP, it is worth highlighting two important methodological issues. First, attempts at classification often takes the *active* voice as a starting point. In line with Construction Grammar, which considers passives as independent constructions – though paradigmatically related to active ones through the concept of transitivity –, the particular semantic functions of the passive were duly taken into account for the semantic characterisation of Recipient passives. Second, the semantic classification of the Dative Alternation was originally developed based on English data. When applying these theoretical concepts to MP, it became evident that the analytical model proposed *inter alia* by Goldberg (1995) and Rappaport-Hovav and Levin (2008) could not be simply and straightforwardly transferred to Portuguese. Instead, a tailored characterisation specific to MP was required (cf. Figure 7 in section 7.4.2; see also Table 2 in Chapter 4). 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 vary idiomatically from language to language.

7.4. Recipient passives' linguistic profile: triggers and constraints on the construction

7.4.1. Lexicalist and constructional models

To precisely identify the full range of verbs allowed in the Recipient passive construction in MP, we relied on two key analyses of the English Dative Alternation: Rappaport-Hovav and Levin (2008) and Goldberg (1995). The former adopts a verb-sensitive approach, arguing that a verb's participation in a specific syntactic pattern is determined by what is lexicalised in its root. In contrast, Goldberg conceptualises the ditransitive construction as a series of semantic extensions from a prototypical, central reading of material transfer. Additionally, we consulted the *Dicionário de Regências Verbais do Português Moçambicano* (DRVPM) by Gonçalves and Justino (2020), which catalogs verbs whose argument realisation differs from the EP reference norm. Although this study subscribes to a constructional approach to argument structure, it does not mean that it completely disregarded the level of individual verbs. 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: 24).

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: 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 successfully⁴³ 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: 33).

Meanwhile, Rappaport-Hovav 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

⁴³ Although the inference of successful transfer is debated (see Rappaport-Hovav & Levin 2008: 145).

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 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 (Rappaport-Hovav & Levin 2008: 134).

7.4.2. 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 51 lemmas, that were subsequently grouped into four semantic categories, all sharing the core semantic component of TRANSFER (see Figure 7). 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 (4)-(5) below) – roughly correspond to Rappaport-Hovav 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 Rappaport-Hovav and Levin’s analysis (2008: 134).

It was thus necessary to extend the range and include two further semantic categories, that we labelled negative transfer (6) and directive transfer (7), the latter being based on Langacker’s (2008: 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* ‘ask’, *mandar* ‘order’, *ordenar* ‘demand’, *aconsejar* ‘advise’, *permitir* ‘allow’, *proibir* ‘forbid’, etc.) and is in this respect distinguished from “assertive” acts (*dizer* ‘say’, *afirmar* ‘state’, *responder*

‘reply’, *negar* ‘deny’, etc.).⁴⁴ These two latter categories, particularly relevant for MP, are absent from Levin’s (1993) classification,⁴⁵ but feature as semantic extensions in Goldberg (1995).⁴⁶ Finally, the so-called non-core dative verbs (i.e., *Send*-verbs and *Throw*-verbs) were not included in the analysis as they proved infelicitous in the Recipient passive construction in MP.

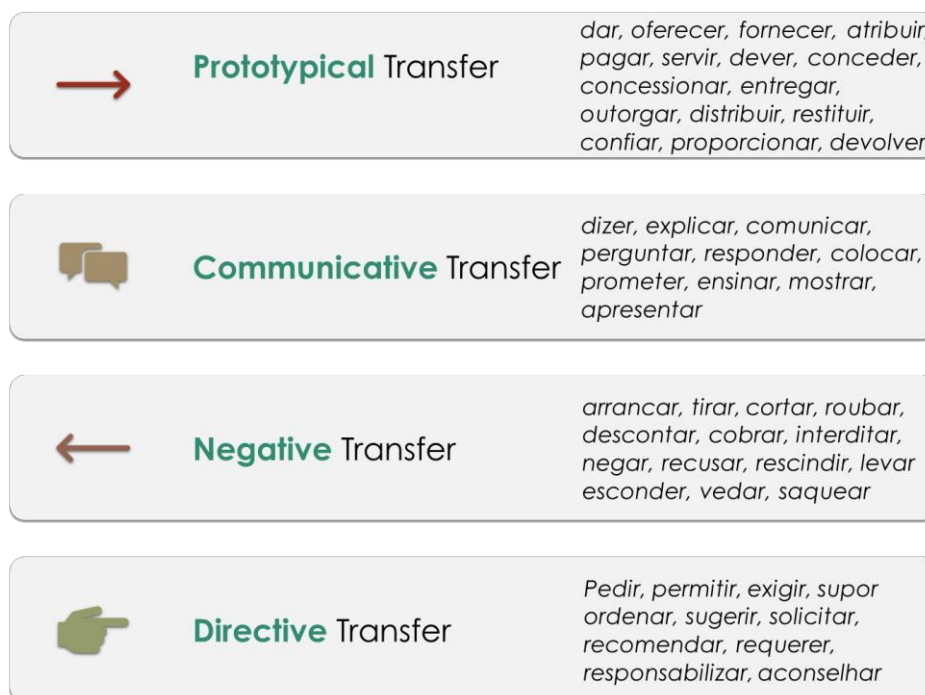


Figure 7. Ditransitive TRANSFER verbs taking part in the Recipient passive construction in MP

(4) 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.’

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ 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: 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 used for a prototypical ‘positive’ transfer, i.e., the indirect object is coded by the same preposition *a* ‘to’ (e.g., *o João deu um livro ao Pedro* ‘John gave a book to Peter’; *o João roubou um livro ao Pedro* ‘John stole a book from Peter’). 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 (Geraerts 2006b: 205).

⁴⁶ 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: 222-224).

(5) 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.’

(6) Negative transfer

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

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

(7) 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.’

7.4.3. 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: 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 (8)-(11) 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’ (8)-(9), *comprar* ‘buy’ (10)-(11) proved less felicitous in this construction, as only 16% of high school students and 7% of university students turned to this option.

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

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

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

(11) Recipient passive counterpart: *??O Pedro foi comprado um livro pelo João.*

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 Figure 7, 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 as restricted 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 Rappaport-Hovav and Levin (2008) required refinement, removing some verbs while adding others, so as to reach a classification suited to MP. This need for adjustment is partly due to the fact that Recipient passives occur in more restrictive contexts in MP than in English. Specifically, we identified three semantic constraints that help explain why certain verbs *do not* appear in the Recipient passive construction, i.e., verbs with which their formation seems to be blocked. While this 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 should not be included in an analysis of constructional alternation (Tagliamonte 2012: 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: 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: 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 Rappaport-Hovav and Levin (2008: 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: 90-91; Goldberg 1995: 56), thereby licensing the use of such passives in English, this option is not (yet) available in MP (though it could potentially emerge, as will be discussed in Chapter 9).

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 Rappaport-Hovav 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.

7.5. Discussion

7.5.1. 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 2006b: 197-198; Soares Da Silva 1999: 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: 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 et al. (2022: 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: 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 (12) and (13)-(14) below and assigned them different explanatory causes: while (12) is said to be the outcome of a change in the argument structure of ditransitive verbs, hence a typical Recipient passive, the examples under (13)-(14) would stem from a general preference in MP for animate, typically human subjects due to Bantu influence (Nhatuve 2022: 23). From a constructional perspective, however, (13)-(14) 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.

- (12) *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'.
- (13) *A minha filha foi roubado celular na baixa.* (negative transfer)
'My daughter was robbed her phone downtown'.
- (14) *O jovem é exigido a uma experiência de serviço de 5 anos.* (directive transfer)
'Young people are required to a five-year service experience'.

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'⁴⁷ (see (15)-(16) 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

⁴⁷ 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.

the semantics of the constructions are integrated to yield the semantics of particular expressions” (Goldberg 1995: 59-60).

- (15) *Muitos militares foram escondidos filhos.*
‘A lot of soldiers didn’t know that they had children, it was hidden from them’.
- (16) *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’.
- (17) *Os jogadores devem serem investidos desde a sua formação.* (from Firmino 2021: 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: 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 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* (see Chapter 6, Tables 3–7).⁴⁸

A syntactic pattern actually seems to emerge, as DOCs proved more frequent when one of the two objects was a clause,⁴⁹ with *pedir alguém para* ‘ask someone to’ and *ordenar alguém*

⁴⁸ Only the contexts with three overt participants were retained, so as to maximise the comparability between the active and the passive voice.

⁴⁹ The interpretation of *para* ‘to, for’ 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: 85) on the need to distinguish between NP and clausal themes, which pattern differently and therefore deserve a separate analysis.

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 et al. 2022: 10). At least in the written language (with the CP used as a proxy), the results obtained in firm 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 was further explored in Chapter 9.

7.5.2. 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.⁵⁰ 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-discursive ways, conveying differences in terms of construal and information structure (18)-(19). 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.

(18) *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.*
 ‘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.’

(19) *O fundo de iniciativas locais que foi dado aos distritos foi com tanta força política que esqueceu o essencial das coisas.*
 ‘The Local Initiative Fund that was given to the districts came with so much political power that the most important things were overlooked.’

⁵⁰ 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.

This is a major endeavour deserving a detailed qualitative and quantitative investigation, that will be the object of the next chapter (see Chapter 8). 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: 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: 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*: 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: 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: 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: 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: 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 prompts 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: 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: 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: 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: 112).

7.6. Conclusions

This study has specifically addressed Recipient passives' semantic characteristics, distribution and status regarding productivity and systematicity. While language contact with southern Bantu languages – where similar passive structures exist – has undoubtedly played a foundational role in their emergence, our analysis also revealed that the complex conceptual categories involved in the formation of this grammatical construction inherently allow for different event perspectives, which can be realised through distinct syntactic patterns. Specifically, the possibility of focalising either the possessive relationship between the recipient and theme *or* the path of the followed by the theme, along with the hybrid conceptual nature of the indirect object, further motivated the development of Recipient passives in MP.

We subsequently set out to delineate as precisely as possible the contexts in which Recipient passives occur and start alternating with Theme passives, as well as the factors that influence the choice between these variants. Our findings indicate that Recipient passives display a consistent set of semantic features, and that their contexts of occurrence are quite specific if compared with their considerably less restricted counterparts in English and Bantu languages. Regarding their status, we demonstrated that Recipient passives constitute a productive (occurring across a broad range of transfer verbs) and a stable construction in MP (present in both written texts and the speech of highly educated Mozambican speakers).

We claimed that postulating a constructional level allows to generalise over various dimensions of transfer and offers therefore a more unified 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 evidence that passive constructions exhibit a substantial degree of independence from their active counterparts. Finally, we showed that Recipient passives are by no means instances of random variation, but are governed by systematic language-internal triggers and constraints. Cognitive-semantic and pragmatic-discursive factors – such as animacy, construal and topicality – also appear to play an important role in determining whether the Recipient or Theme passive variant is selected. While the present case study succeeded in providing a detailed description of this emerging grammatical structure of MP, several questions remain and will be dealt with in the following two chapters. Chapter 8 will address the quantification of language-internal factors and examine how the grammar of Portuguese may have contributed to this variation through analogical mechanisms. Chapter 9 will focus on the role of language contact in the formation of these passives and try to further elucidate the status of DOCs in MP.

8. The Recipient and Theme passive constructional alternation

After detailing the innovative grammatical pattern in Chapter 7, the present case study now examines its relationship with its closest structural counterpart. The Recipient passive construction has indeed developed alongside the ‘default’, normatively standard Theme passive construction, giving rise to a constructional *alternation* where both syntactic variants coexist without replacing one another (Pijpops 2019, 2020). Within a network view of grammar (Goldberg 2006; Diessel 2019), in which constructions are interconnected within a constellation of related patterns at varying levels of abstraction, Recipient and Theme passives function as alternating constructions, i.e., two different ways of syntactically encoding the same event (Perek 2015; Pijpops 2020). The event in question corresponds to a scene of TRANSFER, broadly construed as a situation in which a theme comes into the dominion of a recipient, apprehended from its endpoint by virtue of the passive voice (see Chapter 7).

Building on the growing body of research on alternation studies within Construction Grammar (e.g., Perek 2015; Szmrecsanyi et al. 2016; Pijpops 2019; Belligh & Willems 2022), this study seeks to unravel the multifactorial nature of the choice that MP speakers make between Recipient and Theme passives. Drawing on the dataset used in Chapter 7 – enlarged to encompass Theme passives – we seek to identify the key *linguistic* factors – semantic, discursive-pragmatic, structural, stylistic – that work as the best predictors of the constructional alternation employing statistical modelling techniques, using more specifically random forests and conditional inference trees (Chapter 5). The study further subscribes to the Cognitive Sociolinguistics perspective which posits that, in addition to sociocultural forces, conceptual factors also play a crucial part in shaping the variation (Geeraerts et al. 2010; Soares da Silva et al. 2021).

While acknowledging the fundamental role of language contact in the emergence of the new construction (Chapter 2), this study seeks to apprehend the linguistic phenomenon from its

other end, in terms of its alternation output in MP. As a result, insights about language contact will be relatively limited in this chapter, with a more in-depth discussion reserved for Chapter 9. In doing so, we aim to emphasise language-internal mechanisms, demonstrating that beyond contact-induced effects, variation is also semantically and pragmatically motivated (Cameron & Schwenter 2013). More broadly, we aim to advance our understanding of restructuring and indigenisation processes taking place in postcolonial varieties of pluricentric languages, resulting in subtle region-specific grammatical variation and change. Section 8.1 outlines the data and annotation process, providing a comprehensive description of all predictors included in the analysis. The results of the statistical analyses are presented in section 8.2, which are subsequently discussed in section 8.3.

8.1. Data and annotation

8.1.1. Dataset

To identify the factors driving the constructional alternation, we conducted a corpus-based study, resorting to the Web/Dialects section of the *Corpus do Português* (CP) (Davies 2016). The CP is composed of written material retrieved from blogs and websites from the period 2007-2013 and totals 27,877,440 words for the Mozambican subsection. 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 but extends to other regions of the country. The corpus, however, does not provide detailed sociolinguistic information about the informants' first language, level of education or age. The present study therefore focuses on the internal constraints of variation.

To build the dataset for subsequent statistical analysis, we manually extracted occurrences of both types of ditransitive⁵¹ passives. Attention was restricted to the variable context – that is, ditransitive contexts where the two-object arguments are conceptually present and equally available for topicalisation in the passive. It is important to note that the more frequent strategy

⁵¹ As a reminder, we apply the term ditransitive to all events requiring three core participants – agent, theme and recipient – irrespective of any syntactic marking. Benefactives are not subsumed with ditransitives “because beneficiaries, in contradistinction to recipients, need to be considered as extra arguments which can be added to intransitive, monotransitive and ditransitive structures alike” (De Vaere et al. 2020: 102).

overall in the CP is the promotion of the theme as subject of the passive. This frequency effect can be accounted for in terms of normativity, as this is the only sanctioned option in standard Portuguese and written texts tend to follow reference norms more closely, but it could also be interpreted as an intrinsic feature of constructional alternations, which tend to have a more frequent variant, accounting for up to 80% of all occurrences (Divjak et al. 2019: 39). A first round of data extraction focused on the retrieval of Recipient passives, a step that was dependent upon the identification of the set of alternating ditransitive verbs, all related to the concept of TRANSFER (Chapter 7). A total of 589 Recipient passives were collected, with 54 different verbs. Table 8 shows the frequency of occurrence for each lemma.

Lemma	Abs. Freq.	Rel. Freq.	Lemma	Abs. Freq.	Rel. Freq.
<i>ensinar</i> ‘teach’	65	11.04%	<i>responder</i> ‘reply’	13	2.21%
<i>dar</i> ‘give’	64	10.87%	<i>descontar</i> ‘deduct’	13	2.21%
<i>perguntar</i> ‘ask’	44	7.47%	<i>fazer</i> ‘do’	13	2.21%
<i>atribuir</i> ‘assign’	38	6.45%	<i>oferecer</i> ‘offer’	12	2.04%
<i>supor</i> ‘suppose’	36	6.11%	<i>negar</i> ‘deny’	11	1.87%
<i>solicitar</i> ‘request’	30	5.09%	<i>servir</i> ‘serve’	11	1.87%
<i>permitir</i> ‘permit’	26	4.41%	<i>pagar</i> ‘pay’	11	1.87%
<i>dizer</i> ‘tell’	21	3.57%	<i>conceder</i> ‘grant’	9	1.53%
<i>exigir</i> ‘demand’	19	3.23%	<i>arrancar</i> ‘rip’	9	1.53%
<i>comunicar</i> ‘communicate’	18	3.06%	<i>explicar</i> ‘explain’	8	1.36%
<i>ordenar</i> ‘order’	17	2.89%	<i>cobrar</i> ‘charge’	8	1.36%
<i>confiar</i> ‘entrust’	14	2.38%	<i>recomendar</i> ‘recommend’	7	1.19%
Lemma	Abs. Freq.	Rel. Freq.	Lemma	Abs. Freq.	Rel. Freq.
<i>prometer</i> ‘promise’	6	1.02%	<i>fornecer</i> ‘provide’	1	0.17%
<i>vedar</i> ‘seal’	6	1.02%	<i>cortar</i> ‘cut’	1	0.17%
<i>colocar</i> ‘put’	6	1.02%	<i>amarrar</i> ‘tie’	1	0.17%
<i>roubar</i> ‘steal’	6	1.02%	<i>concessionar</i> ‘franchise’	1	0.17%
<i>pedir</i> ‘ask for’	5	0.85%	<i>distribuir</i> ‘distribute’	1	0.17%
<i>interditar</i> ‘forbid’	5	0.85%	<i>esconder</i> ‘hide’	1	0.17%
<i>recusar</i> ‘deny’	3	0.51%	<i>saquear</i> ‘plunder’	1	0.17%
<i>apresentar</i> ‘present’	3	0.51%	<i>rescindir</i> ‘rescind’	1	0.17%
<i>tirar</i> ‘take from’	3	0.51%	<i>levar</i> ‘take from’	1	0.17%
<i>outorgar</i> ‘grant’	3	0.51%	<i>atear</i> ‘kindle’	1	0.17%
<i>devolver</i> ‘give back’	3	0.51%	<i>proporcionar</i> ‘provide’	1	0.17%
<i>mostrar</i> ‘show’	2	0.34%	<i>responsabilizar</i> ‘be made responsible’	1	0.17%
<i>sugerir</i> ‘suggest’	2	0.34%	<i>restituir</i> ‘restore’	1	0.17%
<i>dever</i> ‘owe’	2	0.34%	<i>apontar</i> ‘point out’	1	0.17%
<i>entregar</i> ‘deliver’	2	0.34%	<i>requerer</i> ‘request’	1	0.17%
TOTAL: 589 (100%)					

Table 8. Distribution of Recipient passives for each lemma in MP (n = 54)

From the 54 alternating transfer verbs of Table 8, we selected 22 verbs to include in the alternation analysis, to keep the manual retrieval and annotation of data manageable. The sample was established on the basis of the first half of the most frequent transfer verbs occurring in the Recipient passive construction and was further refined so as to obtain a balanced representation of four subcategories of TRANSFER (Table 9). Thus, from the frequency-based selection, verbs that were not prototypical of the semantic category of TRANSFER were removed (i.e., *fazer* ‘do’, *supor* ‘suppose’, *solicitar* ‘request’, *responder* ‘answer’), while less frequent but more representative verbs were included (*servir* ‘serve’, *pagar* ‘pay’, *conceder* ‘grant’, *arrancar* ‘rip’, *cobrar* ‘charge’, *vedar* ‘seal’, *pedir* ‘ask’).⁵²

The second round of data extraction consisted in the retrieval of the Theme passive counterparts for the selected subset of transfer verbs. Since the objective of the study is to better define the specific semantic space that the Recipient passive is gradually carving for itself in MP alongside the existing Theme passive construction, we aimed for a balanced sample of the two types of passives, occurring in comparable, near-identical contexts (i.e., with overt recipient and theme participants). Recalling that Recipient passives are non-standard constructions marked for MP whereas Theme passives are the unmarked variant across varieties of Portuguese, they account for approximately 75% of all ditransitive passives in the corpus (although often with an unspecified or implicit recipient, hence not eligible as alternating variant).⁵³ Moreover, Theme passives are not unfrequently used in formulaic or fixed expressions, especially with highly frequent verbs such as *dar* ‘give’ or *atribuir* ‘assign’ (e.g., *seguimento foi dado a* [lit. ‘follow-up was given to’]). Such instances were consequently removed from the dataset. Finally, it is worth mentioning at this point the existence of the active third-person plural impersonal form as a third constructional alternative for the expression of transfer events (e.g., *eu fui dito que* versus *foi-me dito que* versus *disseram-me que* ‘I was told that’). However, we decided to focus on passive structures, considered as minimal pairs making for maximal comparability.

⁵² The TRANSFER semantics is associated with the construction, not with every individual verb, that is, it is interpreted as schematic meaning at the constructional level, accommodating more peripheral instances of transfer (e.g., with the verb *supor* ‘suppose’ or *fazer* ‘do’), as well as overlap between subcategories with fuzzy boundaries (such as communicative and directive transfer in the case of *recomendar* ‘recommend’, which can both be related to the verbal communication of a message as well as the exercise of some authority) (see Chapter 7).

⁵³ However, the distribution of Recipient and Theme passives varies significantly across alternating verbs, making precise estimates challenging. For example, Theme passives account for 87.7% and Recipient passives for 9.4% of cases with the verb *dar* ‘give’, 80.6% and 16.7% with *negar* ‘deny’, and 41.2% and 55.9% with *ordenar* ‘order’, respectively, with 3% of cases remaining unclear for each verb.

Category	Verb	Recipient passives	Theme passives	Total <i>n</i>
Prototypical transfer (<i>n</i> = 413)	<i>atribuir</i> 'assign'	38	54	92
	<i>conceder</i> 'grant'	9	11	20
	<i>confiar</i> 'entrust'	14	27	41
	<i>dar</i> 'give'	64	104	168
	<i>oferecer</i> 'offer'	12	28	40
	<i>pagar</i> 'pay'	11	13	24
	<i>servir</i> 'serve'	11	17	28
Communicative transfer (<i>n</i> = 259)	<i>comunicar</i> 'communicate'	18	21	39
	<i>dizer</i> 'tell'	21	27	48
	<i>ensinar</i> 'teach'	65	34	99
	<i>explicar</i> 'explain'	8	6	14
	<i>perguntar</i> 'ask'	44	15	59
Negative transfer (<i>n</i> = 99)	<i>arrancar</i> 'rip'	9	11	20
	<i>cobrar</i> 'charge'	8	8	16
	<i>descontar</i> 'deduct'	13	8	21
	<i>negar</i> 'deny'	11	15	26
	<i>vedar</i> 'seal'	6	10	16
Directive transfer (<i>n</i> = 162)	<i>exigir</i> 'demand'	19	21	40
	<i>ordenar</i> 'order'	17	18	35
	<i>pedir</i> 'ask for'	5	11	16
	<i>permitir</i> 'permit'	26	30	56
	<i>recomendar</i> 'recommend'	7	8	15
Total <i>n</i>				933

Table 9. Overall distribution of the annotated passive tokens by verb and variant (*n* = 933)

8.1.2. Annotation and predictions

The final dataset is made up of 933 tokens occurring with the preselected subset of 22 alternating ditransitive verbs, distributed between 436 Recipient passives and 497 Theme passives (Table 9). Tokens were manually annotated according to relevant factors at the following levels: (i) the grammatical construction, (ii) the recipient participant, and (iii) the theme participant. Table 10 shows an overview of the total number of tokens for every factor level, for 15 linguistic variables, divided into semantic, discursive-pragmatic, and structural predictors, with the addition of two situational factors (Genre and Register). Some of these were adapted from the substantial body of literature on dative and passive constructions in English (Bresnan et al. 2007; Szmrecsanyi et al. 2016; Röthlisberger et al. 2017). It soon became clear, however, that adjustments would be necessary, as they were initially designed for English, and for the (active) dative alternation. The remainder of this section discusses the variables and their operationalisation in dialogue with theoretical considerations, and makes predictions as to how they are expected to correlate with one or the other variant. The examples provided are retrieved from the CP, shortened and adapted to Portuguese spelling rules where needed; those marked by the letter (a.) are Recipient passives while (b.) refers to Theme passives.

	Factor	Factor levels	Recipient Tokens	Theme Tokens	Total <i>n</i>
<i>dependent variable</i>	Construction	Recipient passive			436
		Theme passive			497
Constructional level	Transfer type	Prototypical	159	254	413
		Communicative	156	103	259
		Negative	47	52	99
		Directive	74	88	162
	Focus	Process	159	301	460
		Result	277	196	473
	Topic	Topic-Recipient	237	58	295
		Topic-Theme	20	221	241
None		179	218	397	
Syntactic structure (clause type)	Main clause	182	191	373	
	Subordinate clause	193	155	348	
	Relative_headRec	40	14	54	
	Relative_headTheme	21	137	158	
Agent-Explicit	Yes	35	49	84	
	No	401	448	849	
	Length	Length.difference	/		
Recipient level	Animacy	Animate	371	358	729
		Collective	41	92	133
		Inanimate	24	47	71
	Affectedness	Beneficiary	151	201	352
		Maleficiary	126	108	234
		Neutral	159	188	347
	Definiteness	Definite	360	426	786
		Indefinite	76	71	147
Person	1-2	78	90	168	
	3	358	407	765	
Accessibility	Yes	418	304	722	
	No	18	193	211	
Theme level	Theme form	NP	185	368	553
		PP	40	3	43
		Pronoun	16	44	60
		Implicit	36	5	41
		Infinitive	106	39	145
		Clause	53	38	91
	Theme form (<i>recoded</i>)	Nominal	277	420	697
		Verbal	159	77	236
Definiteness	Definite	147	282	429	
	Indefinite	99	133	232	
	NA	190	82	272	
Concreteness	Material	99	127	226	
	Abstract	86	172	258	
	NA	251	198	449	
Accessibility	Yes	115	268	383	
	No	321	229	550	
External factors	Genre	Journalistic	90	125	214
		Blog	198	212	411
		Forum	72	32	104
		Admin	40	64	104
		Religious	36	64	100
	Register	Formal	271	354	625
		Informal	165	143	308

Table 10. Number of passive tokens per factor level (*n* = 933)

8.1.2.1. Semantic predictors

Type of transfer

Given the polysemy of the TRANSFER category, the data was annotated for four subtypes, namely prototypical (5), communicative (6), negative (7) and directive (8) transfer (Chapter 7).

- (5) a. *Estou muito feliz por essa oportunidade que **fui dado**.*
'I am very happy for this opportunity I was given.'
b. *Quando me **foi dada** a oportunidade de ver o que as nossas crianças são capazes de fazer.*
'When the opportunity was given to me to see what our children are able to achieve.'
- (6) a. *Importante é **sermos ditos** a definição usada para o caso em questão.*
'It is important that we are told the definition used for the case at hand.'
b. *É isto que deve **ser dito** à sociedade.*
'This is what should be said to the citizens.'
- (7) a. *[São] voluntários para uma vida um pouco melhor que a que **são negados** em África.*
'They want to volunteer for a life that is a bit better than the life they are denied in Africa.'
b. *O direito à Educação não deve **ser negado** às crianças.*
'The right to proper education should not be denied to the children.'
- (8) a. *O Casa Jovem **foi exigido** um estudo de impacto ambiental de primeira linha.*
'Casa Jovem was required to provide a first-rate environmental impact study.'
b. *A seriedade tem de **ser exigida** a todas as partes interessadas.*
'Seriousness must be demanded from all interested parties.'

Animacy of Recipient

Animacy is probably among the best-known traditional predictors for the dative alternation. However, it can also prove misleading since there is a strong bias towards animate recipients in natural languages. Since our dataset contains a few inanimate recipients distributed across Recipient and Theme passives, its statistical impact might turn out not to be so strong after all. Animacy was coded according to a three-level distinction: Animate (9), Collective (10) (i.e., companies and organisations), and Inanimate (11). By contrast, themes are almost exclusively inanimate and were therefore not annotated for animacy.

- (9) a. *Os estudantes são atribuídos uma empresa que gerem tal como acontece na vida real.*
 ‘The students are assigned a company that they should manage just as if it were in real life.’
 b. *Não sabemos qual será o adjetivo que será atribuído ao entrevistado do Canalmoz.*
 ‘We don’t know what adjective will be assigned to the Canalmoz interviewee.’
- (10) a. *A província de Gaza foi atribuída uma meta de 11 mil jovens por recensear.*
 ‘The Gaza province was assigned a target of 11 thousand young people to register’.
 b. *O prémio Escola foi atribuído à Escola Secundária de Muéle.*
 ‘The School Prize was assigned to Muéle Secondary School.’
- (11) a. *Na sua base de dados, cada caso deve ser atribuído um número único de identificação.*
 ‘In your database, each case must be assigned a unique identification number.’
 b. *Uma única palavra, à qual é atribuído um novo estatuto gramatical.*
 ‘One single word, to which a new grammatical status is assigned.’

Concreteness of Theme

As themes are overwhelmingly inanimate, they were in turn coded for whether they referred to a concrete (“material”) or abstract object. However, a problem quickly emerged in that this distinction is only tenable for prototypical and negative transfer, but not applicable to communicative or directive transfer, which as a rule take an abstract theme (a message, an order, a suggestion, etc.). This distinction furthermore fails to apply to another subset of our data (i.e., passives with a clausal theme).

Affectedness of Recipient

Considering that the passive construction foregrounds a strongly affected participant, we decided to indicate whether the recipient was positively, negatively, or neutrally affected by the transfer event. This predictor, however, is strongly correlated with the verb and the type of transfer it is associated with. Yet, although affectedness is paramount to the passive, we expect the *quality* of affectedness to be of little relevance on the formation of Recipient passives, if at all.

Focus: dynamicity of the transfer event

A key notion in Cognitive Grammar is *construal*, referring to our “ability to conceive and portray the same situation in alternate ways” (Langacker 2008: 43) – that is, to view the same event under different perspectives. Alternating constructions can thus be viewed as two different ways of “construing” the same situation. On the one hand, the choice for a passive implies “a change in word order [that] is accompanied by a change of perspective” (Wanner 2009: 9); on the other hand, in the transfer event schema, “both the Mover [Theme] and the Recipient are central participants with legitimate claims to focal prominence” (Langacker 2008: 393). The passive moreover reinforces the possibility of alternate perspectives in making either of the objects entitled to subject position.

An act of transfer can thus be construed as more or less dynamic (Langacker 1991: 291-293). Recipient passives highlight the event from the recipient’s perspective and help convey a more static construal of the transfer event, one in which the theme is already found in the recipient’s possession, resulting in a less energetic conceptualisation where the focus lays on the *result* of the transfer. By contrast, apprehending the scene from the theme moving into the dominion of the recipient favours a more dynamic reading of this same event, with a focus on the *process* of transfer (Chapter 7).

In order to operationalise construal, we designed the two-level variable *Focus*. Although differences in construal are arguably attached to each passive construction, with Recipient passives inherently laying the focus on the result of the transfer, both Recipient and Theme passives were annotated for Focus as a way to test whether we could find an empirical basis for construal. Therefore, we defined a set of potentially co-occurring linguistic elements from the surrounding co-text that convey focus explicitly to guide and systematise the annotation (see Soares da Silva et al. 2021 for another example of operationalisation of construal). *Process* includes occurrence of the passive in a main clause, presence of dynamic adverbs (12), and presence of a *para*-clause of purpose (13). By contrast, a token was coded as *Result* based on occurrence of the passive in a subordinate clause, explicit outcome, or reformulation sentence (14), or presence of an infinitive favouring a holistic construal (15). If we were not able to find any explicit marker for Result, the default encoding was Process (since it is also the default reading in the European reference norm).

- (12) Dynamic verbs/adverbs (Theme passive, process)
LMF e a FMF pediram intervenção do MJD e, assim, foi dada uma moratória aos clubes, como bem explica o David Nhassengo.

‘LMF and FMF asked the MJD to come in, *and thus*, a moratorium was given to the clubs, *as* David Nhassengo well explains’.

- (13) *Para*-clause (Theme passive, process)
*A corrente tem de passar [pela África do Sul] **para** ser transformada e, em seguida, **ser fornecida** a Moçambique.*
‘The electricity needs to pass [through South Africa] *in order to* be transformed, then supplied to Mozambique.’
- (14) Reformulation (Recipient passive, result)
***De outro modo**, pode-se dizer [que Moçambique **é fornecido** a sua própria corrente eléctrica por um país vizinho].*
‘*In other words*, it can be said that Mozambique is provided its own electricity by a neighbouring country’.
- (15) Infinitive (Recipient passive, result)
*Importante é [**sermos ditos** a definição usada para o caso em questão].*
‘It is important that we *be* told the definition used for the case at hand.’

8.1.2.2. Discursive-pragmatic predictors

Topicality

The relationship between information status and constituent order, with given referents preceding new ones, is particularly salient in the alternation at hand since passives are fundamentally pragmatically oriented constructions with a topicalisation function (Wanner 2009: 38). Considering the topicalisation function of the passive, we designed the three-level variable Topic (Topic-Recipient, Topic-Theme, None). This predictor refers to the *previous* segment of text and indicates whether either the recipient or the theme was the entity talked about in the immediately preceding context. When neither of the constituents had such prior pragmatic prominence, the predictor was set to None.

Accessibility of Recipient and Theme

To assess the discourse givenness of either of the objects and measure their degree of identifiability in the discourse space, we resorted to the binary predictor *Accessibility*, adapted from a study on Portuguese relative clauses (Soares da Silva & Afonso 2022). Crucially, the choice of what to consider discursively accessible turns out to be different from previous work. In Bresnan and Ford (2010), for instance, a theme or recipient was tagged as “given” only when it was explicitly or situationally evoked. In all other cases, it was considered as “new”. For the

Recipient/Theme passive alternation, the scope of given elements was broadened to include generic and so-called “frame inferable” referents (Michaelis & Hartwell 2007: 39-40) to achieve a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the activation status of constituents.

For (explicitly or situationally) evoked referents, anaphoric (16) and deictic (17) markers were used; elements such as *todos* ‘all’, *cada* ‘each’, and *uma pessoa* ‘a person’ activate generic referents (18). Frame-inferable recipients/themes (i.e., identifiable by virtue of belonging to a currently active semantic frame) were identified based on lexical associations (19). Finally, noun phrases introduced by a presentational clause, or developing some previously mentioned referent further (e.g., partitive NP) were also coded as accessible (20). When no such marker was detectable, the referent was coded as not accessible (21). We expect more accessible constituents to precede less accessible ones, hence we would expect accessible recipients to increase the odds for a Recipient passive. Examples (16)-(21) are all Recipient passives.

- (16) Anaphoric marker
*O homem é igual a **mulher** em direitos e deveres. Quer dizer, **ela** possui igualmente um imenso potencial para construção activa da sociedade. **Ela** não precisa **ser dada** a oportunidade.*
 ‘Men are equal to *women* in rights and duties. This means that *she* also possesses a huge potential for the active construction of society. *She* does not need to be given the opportunity.’
- (17) Deictic marker
*Acreditamos que **este** assunto deve **ser dado** maior importância logo nos primeiros anos.*
 ‘We believe that *this* subject matter should be given more importance soon in the first years.’
- (18) Generic reference
*Quando **as pessoas são explicadas** que podem ter um DUAT de 25, 30 ou 50 anos renováveis ficam tranquilas e avançam.*
 ‘When it is explained to *the people* that they can have a ‘DUAT’ renewable for 25, 30 or 50 years, they feel relieved and can keep going.’
- (19) Lexical association
*Esta nova técnica vai ser uma mais-valia para a colecção do **Museu**, na medida em que permitirá melhor **conservação dos espécimes**. Os **visitantes são recomendados** a não tocar nos animais **expostos**.*
 ‘This new technique will be an added value for the *museum’s collection*, as it will guarantee a better *conservation* of the *specimens*. *Visitors* are advised not to touch the animals exhibited’ (museum frame)
- (20) Topic elaboration
*Infelizmente **poucos** lêem, os estudantes universitários mesmo, mas **o resto** não entendem e **são vedados** de capacidade de imaginar.*

‘Unfortunately, *few people* read, maybe university students but *the rest, they* do not understand *and are* deprived of any capacity of imagination.’

(21) Inaccessible

Nenhum operário **foi permitido** pelos protagonistas a entrar nas instalações.
‘No employee was allowed by the protagonists to enter the premises.’

8.1.2.3. Structural predictors

Theme form

Whereas recipients exclusively occur as nominal phrases (either pronominalised or not), themes may take various forms: a noun phrase (22), a prepositional phrase (23), an infinitive (24), or a finite clause (25). The theme can also be implicit (null object constructions). While previous research has ignored clausal themes (e.g., Röthlisberger et al. 2017), we took them on as we assume they might favour the formation of Recipient passives. It is important to note, however, that theme form may in some cases be highly dependent on the verb.

- (22) a. *O Abdul Sefo Assuade tinha sido dado* **ordens** pelo chefe do DS.
‘Abdul Sefo Assuade had been given orders by the head of DS.’
b. *Pessoas [...] dando instruções para que fossem dados empréstimos a certas companhias.*
‘People [...] giving instructions that loans be given to certain companies.’
- (23) a. *Desde que os utilizadores dos pesticidas sejam explicados* **sobre a sua correcta utilização.**
‘Provided that pesticide users are informed about their correct use.’
b. *Na palestra foi explicado aos participantes* **sobre o novo ciclo eleitoral.**
‘During the lecture, participants received explanations about the new electoral cycle.’
- (24) a. *Os professores são exigidos a* **serem** o mais imparciais possível.
‘Teachers are required to be as impartial as possible.’
b. *Pode ser exigido à empresa* **ter** duas contabilidades.
‘It can be asked to the company to have two separate accounts.’
- (25) a. *Os atletas continuam a ser ditos* **que não se perde um Maxaquene-Desportivo.**
‘Athletes continue to be told that it is not OK to lose a Maxaquene-Desportivo.’
b. *Foi dito aos candidatos aprovados* **que seriam chamados a exercer funções.**
‘It was said to the approved candidates that they would be called to perform functions.’

Clause type

The type of clause in which a Recipient or Theme passive appears was coded according to a four-level distinction: main clause, subordinate clause, relative clause with recipient antecedent (26), and relative clause with theme antecedent (27).

- (26) a. *A equipa do Canalmoz que **foi recomendada** a contactar o administrador distrital.*
'The Canalmoz team that was recommended to contact the district administrator.'
- b. *Todos aqueles a quem as oportunidades **têm sido negadas**.*
'All those to whom opportunities have been denied.'
- (27) a. *Em qualquer papel que **sou atribuída**, dou o melhor de mim.*
'In any role I am assigned, I give my best.'
- b. *Grau que **será atribuído** ao estudante que concluir o primeiro ciclo com sucesso.*
'Degree that will be awarded to the student who successfully completes the first cycle.'

Length

Length of constituents was operationalised as the *log* of the lengths (in number of words) of the recipient and the theme. We then took the difference of these values (theme *minus* recipient) to obtain a positive or negative continuous variable. We would expect a negative value to correlate with Recipient passives; in other words, we would expect Recipient passives to occur when the recipient is shorter than the theme. The tendency to put longer constituents at the end of a sentence, known as the end-weight principle, emerged as one of the most influential factors when choosing a dative variant in English (Bresnan et al. 2007). Matters might nevertheless be more complicated in this case since the relationship between order and constituent length is less straightforward in the passive, and subject-verb agreement facilitates a freer order of constituents in Portuguese.

Definiteness of Recipient and Theme

Both themes and recipients were coded for definiteness, which is often used as a proxy for discourse givenness. However, we suspect that this notion fails to properly account for the speaker's choice between Recipient and Theme passives, as formally definite NPs do not

account for the whole range of functionally identifiable NPs.⁵⁴ In line with previous studies (e.g., Bresnan et al. 2007; Röthlisberger et al. 2017), it is expected that a definite recipient increases the likelihood of a Recipient passive, while the likelihood of a Theme passive should increase with a definite theme. Like for theme concreteness, the data could not be annotated for theme definiteness with clausal themes.

Person of Recipient

In the literature on the English dative alternation, a weak effect of recipient person was found: speakers favoured the double-object construction in cases where the recipient was “local” (first or second person) (Röthlisberger et al. 2017: 11). This binary distinction was reproduced in our annotation, and a similar slight effect in the choice between Recipient and Theme passives is expected: first- and second-person pronouns, being more salient in discourse and more directly affected by the action, might more easily appear as subject of the passive.

Overtness of Agent

We controlled for the overt presence of the Agent – that is, its expression by means of a *by*-phrase – headed by the preposition *por* in Portuguese (*fui explicado por juristas* [lit. ‘I was explained by lawyers’]). However, because most tokens in our dataset are short passives (849 against 84 with overt agent) – as are most passive sentences (Wanner 2009: 19) – we expect the expression of the agent to have no effect on the alternation.

External factors

Finally, two situational variables, Register and Genre, were also included in the analysis. Each token was coded as either formal or informal, and the different genres featuring in the corpus were divided into journalistic writings, blog articles, forum posts (including comments), administrative documents (including texts from official or governmental sites) and religious texts.

⁵⁴ For instance, constituents can be indefinite but have a specific reference, or be accessible in the discourse but underspecified for quantity hence indefinite, as is the following example: *Isto acontece muito com pessoas com projectos agrícolas. [...] Alguns são dados valores inferiores aos que pediram*, with *alguns* ‘some’ referring to a subset of a given referent (*pessoas com projectos agrícolas* ‘people with agricultural projects’).

8.2. Analysis and results

We relied on conditional inference trees and random forests (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012; Levshina 2015), two complementary statistical techniques based on recursive partitioning. These non-parametric tests are particularly suited to deal with unbalanced datasets, as they do not make any assumptions about the distribution of the data, and are especially useful in cases of data sparsity, i.e., “in situations when the sample size is small, but the number of predictors is large” (Levshina 2015: 292). They are also considered to be robust in the presence of outliers or multicollinearity, and to handle complex or higher-order interactions well. Since we are essentially dealing with an alternation in the making in an exploratory fashion, with a rather diverse dataset,⁵⁵ these statistical tools fit our purposes well. All analyses were carried out using *R* (version 4.2.2, R Core Team, 2023) using the *partykit* package (version 1.2-23).⁵⁶

8.2.1. Random forest analysis

We started out with a random forest analysis to obtain a ranking of the most significant predictors of the alternation, using the *varimp()* function. In addition to the 17 variables listed in Table 10, we included the factor Lemma in order to probe for possible lexical biases related to specific verbs. Highly correlated predictors can be explored together in the analysis (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012: 169). This is for instance the case in for the variables Affectedness and Transfer type, or Topic and Accessibility. The index of concordance (the *C*-value) for the random forest model with the full set of predictors reaches $C = .95$, indicating an outstanding fit. Figure 8 yields a picture of the relative importance of each predictor.

⁵⁵ In contrast to most analyses on the English dative alternation, our data is more diverse in terms of semantic categories of transfer, number of verbs included, and type of themes.

⁵⁶ The dataset used for the present study along with the R script for carrying out the analyses are publicly available at the following link: <https://osf.io/6pwzb/>.

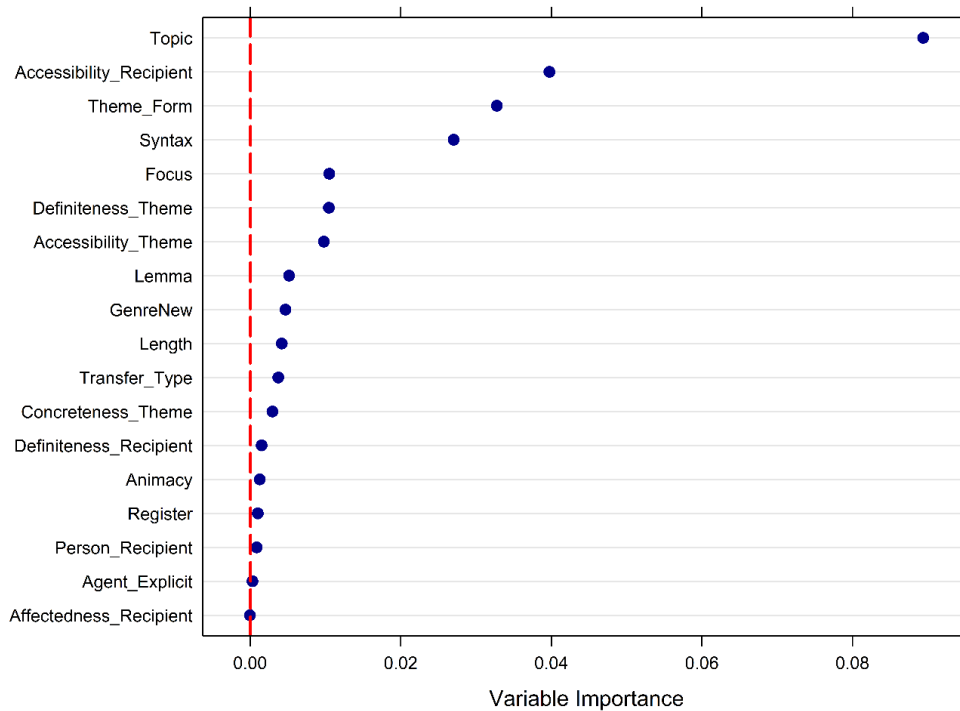


Figure 8. Random forest analysis with 18 predictors ($C = .95$).

Figure 8 reveals from the outset a split between significant and insignificant predictors. All the variables close to the dashed (red) line have a level of importance close to zero and as such do not exert any substantial influence on the choice between the two passive alternants. Among highly significant predictors, pragmatic factors feature prominently, with Topic being by far the most influential, followed by the discursive Accessibility of the recipient. These two predictors measure different yet intertwined notions: if a given referent is the topic of a piece of discourse, it will also be discursively accessible. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true: a referent can be discursively accessible (i.e., given, evoked or frame inferable) without being the entity currently talked about. Pragmatic factors are closely followed by structural ones, namely Clause Type and Theme Form. Interestingly, the construal predictor, Focus, is found among the five most influential factors.

At the other end of the spectrum, a closer look at the variables that showed no statistical significance also proves to be quite informative. At the very bottom, in line with the predictions made, the overt presence of the agent does not impact the choice between variants. The possibility of specifying the agent is rather a characteristic of passive structures. The same holds for Affectedness: passives inherently give prominence to the affected participant, irrespective of whether the latter is positively or negatively affected. These two factors are therefore more

appropriately described as intrinsic properties of passive constructions rather than as determinants of the alternation. Somewhat surprisingly, the person/number of the recipient appears as insignificant, which could be due to the type of data under study. As our sample of written texts is biased towards the third person (765 against 168), the difference between local and non-local recipients might be ironed out, remaining to be tested in spoken language.

Finally, a few traditional predictors were also encountered at the bottom of Figure 8: Animacy is one of the least powerful predictors, along with Definiteness of the recipient, which validates the view of definiteness as too restricted a measure for a proper account of the discourse givenness of a referent. Constituent Length apparently has some effect on the alternation, yet due to the heterogeneity of our dataset in terms of theme form and to the more flexible word order in Portuguese, it does not weigh much either. Turning to external factors, Register has little influence on the alternation, revealing that Recipient passives are not confined to informal discourse, while Genre has a stronger impact. Lastly, Transfer Type is a predictor of relatively low strength, which points towards an overall homogeneous behaviour of the alternation across all four semantic subcategories.

8.2.2. Conditional inference trees

Following up on the random forest analysis, we used conditional inference trees to unveil how the most significant predictors of the alternation interact with each other. Conditional inference trees help identify which (combination of) factors are more likely to correlate with one or the other alternant. Figure 9 shows a conditional inference tree grown for the full dataset with the top-eight most significant predictors, excluding Lemma (see Figure 8). In keeping with the results from the random forest, Topic emerges as the most important variable overall, followed by Syntactic Structure, Genre, Theme Form, Accessibility of the Recipient, and Focus. The model obtained has a *C*-value of .89. The number of observations in each end node is shown in parentheses above the boxes (Levshina 2015: 294).

It can be seen from Figure 9 that the proportion of Recipient passives (in white) is highest when the recipient referent is already the topic of the previous sentence or segment of text (at the left-hand side of the graph). By contrast, when the theme is the entity being talked about, we obtain a stronger, sometimes even categorical tendency towards Theme passives. In cases where the recipient is not the main discourse topic, the variable Topic intertwines with recipient Accessibility to determine the proportion of Recipient passives: a non-accessible recipient

dramatically decreases the chance of forming a Recipient passive construction, while Theme passives appear to be less constrained in that respect. Discursive salience, especially with regard to the recipient referent, thus emerges as a decisive factor driving the alternation in MP.

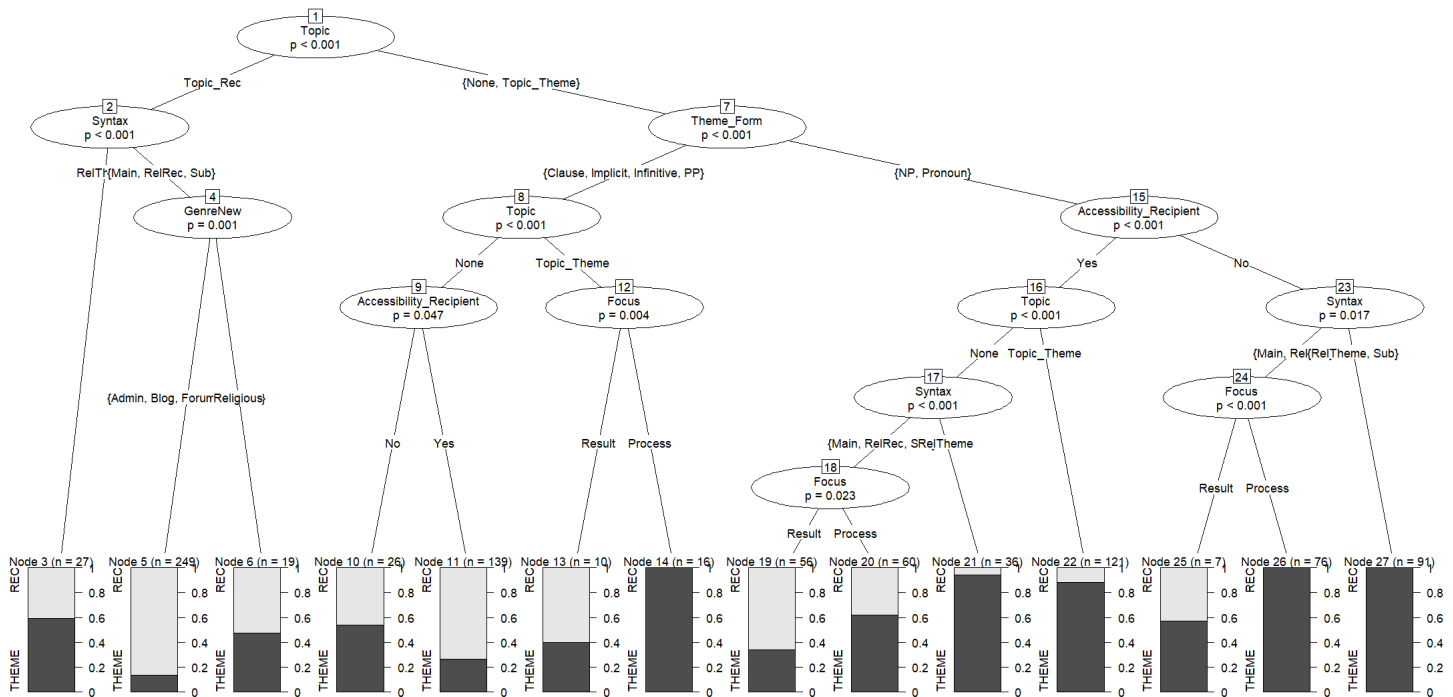


Figure 9. Conditional inference tree for the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP (8 predictors, $C = .89$).

Other factors subsequently enter into play. At the right-hand side of the tree, when neither constituent is topical (“None”) or when the theme gets most attention (“Topic-Theme”), both the discursive accessibility of the recipient and the construal of the event determine the distribution between both types of passives, along with structural factors. The split in node 7 reveals an important difference in the syntactic behaviour of the theme, depending on whether it is a noun phrase or a verbal complement. The variable Theme Form was therefore recoded as a binary predictor (“Nominal/Verbal”).⁵⁷ An additional structural predictor that seems to tip the statistical balance is the syntactic structure of the passive constructions. When taking a closer look, however, we see that what really weighs in are the relative clauses, as a strong correlation can be observed between the antecedent of the relative clause and the subject of the passive construction, especially so with the theme (see nodes 3, 21 and 27). The use of relative clauses

⁵⁷ It is worth noting, though, that the tree in Figure 9 grouped implicit and prepositional themes together with infinitives and clauses, as can be seen in the split from node 7.

furthermore ties in with pragmatic factors since the antecedent is typically a referent about which a comment is made, thus very accessible by virtue of having been introduced in the immediately preceding context. The variable Syntax thus emerges as more deterministic than probabilistic, hence little informative. Last but not least, construal emerges as a significant, though secondary predictor of the alternation. In line with our expectations, whenever the focus lies on the result (see nodes 12, 18, 24), a larger share of Recipient passives (in white) is found. This backs up the vision according to which Recipient passives convey a different, more result-oriented perspective on the transfer event, albeit in interaction with and secondary to pragmatic factors.

8.2.3. Conditional inference tree analysis pruned

To achieve a clearer picture, two additional conditional inference trees were grown retaining only a subset of statistically significant predictors. This decision came at the cost of a slight decrease in the C -value of the models, which nevertheless remained above the cut-off value of $C \geq .8$, indicating good performance (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012: 156), with $C = .86$ and $C = .80$, respectively. To obtain these pruned trees, we proceeded in a principled manner: starting with the first model (Figure 9), we excluded Syntax due to its bias towards relative clauses, and substituted Theme Form with its recoded binary counterpart.

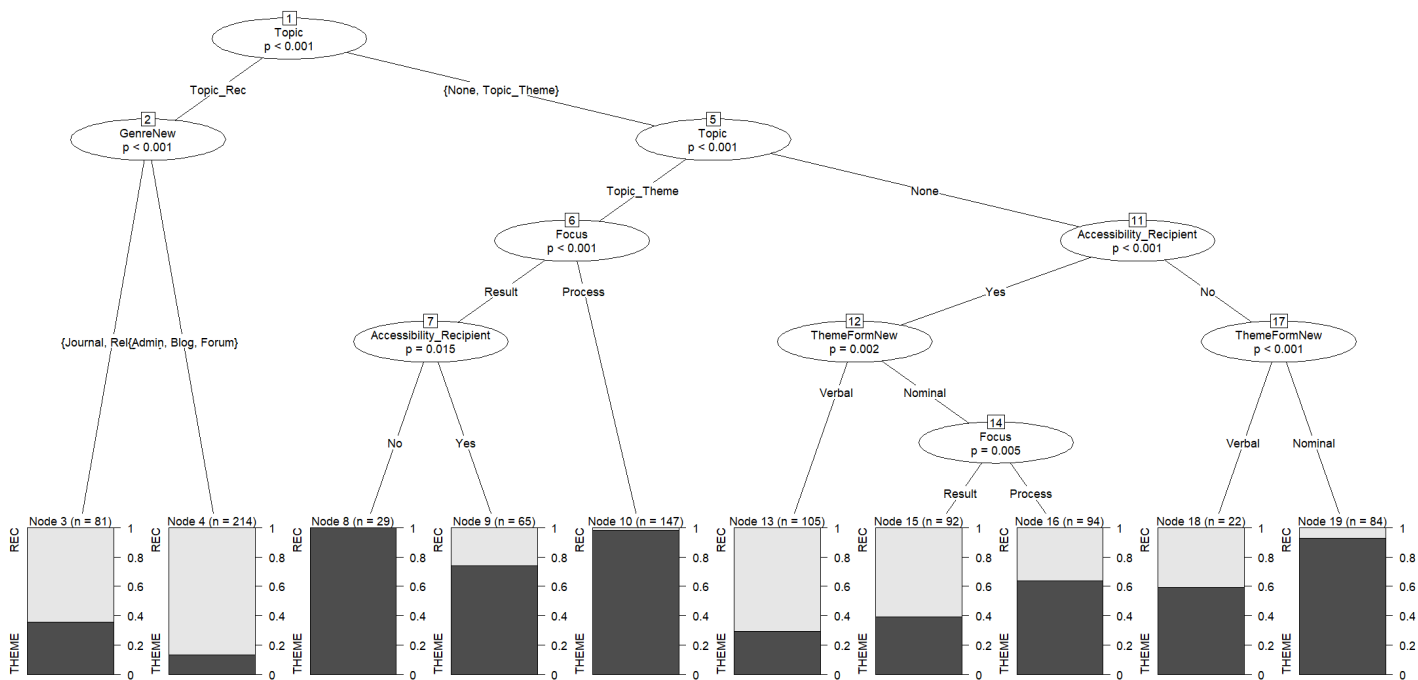


Figure 10. Conditional inference tree for the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP (6 predictors, $C = .86$)

Unsurprisingly, Topic remains the determining predictor of the alternation as displayed in Figure 10. The interactions between Topic on the one hand, and recipient Accessibility and Focus on the other are also sustained, with Recipient passives correlating with high degrees of recipient accessibility and a focus on the result of the transfer. When recipients are topical, and thus more likely to appear in Recipient passives, a mild effect of Genre can be noted: Recipient passives are slightly less likely in journalistic and religious discourse, in contrast with less stylistically constrained types of texts such as blogs and forums. Finally, the difference in behaviour between nominal and verbal themes is found once more: in cases of no clearly defined topic (“None”), recipient Accessibility and Theme Form interact, with verbal themes more strongly associated with the Recipient passive construction. This is relatively unsurprising considering that in such cases the recipient emerges as the only available NP, making it a prime candidate for subjecthood.

From this second 6-predictor model, we created a third tree, shown in Figure 11, by removing one further variable, Topic, on the basis of the interaction between Topic and Accessibility (identified in Figure 9), as well as on the fact that they measure related—albeit distinct—pragmatic notions. Although we took out the main predictor, we maintained both theme and recipient Accessibility to compensate for this “loss”, by virtue of their interaction. Overall, this is simply another configuration for testing how information structure influences

the choice between Recipient and Theme passives, one in which the notion of discursive accessibility gains prominence.

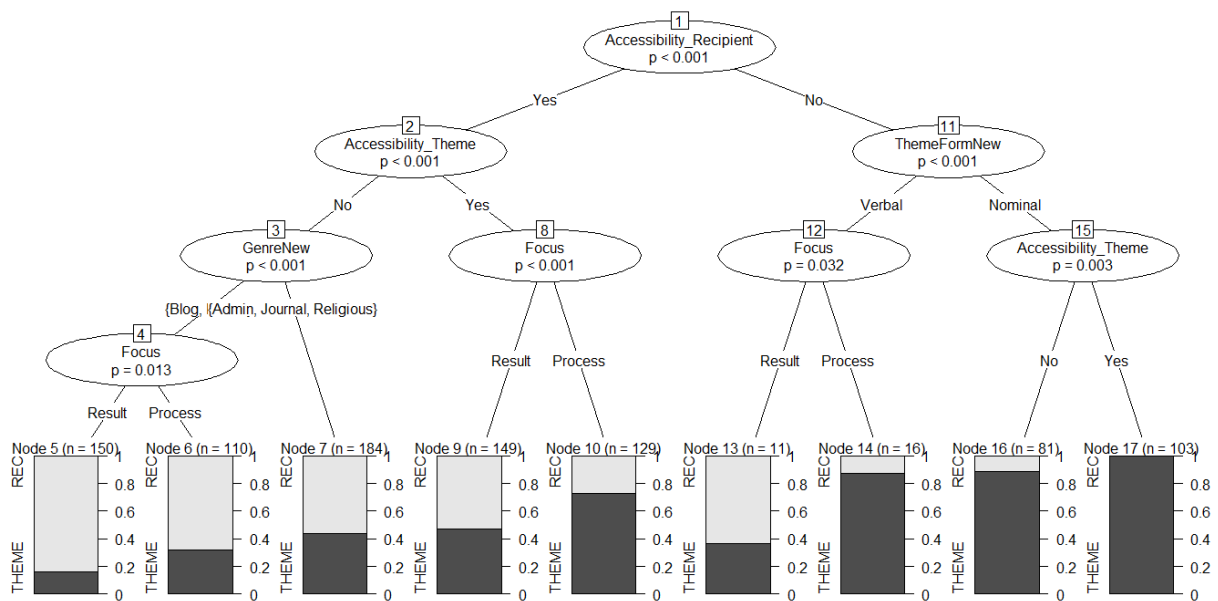


Figure 11. Conditional inference tree for the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP (5 predictors, $C = .80$)

In this minimal model, what is lost in terms of C -value ($C = .80$) is gained in terms of clarity: Figure 11 displays a slope that nicely illustrates how the proportion of Recipient passives (in white) gradually diminishes as the recipient loses its accessible status, while that of Theme passives (in black) steadily rises. Recipient Accessibility substitutes Topic as the most important predictor of the alternation, while theme Accessibility comes in to compensate for the absence of information about the topicality of the referents. The proportion of Theme passives increases when the theme is discursively accessible, even in cases of accessible recipient (node 2). When both constituents are simultaneously accessible, construal comes into play to introduce a further distinction (node 8). The variable Focus features once again as a secondary predictor, consistently displaying a larger proportion of Recipient passives in cases of result-oriented reading.

Figure 11 unveils two important interactions: first, theme Accessibility is subordinated to recipient Accessibility, with the latter determining more strongly the choice between the two types of passives; second, construal is consistently shown to interact with other predictors, being subordinated to pragmatic and, to some extent, structural factors. Arguably, such complex interactions “are difficult to model elegantly” in mixed-effects logistic regression (Tagliamonte & Baayen 2012: 169), which is why we resorted to random forest and conditional inference tree

analyses. Another striking observation arising from Figure 11 is that Recipient passives never succeed in completely ousting Theme passives, which remain the default, most widely available variant when it comes to forming passives in ditransitive contexts. The absence of categorical contexts for Recipient passives may be due to the construction’s relative recency and ongoing constructionalisation, as well as to the normative pressure the European standard still exerts in Mozambique.

Finally, we built one last tree grown on structural predictors only, that consisted of Syntax, binary Theme Form, Definiteness of both recipient and theme, Person of recipient, overt presence of the Agent and Length, achieving an index of concordance of $C = .74$. Its most valuable contribution is the illustration of the impact of Length, estimated at the cut-off value of -0.405 . According to our coding, cases in which the recipient is shorter than the theme should yield a negative value, which is expected to correlate with Recipient passives; by contrast, a positive value should correlate more strongly with Theme passives. Figure 12 shows that values lower than -0.405 indeed display a greater tendency towards Recipient passives (in white), and that the proportion of Theme passives (in black) is larger for values above -0.405 . The first split for Definiteness of the theme (node 4) reflects the difference between nominal and clausal themes, since an “NA” value indicates a verbal complement that could not be annotated for definiteness. The second split (node 8) somehow corresponds to theme Accessibility, since a definite theme would be considered as discursively more accessible than an indefinite one.

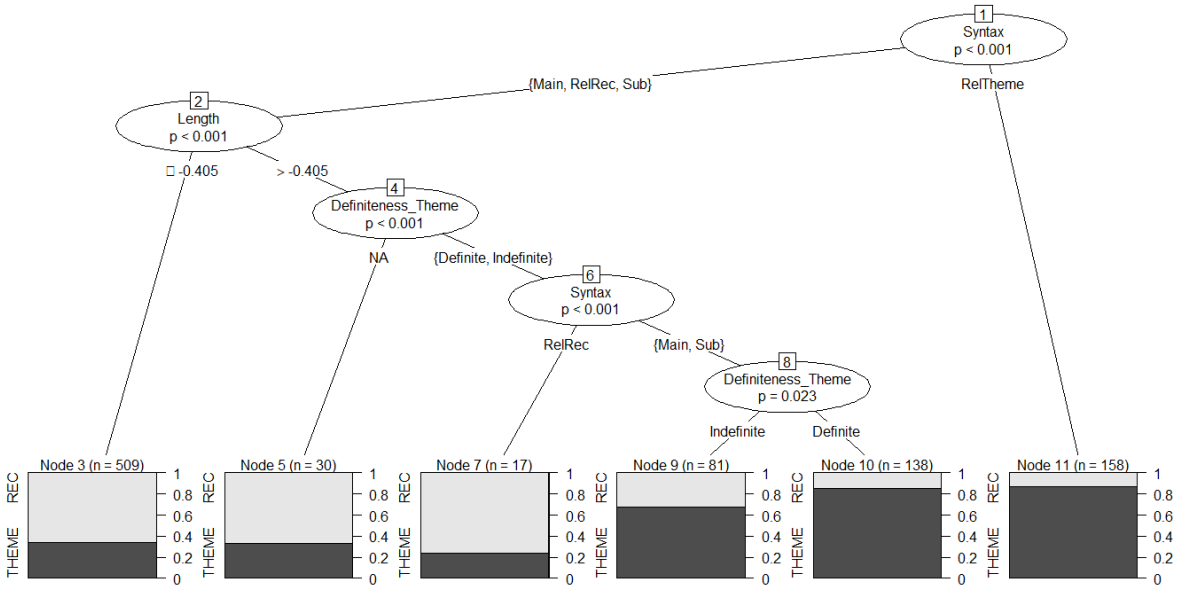


Figure 12. Conditional inference tree for the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP (7 predictors, $C = .74$)

8.3. Discussion

The present section discusses the main findings and their relevance for the study of language variation and change in general, with each subsection roughly corresponding to the questions of how (8.3.1), where (8.3.2) and why (8.3.3) argument structure varies (Pijpops 2019).

8.3.1. Meaningful alternation

The Recipient passive construction so typical of the variety of Portuguese spoken in Mozambique has not yet achieved the status of endogenous norm. Yet a dive into corpus data from the past two decades has revealed remarkable degrees of semantic coherence and syntactic productivity (see Chapter 7), as well as responsiveness to a set of linguistic constraints that determine its actual use in discourse. MP has thus developed one more variant that qualifies as an “alternate way of saying the same thing” when it comes to a transfer event, which has been integrated into “a larger system of functioning units” as they entered in a complementary distribution with Theme passives (Labov 1972: 188). The models presented in the previous section unveiled structured variation between the innovative construction and its standard counterpart, with the alternation being primarily driven by pragmatic-discursive factors: the topicality and discursive accessibility of the recipient emerged as the most significant predictors and account for the largest share of Recipient passives in our dataset, which ties in with the topicalisation function of the passive. Recipient passives therefore stand out as Topic-constructions, which are dependent to a greater extent than Theme passives upon the discursive salience of the recipient referent in the discourse space.

Beyond these important pragmatic considerations, the models highlighted other influencing variables and several interactions. On the one hand, the alternation between Theme and Recipient passives proved sensitive to alternate conceptualisations, depending on which participant receives focal prominence. The construal variable emerged as a secondary predictor, with Theme passives favouring a more dynamic reading and Recipient passives correlating with a less dynamic interpretation of the transfer event with a focus on its effective result. Structural factors, on the other hand, such as clause type and theme form, scored high in our models, but hardly provided any satisfactory explanatory power. Using a particular clause structure for a given passive construction appeared rather as an *effect* of a combination of other factors,

especially those related to information structure (e.g., a relative clause elaborates on a referent which has just been introduced and therefore tends to be discursively accessible). This in turn raises the question of whether syntactic factors are real predictors of the alternation, considering that correlation does not *per se* entail causation (Belligh & Willems 2022: 19). When choosing between a Recipient or a Theme passive, the MP speaker thus makes a meaningful choice, as the two syntactic variants convey differences in perspectivisation and information status, which in turn contributes to take the constructionalisation process of Recipient passives further.

8.3.2. A multi-layered process

The models obtained in the statistical analysis appear to accurately generalise over several related Recipient passive micro-constructions (i.e., Recipient passives with different verbs and semantic classes of transfer as well as with both nominal and clausal themes), which in turn seems to indicate that the Recipient passive has acquired a schematic meaning beyond the semantics of the individual verbs that participate in the construction. This process is referred to as *schematisation* by Traugott and Trousdale (2013: 117) and typically correlates with increases in constructional productivity (2013: 238) as the schema becomes a meaningful, readily available template. The emergence of this new constructional schema, however, did not automatically lead to a plain and homogeneous alternation evenly distributed across a well-defined set of verbs. Rather, several mechanisms, including reanalysis, analogy and lexical preferences, also came into play and interfered in the constructionalisation process, with direct consequences on the alternation.

To begin with, a similar alternation can occasionally be found in standard Portuguese. Even though the new variant is a typically Mozambican innovation, passives with a recipient-like subject are also possible in other varieties, including European Portuguese, with verbs like *ensinar* ‘teach’ or *perguntar* ‘ask’. The use of the verb *ensinar* ‘teach’ in (28)—retrieved from the MP subsection of the CP—would easily be considered acceptable by speakers of European and Brazilian Portuguese, in contrast to the same use of the verb *dizer* ‘tell’ in (29), restricted to MP. Moreover, although a Recipient passive with an infinitival theme like (28) is more likely to be judged acceptable by European, Brazilian, and Mozambican speakers alike, the former will be more inclined to reject the same kind of passive with the same verb when it takes a nominal theme like (30), in contrast to Mozambican speakers. This reveals how different

varieties of a language have partially overlapping constructional networks and how some structural potentialities are explored further in one variety rather than in another.

- (28) *Fomos ensinados a plantar sementes em linhas retas.* (EP, BP & MP)
'We were taught how to plant seeds on straight lines.'
- (29) *O empreendedor já foi dito para rectificar.* (only MP)
'The entrepreneur was already told to rectify.'
- (30) *A cultura de Moçambique leva a mulher a ser ensinada a obediência e dedicação à família.* (only MP)
'In Mozambique, women are still taught obedience and dedication to their family'.

Besides, there are constructions in the network of Portuguese whose surface structure presents similarities with the Recipient passive schema and could thus have facilitated its emergence through reanalysis. This is the case of the semantic subcategory of “directive transfer”, which overlaps more generally with the category of directive verbs. In standard Portuguese, verbs such as *autorizar* ‘allow’, *proibir* ‘forbid’, and *obrigar* ‘oblige’ naturally take a recipient-like subject in the passive (e.g., *fui autorizada* ‘I was allowed’ or *foram obrigados* ‘they were forced’). MP speakers then seem to expand the category of directive verbs to include some verbs that from a normative point of view do not license a recipient subject, like *exigir* ‘demand’ or *permitir* ‘permit’, or even the causatives *fazer* ‘do’ (31) or *deixar* ‘let’ (32).⁵⁸ Schematisation and analogisation therefore emerge as intertwined processes involved in the constructionalisation of the Recipient passive, and their interaction might even lead the construction to acquire new meanings over time.

- (31) *Muitos foram feitos crer que tinham um movimento próprio.*
'A lot of them were made into believing that there was a movement'.
- (32) *Os partidos da oposição não são deixados exercer as suas actividades.*
'The opposition parties were not allowed to carry out their activities'.

Finally, lexical biases in alternations have consistently been uncovered by researchers (e.g., Theijssen et al. 2013; Perek 2015; Pijpops 2019). The fact that the variable Lemma was ranked

⁵⁸ Interestingly, in some cases, a similar alternation can be encountered in European Portuguese with the verb *mandar* ‘require’: *cumprir o que foram mandados fazer* (subject recipient) or *cumprir o que lhes foi mandado fazer* (dative clitic recipient) ‘comply with what they have been required to do’. This opens interesting new avenues for comparative linguistic research across varieties.

among the predictors of medium strength in the random forest analysis suggests the existence of such constructional preferences. Lexical biases may also account for the differences in the frequency with which a given verb features in either variant. Verbs like *mostrar* ‘show’ or *distribuir* ‘distribute’, for example, are more strongly biased towards the theme participant, that is, they profile transfer events in which theme is generally the most salient participant, which justifies their low frequency in the Recipient passive construction (see Table 8). By contrast, verbs like *dar* ‘give’ or *oferecer* ‘offer’ are more generic transfer verbs, hence underspecified in terms of inherent argumental focus. According to Perek (2015: 158), the weight of some lexical biases constraining the use of a given verb in a construction may suggest verb-specific micro-constructions at lower levels of schematicity. All in all, the Recipient passive schema did not develop in isolation but within the inherited constructional network of Portuguese, where it necessarily enters in interaction with neighbouring nodes at various levels of abstraction, which may result in local(ised) asymmetries in constructional patterns (that can be expressed *inter alia* in terms of frequency of occurrence).

8.3.3. Social and cognitive embedding of the alternation

Although the analysis focused on the linguistic envelope of variation, the emergent construction and resulting alternation are not only submitted to pressures from within the linguistic system, but also embedded within a specific speech community with its own intrinsic social processes and cultural values. In other words, constructionalisation does not operate within the boundaries of the constructional network only, but is also shaped from the outside, since the particular “geography, setting and social situation of the speech community will impact on the state of development of the grammar in time and space” (Tagliamonte 2012: 351). The lasting implantation of Portuguese in a postcolonial, highly multilingual ecology characterised by Bantu language contact and second-language acquisition processes marked the beginning of a new evolutionary course for the regional variety of Mozambique, which currently finds itself in an advanced stage of nativisation (Schneider 2003).

The path of implementation of the Recipient passive construction within the MP speech community is an illustrative example of the interplay between internal and external factors in driving language variation and change, especially in emerging varieties. By revealing patterns of variation and showing how semantic and pragmatic considerations motivate the speaker’s choice for one or the other variant, the multifactorial analysis illustrates how the new passive

construction, presumably originally modelled on the Bantu contact languages⁵⁹ (Cumbane 2008; Firmino 2024; Ngunga 2012), started assuming autonomous functions within – and in line with – the grammar and structural possibilities of Portuguese. The interaction between the Portuguese linguistic system and Bantu substrate influence is moreover sustained by general cognitive principles. Specifically, Recipient passives commit to the “Easy First” cognitive principle – the general tendency for language users to place “easy”⁶⁰ elements first – functioning both as a motivation for the emergence of the new pattern as well as a cognitive routine likely to reinforce the (re)use of the construction over time (Röthlisberger et al. 2017: 24-26).

The specific contact ecology in which MP develops thus constrains the path of language change. Contact-induced changes are thus also multidimensional: they are not limited to structural convergence with the contact languages but involve *restructuring* (Walkden 2017:416) in compliance with the linguistic resources of the borrowing language as well as with general cognitive and discursive principles. In the development of the Recipient passive construction, we find the articulation of the community-specific contact ecology and language-internal developments such as schematisation, funnelled by the language-specific structural constraints of Portuguese. Then, under pressure from the bulk of the population that is increasingly shifting to Portuguese, especially in urban settings (Baxter 2018: 293; Chimbutane & Gonçalves 2023), the innovative pattern is crystallising, eventually ending up in the speech of the first generations of monolingual MP speakers who acquire a nativised variety despite normative pressure from education (see Chapter 9).

8.4. Final considerations

This corpus-based study investigated the incipient Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP, that is the choice – exclusively available to speakers of that variety – of either the recipient or the theme as the subject of the passive clause in ditransitive contexts. It further evidenced how MP is undergoing nativisation, understood as the process by which Portuguese is being shaped

⁵⁹ It goes beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss how the corresponding construction works in the Bantu languages of Mozambique. Referring to the Changana language, however, Chimbutane (2002: 211) pointed out that it “has a non-alternating passive type”, as “only the goal/recipient may undergo passivisation” in ditransitive contexts. The Theme/Recipient passive alternation thus seems to be a true MP innovation. Further considerations about ditransitive passives in Bantu languages are provided in the next chapter (Chapter 9).

⁶⁰ “An element may be easier to retrieve [from long-term memory] by virtue of it being more frequent, shorter, less syntactically complex, more conceptually salient [e.g., animate], or having been recently mentioned [hence accessible]” (Röthlisberger et al. 2017:4).

through its implantation in a postcolonial and multilingual ecology. While the Recipient passive construction essentially emerged out of language contact, displaying structural convergence with the Bantu languages of Mozambique, the multifactorial statistical analysis based on random forests and conditional inference trees uncovered structured variation between the two constructional variants, responsive to a set of language-internal predictors, the most prominent of which are related to information structure (topicality and discursive accessibility of the participants) and to differences in construal (focus on either the result or the process of transfer). Recipient passives can be characterised as Topic-constructions that more strongly depend on the discursive unfolding than Theme passives do, allow putting emphasis on the affectedness of the recipient more straightforwardly, and conceptualise the transfer event in terms of its end result.

The study of constructional alternations in the context of emerging varieties, and in particular of the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP, helped bring to light how a new constructional schema is accommodated into the language system, with each variant taking on distinct functions. The multivariate quantitative methods developed in the field of alternation studies allowed to identify the most important predictors determining the choice between variants, while the network approach it entails was key to revealing the gradience and complexity of constructional changes, by emphasising the connections that exist at several levels in the constructional network (vertical and horizontal relations, see Diessel 2019). The study of the Recipient/Theme passive alternation in MP ultimately illustrates how different varieties of the same language may have partly different networks of constructions, which in the long run can lead to increases in the regional variation of grammar. Echoing Schneider's words (2003: 249), "this indigenisation of linguistic structure [...] gradually enriches the emerging new variety with additional structural possibilities, ultimately modifying parts of its grammatical makeup". The typically Mozambican Recipient passive pattern thus emerges as a case of both meaningful *variation* with their Theme passive counterparts, and language *change* in postcolonial varieties of pluricentric languages.

9. Looking for the sociolinguistic determinants of an emerging construction

This last case study draws on a ten-week period of fieldwork and participant observation in Mozambique, with the primary goal of gathering sociolinguistic data on MP's Recipient passives, as well as evaluating the current influence of Bantu languages upon their formation. Additionally, the study revisits the theoretical connection between Recipient passives and Double Object Constructions (DOCs). To achieve these three objectives, we conducted an experimental study involving university students from various regions of the country (Chapter 5). The study consisted of an acceptability judgement task featuring 45 sentences, including 15 Recipient passives and 15 corresponding DOCs. The results reveal that, while DOCs were rated as acceptable more frequently than anticipated, Recipient passives consistently received higher acceptability ratings across the board, regardless of participants' regional background or native language. Section 9.1 presents the research questions that this study seeks to address. Section 9.2 outlines the study's design and the methodological steps followed. Section 9.3 is devoted to the statistical analyses, using logistic regression, and section 9.4 follows up with a discussion of the results in relation to the research questions posed in section 9.1.

9.1. Open research questions

9.1.1. Sociolinguistic data

As previously mentioned in this thesis (Chapters 6 and 7), Recipient passives have been noticed quite early by researchers (Carvalho 1987; Gonçalves 1991, 1996, 2010) and continue to feature in recent investigations (Firmino 2021; Nhaturve & Mavota 2021; Gonçalves et al. 2022). This

means that these constructions have been consistently observed in both written and spoken language over the past four decades, which suggests their widespread use across Mozambique, cutting across different regions and educational levels. This observation nevertheless requires further empirical validation, particularly in terms of sociolinguistic data. While the recent release of the *Corpus do Português* (Davies 2016) – with its 27 million tokens for the MP variety sourced from websites from all over the country – enabled larger-scale investigation, it crucially lacks detailed sociolinguistic metadata, making it difficult to assess its representativeness across regions and social groups.

As regards previous studies, sociolinguistic insights are often difficult to compare and generalise due to the diversity of participant profiles and methodologies. For example, in the recently collected PALMA corpus of spoken interviews from Maputo, Gonçalves and colleagues (2022) identified 15 instances of Recipient passives, 10 of which were produced by a single speaker. They concluded that while Recipient passives remain in use, their occurrence appears to be more restricted than a few decades ago (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 11). Conversely, in a production task conducted with high school and university students, Nhatuve and Mavota (2021: 235) found that when asked to create a passive sentence with a ditransitive verb like *oferecer* ('to offer'), 50% of high school students and 45% of university students produced a Recipient passive. These discrepancies in the findings seem to stem from variations in participant selection, as the two studies relied on different samples of informants: informants in Gonçalves et al. (2022) consisted predominantly of native Portuguese speakers, whereas Nhatuve and Mavota (2021) focused on L2 Portuguese speakers. Furthermore, much of the research has so far been based on relatively small linguistic samples and has primarily focused on urban speakers in Maputo, leading to a limited representation of linguistic practices across the country.

9.1.2. Double Object constructions

According to the literature, the emergence of Recipient passives is closely related to another distinctive feature of MP: the ability to form Double Object constructions (DOCs) in the active voice, as in example (1) below (Chapters 6 and 7). Many researchers have endorsed the assumption of a necessary link between Recipient passives and DOCs, interpreting the latter as the *sine-qua-non* condition for the emergence of the former (Gonçalves 1996: 50-51, 62-63; Firmino 2008: 18; Petter 2009b: 215; Gonçalves 2010: 47-48; Brito 2011: 35; Ngunga 2012:

17; Gonçalves et al. 2022: 11). However, this derivational hypothesis – which we will refer to as “structural parallelism” in the remainder of this chapter – has not yet been substantiated by corpus-based studies quantifying the use of DOCs in contrast to Recipient passives.⁶¹

- (1) MP: *Dar os meus filhos aquilo que eu não tive* (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 10)
(EP: *Dar aos meus filhos aquilo que eu não tive*)
‘Give (to) my children what I didn’t have’

Throughout this thesis, we argued that a constructional approach to argument structure (e.g., Goldberg 2006; Diessel 2019) offers a valuable and complementary perspective that sheds new light on these innovative passive structures. Unlike derivational models, which assume dependency relationships between constructions, constructional models promote constructional *autonomy*. Under this framework, passive structures can be analysed independently rather than being considered second-order phenomena derived from a more basic underlying structure.

This does not imply that constructional models deny or disregard the existence of connections between constructions, or the paradigmatic link between active and passive forms: the very structure of grammar, viewed as a network of interrelated constructions at several levels of abstraction, posits both vertical (across levels of schematicity) and horizontal links (across related structures) between constructions (Diessel 2019, 2023 – see Chapter 4). Crucially, however, each node in the constructional network warrants independent analysis based on its own intrinsic features, though occasionally in dialogue with neighbouring constructions.

9.1.3. A contact-induced origin

Recipient passives provide a prime example of contact-induced linguistic change, i.e., a change that originates in the influence from contact languages and subsequently makes its way into the receiving language. Bantu languages are typologically characterised by their ability to promote recipients and/or beneficiaries to the subject position in passive constructions.⁶² Recipient

⁶¹ It is furthermore worth noting that when Mozambican linguists discuss signs of nativisation of their variety of Portuguese, they usually highlight passives rather than DOCs (Ngunga 2012: 16; Firmino 2021: 182; 2024: 819).

⁶² In Bantu, the formation of passive sentences relies on morphological rather than syntactic mechanisms, in contrast to i.e., Romance languages such as Portuguese. Passives are typically marked by a verbal affix, often in the form *-w-*, *-iw-*, or *-ew-*, appended to the verb root. Many southern Bantu languages allow beneficiaries and recipients (typically expressed in applicative constructions) to be topicalised in a passive. This is facilitated by the interaction between applicative and passive morphology.

passives are thus a relatively well-known phenomenon in Bantu linguistics and have been widely documented across several southern Bantu languages, including Zulu (Taljaard & Bosch 1988), Sesotho (Demuth 1990), Setswana (Creissels 2006), Ciluba (Van Otterloo 2011), Herero (Marten et al. 2008), Swahili (Bearth 2003), Chichewa (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987; Bresnan & Moshi 1990), and Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009), among many others.

As for Mozambique, research confirms the presence of these structures in various local languages.⁶³ Examples include Changana (Chimbutane 2002), Xitshwa (Cumbane 2008), Chuwabo (Guérois 2015), Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009) and Swahili (Bearth 2003), as illustrated in the examples (2) to (6) below (which also specify the provinces where these languages are predominantly spoken). These studies further reveal a general preference for Recipient passives in most of these languages, with Theme passives largely deemed ungrammatical.⁶⁴ The widespread documentation of these structures strongly suggests that Recipient passives are a prevalent structural feature throughout the country.

(2) **Changana** (Maputo)

Dokodela a-komb-iw-a xi-londza (hi m-babzi). (Chimbutane 2002: 118)
 1.doctor 1-show-PASS-VF 7.wound by 9.patient
 ‘The doctor is being shown a wound (by the patient).’

(3) **Xitshwa** (Inhambane)

Amunhu i-nyik- el-w-e male hi António. (Cumbane 2008: 244)
 1.pessoa 1-oferecer-APL-PASS-VF dinheiro por António
 ‘A pessoa foi oferecida dinheiro pelo António.’

(4) **Makhuwa** (Nampula)

Shilá o-núú-váh-iyá mithúpi (ni Apilyu). (Van der Wal 2009: 76)
 1.Shila 1-give-PAST-PASS-VF 4.roosters (with 1.Abelho)
 ‘Shila was given roosters (by Abelho)’

⁶³ The Bantu languages of Mozambique fall under the letters S, P and N (to which G could be added, corresponding mainly to Swahili) according to Guthrie’s (1967-1971) classification. Complementing this, the Bantu Languages Research Group at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo (NELIMO) has proposed its own classification for the indigenous languages of Mozambique. They identified six language groups in Mozambique: (I) Kimwani, Makonde, Yao; (II) Makhuwa, Lomwe, Chuwabo; (III) Nyungwe, Nyanja, Sena; (IV) Shona, Manyika, Nda; (V) Copi, Gitonga; (VI) Changana, Ronga, Xitshwa (Ngunga & Faquir 2012: 15). Despite Makhuwa and Chuwabo being grouped together, Kisseberth (2003) contested this classification, suggesting that they should be considered as two distinct and unrelated languages that influenced each other through intensive contact.

⁶⁴ While the Recipient passive is the preferred for languages such as Swahili (Bearth 2003: 136), Chichewa-Nyanja (Bresnan & Moshi 1990: 150), Changana (Chimbutane 2002: 118) and Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009: 76), Guérois (2015: 271) demonstrated that Chuwabo is a symmetric language that allows for both types of passives without inherent preferences.

(5) **Chuwabo** (Zambézia)

Akálába *a-hí-váh-íw-a* *mbúzi na múyana.* (Guérois 2015: 440)
2.older 1-PAST-gIVE-PASS-VF 9.goat by 1.woman
'The old people were given a goat by the woman.'

(6) **Swahili** (Cabo Delgado)

m-toto *a-li-p-ew-a* *pesa (na mama).* (Bearth 2003: 135)
1.child 1-PAST-gIVE-PASS-VF money (with mother)
'The child was given money (by his mother).'

Given the situation of stable and widespread multilingualism in Mozambique – a prerequisite for effective contact-induced transfer of linguistic features (Palacios 2010 – see Chapter 3) – Recipient passives in MP can be understood as one of the outcomes of intensive contact with the Bantu languages of Mozambique. As Cumbane (2008: 349) notes, “the causal relationship between the production of dative [i.e., Recipient] passives and the syntactic structure of Xitshwa is necessarily established”. More specifically, Recipient passives represent an instance of structural, or grammatical, borrowing, a mechanism of contact-induced change whereby a syntactic pattern characteristic of Bantu languages is integrated into Portuguese’s structural framework (Palacios 2010). Structural borrowing, however, does not solely consist in a straightforward transfer of grammatical features but entails a gradual adaptation process, where features from the source language adjust to fit within the receiving language’s system (Palacios 2021: 41), as will be further discussed in section 9.4.3 (see also the discussion in Chapter 8).

9.2. The study

This brief overview of the literature has highlighted several unresolved questions, including (i) whether Recipient passives are characteristic of the Mozambican population as a whole or confined to specific speaker profiles, and (ii) whether Recipient passives can be regarded as independent constructions with respect to Double Object constructions. In addition, while the role of language contact in the emergence of these constructions was acknowledged in section 9.1.3, it remains unclear (iii) to what extent the mother tongue of the speaker continues to influence his choice when it comes to forming a Recipient passive. These research questions will be explored in the remainder of this chapter, on the basis of an acceptability judgment task. To the best of our knowledge, no such perception experiment has so far been conducted. In the

present section, we describe the design of the study in more detail along with its strengths and weaknesses.

9.2.1. Design

To address the research questions outlined above, we decided to test for the speakers' *perception* of Recipient passives by means of an acceptability judgement task. Because we are dealing with non-standard constructions, i.e., not sanctioned by an official norm, we decided to assess acceptability rather than grammaticality. While grammaticality judgements, or judgements of well-formedness, draw more directly upon metalinguistic competence and call for a prescriptive stance, acceptability judgements were deemed to trigger a wider, less restrained range of responses, as they do not orient the attention of the participant directly and exclusively towards linguistic *form*. In this way, we expected participants to indicate what they would (rather than what they should) accept.

The experiment was composed of a total of 45 sentences, 15 of which were Recipient passives (i.e., our target items). The design followed a 15 x 3 structure, where 15 ditransitive verbs were selected, each presented in three distinct constructions: a Recipient passive construction, a Double Object construction and a third, either grammatical or ungrammatical construction (the last series being true fillers). The participants were asked to answer in a binary fashion, rating sentences as either "Totally natural" or "Not natural at all". All 45 sentences were entirely made up (i.e., not retrieved from existing corpora), but they were modelled on existing data, embedded in a culturally relevant context, made as short and straightforward as possible and most importantly, double-checked by a native MP speaker. All items were subsequently randomised and presented to the test subjects.

Considerable attention was devoted to the creation of the questionnaire items to produce credible and naturally sounding sentences as close as possible to a spoken and colloquial register. The first crucial step involved the selection of the ditransitive verbs that would be taken on in the analysis. We wanted firstly to test the four subtypes of transfer (see Chapters 4 and 7), and secondly to include extensions, i.e., verbs not typically associated with the Recipient passive construction, but potentially usable in such contexts due to constructional productivity (in particular passives featuring a beneficiary as subject) (Chapter 4). We ended up with the following selection of 15 verbs, divided into 5 groups: verbs of prototypical transfer (*dar* 'give', *oferecer* 'offer', *entregar* 'hand over', *emprestar* 'lend'), negative transfer (*roubar* 'steal',

recusar ‘deny’, *cobrar* ‘charge’), communicative transfer (*dizer* ‘tell’, *comunicar* ‘communicate’, *perguntar* ‘ask’), and directive transfer (*pedir* ‘ask for’, *permitir* ‘permit’, *sugerir* ‘suggest’) and lastly, two verbs taking a recipient-beneficiary (*cozinhar* ‘cook’, *construir* ‘build’). An extra passive sentence was eventually included, with a verb that can be used in an inherent possession construction (*tapar a boca* ‘cover the mouth’), hence bringing the total number of lemmas to 16. This extra item, however, was not matched by a corresponding DOC. The last three verbs – *cozinhar*, *construir*, *tapar* – illustrate possible extensions of the Recipient passive constructional schema. While the first extension was modelled on examples found for Changana (Ngunga et al. 2016: 348), Makhuwa (Van der Wal 2009: 77) and Chuwabo (Guérois 2015: 443), the second was inspired by Gonçalves (2010) and the last one adapted from an example found in the *Corpus do Português*.

Given the present verb selection, variations in the acceptability of Recipient passive constructions are expected based on the type of verb and/or type of transfer. The data collection process also included sociolinguistic information about the participants. The distributed task consisted of two parts: a questionnaire aimed at gathering sociolinguistic data, including a declaration of consent to be signed by the participants, confirming their voluntary participation and ensuring their anonymity (see Appendix I and II),⁶⁵ and the acceptability judgement task consisting of the 45 items (see Appendix III).

9.2.2. Participants

While a successful probing of the Mozambican population would ideally require a sample of participants reflecting diverse age groups, regional origins, and social and educational backgrounds, the logistics entailed by the application of a questionnaire in a foreign country quickly imposed some constraints. We therefore decided to restrict our sample to undergraduate students,⁶⁶ selected out of four different higher education institutions, owing to the convenience of collecting substantial amounts of data with relatively minimal effort. Data was collected at the Eduardo Mondlane University (UEM) in Maputo, the Instituto Superior Politécnico de Gaza (ISPG) in Chòkwé, the Licungo University in Quelimane and the Catholic University (UCM) in Nampula, thereby covering southern, central and northern provinces (Figure 13).

⁶⁵ The participants were informed of the purpose of the study beforehand and were ensured that their anonymity would be safeguarded. Only the questionnaires accompanied by the signed paper form were processed in the study, and names were carefully removed during data processing.

⁶⁶ The courses included: Portuguese Language and Literature, French Language and Literature, Bantu Language and Literature, Economics, (environmental) Management, Theology.

aged 18 to 23, comprise 16 males and 14 females, all from northern Portugal (Braga, Guimarães, Porto, Barcelos, Viana do Castelo). Among them, 21 reported additional fluency in English, 6 in Spanish and 2 in French. This group of 30 undergraduates will constitute our control group, with the aim to contrast EP and MP speakers’ attitudes and perceptions towards the Recipient passive construction.

The Mozambican sample consists of 190 participants balanced in terms of sex, with 95 men and 95 women. As university students, they are all expected to be highly proficient in Portuguese. Out of 190 respondents, 114 declared having Portuguese as a first language (i.e., acquired at home with or without a Bantu language), while the remaining 76 reported acquiring Portuguese as a second language, likely around the age of 5 or 6 upon entering the school system. Among the L1 Portuguese speakers, 37 reported Portuguese as their sole mother tongue, the remainder being bilingual Bantu/Portuguese speakers. Table 11 provides an overview of the participants’ distribution by sex and first language. Regarding the Bantu L1s, our sample includes speakers of 20 different Bantu languages. Table 13 summarises the number of speakers per language, with some participants reporting multiple mother tongues. The remaining languages in which proficiency was claimed were English (16), French (4) and Spanish (3).

As for regional provenance (see Figure 13), Table 12 shows that 71 participants come from southern Mozambique (subsuming the provinces of Maputo, Gaza, Inhambane), 63 from the central region (Zambézia, Manica, Sofala, Tete) and 57 from the north (Nampula, Niassa and Cabo Delgado). The best-represented provinces are Maputo (49), Zambézia (49) and Nampula (45) (i.e., the provinces where data collection took place), correlating with the prevailing Bantu languages in the sample, respectively Changana (38), Chuwabo (27) and Makhuwa (40). It is also worth highlighting that data was exclusively collected in urban centres. This is relevant given the urban/rural divide in Mozambique with respect to proficiency in Portuguese. As Firmino (2024: 810) emphasises, “the multiethnic environment of the urban centres favours the expansion of the use of Portuguese since it has been used as the link language”. Urban centres are thus likely to play a pivotal role in the creation and gradual diffusion of a new endogenous norm.

	Bantu	Bilingual	Portuguese	TOTAL
Men	47	33	15	95
Women	29	44	22	95
TOTAL	76	77	37	190

Table 11. Participants’ distribution by sex and L1

REGION/Provinces	TOTAL
NORTH	56
Cabo Delgado	6
Nampula	44
Niassa	6
CENTRE	63
Manica	7
Sofala	6
Tete	1
Zambézia	49
SOUTH	71
Gaza	11
Inhambane	11
Maputo	49
TOTAL	190
Portugal	30
GRAND TOTAL	220

Table 12. Regional distribution of participants⁶⁸

Bantu L1	N° speakers	Bantu L1	N° speakers
Swahili	1	Nyungwe	1
Makonde	1	Sena	7
Yao	1	Ndau	2
Makhuwa	40	Shona	2
Koti	1	Manyika	2
Lomwe	8	Ciwute	1
Manhaua	1	Copi	4
Marenje	1	Gitonga	5
Chuwabo	27	Changana	38
Chibarue	1	Xitshwa	4

Table 13. Bantu L1s represented in the sample

⁶⁸ Although there is a tendency for linguistic and regional distributions to match, this should not obscure the reality of migrations and population movements within Mozambique that can reconfigure such distributions. Participant n°17, for instance, was born in the northern part of the country but has Changana, a typically southern language of Mozambique, as mother tongue. This, in turn, further enhances the use of Portuguese as *lingua franca* across the country.

9.2.3. Predictions

The overarching goal of the present study is to bring more sociolinguistics into the description of Recipient passives in MP. Given the characteristics of our participant sample, we will primarily seek to assess the impact of Bantu mother tongues on the acceptability of Recipient passives, as well as potential regional variations. More specifically, it will be investigated (i) whether acceptability ratings differ across Mozambique's three main regions, and (ii) whether acceptability ratings vary depending on whether the informants consider Portuguese as their first or second language.

Based on our research premise that Recipient passives reflect the nativisation of MP, our first working hypothesis is that sociolinguistic variables such as 'region' and 'L1' will exert minimal influence on acceptability judgements. In other words, we anticipate that Recipient passives will receive consistently high acceptance ratings, regardless of participants' region of origin or linguistic background. Such findings would in turn suggest that the role of language contact in shaping these constructions has settled and is no longer a significant factor in their development.

Additionally, we hypothesise that the acceptability of Recipient passives will vary depending on the specific verbs and types of transfer involved. Our second hypothesis is therefore that differences should be found within the group of target items. Lastly, we aim to contrast the acceptability ratings for Recipient passives with those for DOCs. As a third hypothesis, we expect Recipient passives to be overall more widely accepted than DOCs. Discrepancies in acceptability between the two construction types may challenge the relevance of structural parallelism as an explanatory framework for language change.

9.2.4. Limitations

Within the available array of experimental designs (such as tests of grammaticality, multiple choice task, fill in the blanks, guided production, etc.), an acceptability judgment task was considered the best suited for our purposes, but this approach is naturally not devoid of shortcomings. First, it is limited to *perception* of Recipient passives, turning it impossible to make any statement as to whether the participants would actually produce such passives

themselves.⁶⁹ Second, the very notion of “acceptability” could prove problematic, when it comes to finding out what the participants actually assessed: it is not always possible to determine whether the participants judged a sentence as acceptable based on its linguistic *form*, or rather based on its propositional content. Third, the fact of using a “polarised” binary response instead of a scale could arguably obscure meaning nuances. Finally, an important issue is linked to the artificiality of the sentences, as all 45 items were especially designed for this study. As Recipient passives are essentially Topic-constructions, their occurrence strongly depends on the discursive accessibility of the recipient participant, while the test items lack contextual linkage. Despite these limitations, inherent to any experimental design that seeks to isolate a part of the grammatical network of a language, the results obtained allow nonetheless to shed new light on aspects of language variation in the Portuguese spoken in Mozambique.

9.3. Analysis and results

9.3.1. Data visualisation

Upon completion of data collection, an initial observation emerged: participants exhibited a global tendency to accept most questionnaire items (3993 “Totally natural” answers against 1928 “Not natural at all” answers). In other words, respondents were largely inclined to perceive most sentences (target items and fillers alike) as “totally natural”, while very few items triggered strong rejection responses. Table 14 shows the percentages of acceptability ratings for each construction and each verb. Crucially, our target items, i.e., the 16 Recipient passives, were deemed natural in over 50% of responses. Among these, the 13 most prototypical items achieved acceptability ratings ranging from 62% to 88%, underscoring their widespread acceptance. As anticipated, the three extensions (Beneficiary passives) achieved lower acceptability scores, yet they remained above the 50% threshold and were not outrightly rejected, as might have been expected.

Although they were not considered as target items in the strict sense, we included “matching” active structures to test for structural parallelism, i.e., the hypothesis according to

⁶⁹ The author can nevertheless guarantee that during fieldwork, such passive constructions were produced by Mozambican informants, in both spontaneous and semi-guided production (i.e., interviews).

which Double Object constructions are a necessary condition for the occurrence of Recipient passives. It emerged from the survey that DOCs display a more mixed picture and a wider range of variation as their acceptability scores range from 46% to 82%. Contrary to our expectations, DOCs were broadly accepted overall. They were rejected in only two cases (with the verbs *cobrar* ‘charge’ and *cozinhar* ‘cook’), and only twice did the score of DOCs outweigh that of Recipient passives (with the verbs *entregar* ‘hand’ and *recusar* ‘deny’). It remains unclear whether these differences are attributable to the verbs themselves or to the specific questionnaire items.

Verb	Recipient passive		DOC	
<i>Dar</i> ‘give’	154	81%	126	66%
<i>Oferecer</i> ‘offer’	140	73%	121	63%
<i>Entregar</i> ‘hand’	124	65%	131	69%
<i>Emprestar</i> ‘lend’	152	80%	128	67%
<i>Dizer</i> ‘tell’	168	88%	128	67%
<i>Comunicar</i> ‘communicate’	142	74%	134	70%
<i>Perguntar</i> ‘ask’	143	75%	134	70%
<i>Roubar</i> ‘steal’	127	66%	119	62%
<i>Cobrar</i> ‘charge’	118	62%	88	46%
<i>Recusar</i> ‘deny’	132	69%	157	82%
<i>Pedir</i> ‘ask for’	147	77%	145	76%
<i>Permitir</i> ‘permit’	154	81%	122	64%
<i>Sugerir</i> ‘suggest’	146	76%	142	74%
<i>Cozinhar</i> ‘cook’	106	55%	65	34%
<i>Construir</i> ‘build’	97	51%	97	51%
<i>Tapar</i> ‘cover’	106	55%	NA	NA
AVERAGE	134/190	70,5 %	122/190	64,1 %

Table 14. Acceptability ratings for Recipient passives and Double Object constructions per verb

Let us now examine the different groups of informants to determine whether any in-group or between-group differences can be identified. Figure 14 illustrates the distribution of acceptability ratings for each construction based on the participants’ first language. We observe that the data pattern similarly across all three groups. Recipient passives are generally rated as natural slightly more frequently than DOCs, regardless of whether the respondent is a monolingual Portuguese speaker or also proficient in a Bantu language. In other words, the acceptability of Recipient passives appears unaffected by whether participants acquired Portuguese as their first or second language.

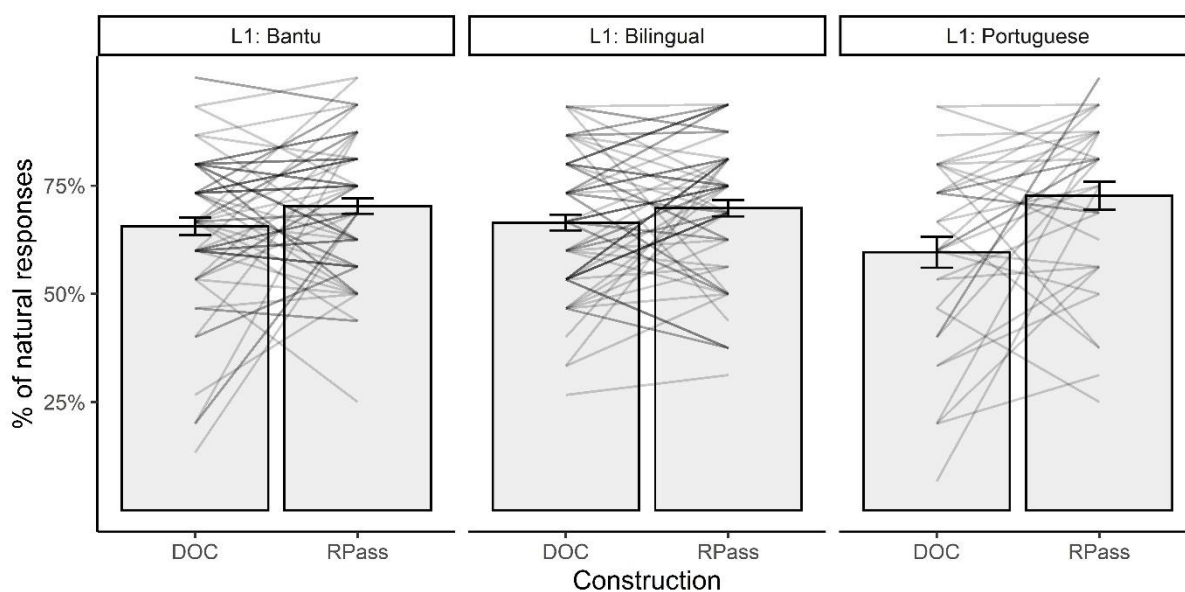


Figure 14. Distribution of acceptability ratings per construction and per first language

Taking a different perspective on the data – namely by examining the proportion of sentences rated as “not natural” (see Figure 15) – we observe a reversed but similar pattern: DOCs are dismissed more frequently than Recipient passives, regardless of whether the informant is fluent in a Bantu language or not. Interestingly, both Figures 14 and 15 reveal a wider gap between DOCs and passives in the Portuguese L1 group. Mozambican monolingual speakers of Portuguese tend to reject DOCs more strongly than bilingual speakers do. This is somehow expected, considering that DOCs are a well-known property of Bantu languages, but not of (European) Portuguese (Brito 2009: 156). Quite surprisingly, however, Portuguese L1 speakers also emerges as the group who least strongly rejects Recipient passives. Finally, the by-participant lines displayed in both figures highlight substantial individual differences, reflecting the significant variability characteristic of the grammar of emerging varieties. Such variability serves as a reminder to interpret the data with caution, as we are dealing with a national variety still in its early stages of development, undergoing an active process of nativisation.

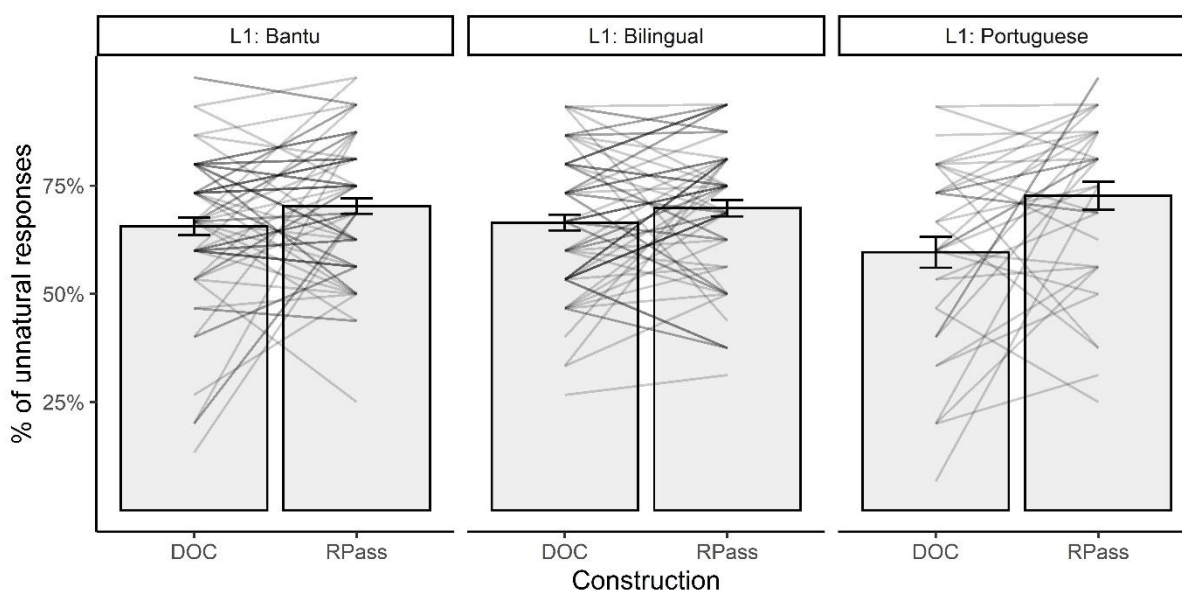


Figure 15. Proportion of “not natural” responses per construction and per first language

9.3.2. Statistical analysis: logistic regression models

Since we worked with a binary response, we decided to conduct a logistic regression analysis to test our predictions. To do so, we resorted to the *glm()* and *glmer()* functions from the *lme4* package in R (version 4.2.2.), with the latter function allowing the addition of random effects. The statistical analysis was carried out in two phases. First, we compared the responses given for each construction under study, namely Recipient passives and Double Object constructions; second, we tested and measured the effect of social predictors on the probability of accepting Recipient passives only. While the first step of the analysis will provide answers regarding our *second* research question (i.e., structural parallelism), the latter will provide insights that will help us deal with the *first* and *third* research questions (i.e., the social determinants of Recipient passives and the role of language contact).

Model 1: Does Construction affect Response?

The first model that was fitted aimed at addressing the relationship between active Double Object constructions and Recipient passives, to see whether the acceptability scores varied as a function of the construction. To do so, we fitted a very simple model on our data (composed of the answers of the 190 Mozambican participants) that can be represented in R as `Response ~ Construction`. The binary outcome “Totally natural” versus “Not natural” was

recoded as 1 and 0 respectively, and the reference level was set to ‘PASS’ in order to compare the likelihood of rating DOCs as “natural” when compared to Recipient passives. Table 15 shows the results obtained. The AIC (Akaike information criterion) value for this model is 7449.

	Coefficient Estimate (β)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value	Odds ratios
(Intercept)	0.87	0.04	22.01	<0.001 ***	2.40
Construction: DOC	-0.29	0.06	-5.27	<0.001 ***	0.75

Table 15. Does Construction affect Response?

First, we observe that both the intercept (β_0) and the other β_i coefficient are significant ($p < 0.001$), which indicates a significant effect of the construction type on the probability of rating a given sentence as natural. The effect of β_i is furthermore negative ($\beta_i = -0.29$; $p < 0.001$), which means that the DOC construction decreases the odds for “naturalness”. To assess the effect size provided by both coefficients, a few transformations are needed (Garcia 2021: 147-148). As regards the intercept, by taking the inverse logit of its coefficient (given in log-odds), we obtain the probability of rating a given sentence as natural when the construction is a Recipient passive. The inverse logit of the intercept yields a value of 0.7047, i.e., Recipient passives are rated as natural in 70,5% of the cases, which echoes the results obtained in Table 4. As for the β_i coefficient, which has to be interpreted relative to the intercept, we can turn it from log-odds to odds by exponentiating it ($\exp(-0.29)$ in R). A decrease (negative sign) of -0.29 log-odds is equivalent to a decrease by a factor of 0.75, that is, the occurrence of a DOC decreases the odds of rating a sentence as natural by a factor of 0.75 relative to a Recipient passive construction. We furthermore used the function *predict()* to predict, on the basis of our data, the probabilities of natural responses for each construction. We obtained 0.705 for Recipient passives and 0.641 for DOCs, matching the figures of Table 14.

Model 2: Do Construction and Transfer Semantics affect Response?

The simple model presented above has the advantage to be very straightforward, but it disregards the potential semantic differences between the various subtypes of transfer. As a reminder, the verbs included in the acceptability judgment task were carefully selected so as to represent all four transfer types plus potential benefactive extensions (see Section 9.2.1). In the next model, we will check for differences amongst the semantic category of TRANSFER. Recipient passives of prototypical transfer are the baseline against which the effect sizes will be assessed. The results are displayed in Table 16.

	Coefficient Estimate (β)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value	Odds ratios
(Intercept)	1.06	0.06	16.48	<0.001 ***	2.87
Construction: DOC	-0.36	0.06	-6.36	<0.001 ***	0.70
Transfer: Communicative	0.18	0.09	2.09	0.03 *	1.20
Transfer: Directive	0.22	0.09	2.45	0.01 *	1.24
Transfer: Extension	-0.94	0.09	-10.87	<0.001 ***	0.39
Transfer: Negative	-0.26	0.08	-3.17	0.002 **	0.77

Table 16. Do Construction and Transfer Semantics affect Response?

First, we see that all predictor levels are significant, with both constructions included in the model. The AIC-value is also lower for this second model, which indicates a better fit (AIC = 7248). The intercept is positive, indicating that the chance of rating a prototypical Recipient passive as natural or acceptable is higher than 50%. By taking the inverse logit of the intercept, we see that the probability goes up to 74% ($\text{invlogit}(1.05519) = 0.741$). By contrast, when the construction turns to a DOC, the odds for a natural response decrease, since it presents a negative coefficient. As for the coefficients of the different TRANSFER categories, we see that both communicative and directive transfer have a positive effect on the likelihood of rating a sentence as acceptable ($\beta = 0.18, p = 0.03$; $\beta = 0.22, p = 0.01$), whereas negative transfer and, importantly, semantic extensions of transfer, have a negative effect ($\beta = -0.26, p = 0.002$; $\beta = -0.94, p < 0.001$), that is, participants have a stronger tendency to reject the sentences (either passives or DOCs) when they belong to these two last semantic categories. The fluctuations in acceptability ratings reflect to some extent how the TRANSFER category (and the constructions deriving from it) is prototypically structured, with more central and more peripheral instances.

As a second step, we carried out a *mixed-effects* logistic regression using the *glmer()* function, allowing us to add random effects. The picture changed a little, as can be seen from Table 17. The AIC-value for this model is 6995. The striking result obtained when adding random effects for both Participant and Item is that some of the coefficients lost their significance. It emerges that only the extensions that depart more radically from the central notion of transfer have statistical relevance. This ultimately points towards some homogeneity within the TRANSFER category that overrules more subtle existing differences, i.e., the four subtypes of transfer behave similarly overall across the different constructions. Differences in the informants' responses regarding specific items of our questionnaire would then be due to causes that are out of our control (i.e., random effects). The fact that one particular sentence was considered as less acceptable by many informants could have been due to other factors such as its propositional content or a less idiomatic way of conveying information.

	Coefficient Estimate (β)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value	Odds ratios
(Intercept)	1.16	0.14	8.13	<0.001 ***	3.20
Construction: DOC	-0.4	0.12	-3.26	0.001 **	0.67
Transfer: Communicative	0.21	0.18	1.13	0.26	1.23
Transfer: Directive	0.23	0.18	1.25	0.21	1.26
Transfer: Extension	-1.04	0.19	-5.41	<0.001 ***	0.35
Transfer: Negative	-0.28	0.18	-1.55	0.12	0.75

Table 17. Mixed-effects logistic regression with Construction and Transfer Semantics

Model 3: Sociolinguistic models

Moving on to the social determinants of Recipient passives in MP, it will be interesting to explore which and to what extent external predictors affect or determine the speaker's acceptance of the Recipient passive construction. More specifically, considering the population sample under study (higher education students), the two variables controlled for were the speaker's first language (L1) and home region (Region), while random effects were added for both Participants and Items. Recalling our hypothesis, which considers Recipient passives as a token for the *nativisation* of the MP variety as a whole, no significant differences are expected between the groups represented in our sample, so that we ultimately sustain the *null hypothesis* (H_0). Arguably, an absence of significant differences in terms of L1 could be interpreted as an indication that Recipient passives have by now become an *internal* development of MP, that is, that language contact has ceased to have a bearing on the constructionalisation process.

To fit this last set of models, we first removed the DOCs so as to only retain the target items and have a look at passive constructions exclusively. Both variables to be included in the model have three levels: Region (South; Centre; North) and L1 (Portuguese; Bilingual; Bantu). We then defined a baseline according to which we would compare the effect size of the different predictor levels in the choice of either accepting or rejecting Recipient passives. Considering that big urban centres and especially capital cities are usually viewed as norm-defining centres, we took 'South' (the region where Maputo is located) as our reference level. As for the L1 predictor, the reference was set at 'Portuguese' to see whether being knowledgeable or fluent in one (or more) Bantu language(s) significantly affects the participant's response. Our intercept therefore represents the new generation of native speakers of Portuguese in Mozambique, who are mainly concentrated in the capital city. Table 18 reports the results obtained. The AIC-value for this model is 3500.

	Coefficient Estimate (β)	Std. Error	z-value	p-value	Odds ratios
(Intercept)	1.17	0.22	5.37	<0.001 ***	3.21
Region: Centre	0.10	0.16	0.62	0.54	1.11
Region: North	-0.10	0.16	-0.59	0.56	0.91
L1: Bantu	-0.19	0.19	-0.99	0.33	0.83
L1: Bilingual	-0.20	0.18	-1.06	0.29	0.82

Table 18. Do Region and L1 affect Response?

It emerges from Table 18, in line with the predictions made, that none of the predictors' levels is significant, which confirms the null hypothesis. In other words, the probability that a given participant rates Recipient passives as natural does not depend on his/her proficiency level in Portuguese, nor on his/her region of origin. Interestingly, though, the intercept turns out to be significant ($\beta_0 = 1.17, p < 0.001$). The intercept gives us the odds for 1 (i.e., for accepting Recipient passives) when the speaker comes from the south of Mozambique and speaks Portuguese only. Its positive value indicates a probability above the 50% threshold; converting log-odds into probabilities yields a value of 0.763, i.e., a 76% chance for a southern Mozambican speaker to rate Recipient passives as natural. An alternative mixed-effects regression was carried out with another baseline, changing the reference levels to 'North' for the Region predictor and 'Bilingual' for the L1 predictor. Once again, no predictor was found to be significant except for the intercept ($\beta_0 = 0.87, p < 0.001$), indicating that speakers from the north of the country have a 70% tendency to accept Recipient passives.

The final step of the sociolinguistic analysis was to contrast the Mozambican informants with our control group of 30 undergraduate students from Portugal, as another way of testing whether Recipient passives are in fact a new grammatical feature typically characteristic of MP. It emerged from the distribution of the questionnaire that the Portuguese informants produced mixed responses and rated some Recipient passives as natural in more cases than initially anticipated. Despite these unexpected results, the statistical analysis quite plainly revealed statistically significant differences between the two groups (Table 19).⁷⁰ The mixed-effects logistic regression shows that Portuguese participants have a significantly higher tendency to reject Recipient passives ($\beta_3 = -1.46, p < 0.001$). The AIC-value of the model is 4100.

⁷⁰ Among the participants who filled in the control group questionnaire, a few were not EP speakers (they were from Brazil, Guinea-Bissau and Angola), so their data was not retained in the present analysis. Interestingly, though, the Brazilian informants seemed to reject even more strongly Recipient passives than EP informants tended to. This might appear as puzzling at first glance given the hypothesis of the Afro-Brazilian continuum (Álvarez-López et al. 2018) which posits similar linguistic developments in BP and the African varieties of Portuguese. This could be the starting point for more exciting comparative research between Portuguese varieties.

	Coefficient Estimate (β)	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>z-value</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Odds ratios</i>
(Intercept)	1.02	0.17	5.96	<0.001 ***	2.77
Region: Centre	0.08	0.16	0.50	0.62	1.08
Region: North	-0.09	0.17	-0.55	0.58	0.91
Region: Portugal	-1.46	0.20	-7.31	<0.001 ***	0.23

Table 19. Control group

9.4. Discussion

The present section discusses the most relevant findings obtained through the logistic regression analyses in dialogue with our three research questions, more specifically with the issues of sociolinguistics (9.4.1), structural parallelism (9.4.2) and language contact (9.4.3).

9.4.1. Sociolinguistics

This study was primarily motivated by the need to gain a deeper understanding of the social distribution of Recipient passives within the Mozambican population. Due to fieldwork-related constraints, the study focused on a younger, post-independence generation of MP speakers, 60% of whom reported Portuguese as their first language (acquired at home alone or alongside a Bantu language). These young individuals can nonetheless be regarded as the speakers of tomorrow and the future custodians of the Portuguese language in Mozambique.

As research on emerging varieties (e.g., Palacios 2017; Röthlisberger et al. 2017; Gonçalves et al. 2024) has consistently shown, innovative linguistic phenomena are strongly conditioned by factors such as region, first language and education (with innovations consistently associated with lower education levels). Remarkably, the results of the mixed-effects logistic regression suggest that Recipient passives are no longer strongly influenced by external factors. In the acceptability rating task, neither ‘region’ nor ‘L1’ emerged as significant predictors. The absence of significant regional differences (i.e., the fact that a Mozambican informant born in the province of Nampula and another from the Gaza province both accept Recipient passives to a similar extent) points to the widespread adoption of this construction across Mozambique, which in turn reinforces the case for a distinctly Mozambican variety of Portuguese (notwithstanding regional variation and dialectal specificities). Moreover, the analysis

highlighted a sharp contrast in behaviour between EP and MP speakers, with the former rejecting more strongly the Recipient passive construction.⁷¹

As for the participants' first language, the regression analysis did not reveal any significant differences between monolingual Portuguese speakers and bilinguals proficient in one or more Bantu languages. Given the Bantu origin of the Recipient passive construction (see section 9.1), one might have expected respondents with a Bantu background to show greater acceptance of these constructions. Surprisingly, quite the opposite was observed: native monolingual speakers of Portuguese were slightly more likely to rate Recipient passives as natural than bilinguals or L2 Portuguese speakers (as illustrated by Figure 14 and the intercept value of Table 18).

As previously explained, the study's population sample precluded testing for differences in age and education levels. Yet in postcolonial contexts, these variables appear to be frequently correlated, as older generations tend to have lower education levels, hence less proficiency in Portuguese. They are consequently more likely to produce 'deviating' constructions, by relying more heavily on strategies from their mother tongues when speaking Portuguese. Many studies on emerging varieties therefore tended to attribute the high amount of variation observed to imperfect or incomplete acquisition, predicting that such variation would diminish as newer generations gained greater exposure to the official (EP) norm through formal education (Gonçalves et al. 2022).

However, this study demonstrates that Recipient passives are not confined to older or less-educated speakers. On the contrary, our findings suggest that they are considered natural options by the new generations of speakers, including monolinguals. This indicates that such constructions are gradually being integrated into MP's grammar, or at the very least, suggests that these passives are unlikely to soon disappear. The fact that two of the external predictors usually thought to influence the production of linguistic innovations in emerging varieties (i.e., 'region' and 'L1') did not prove statistically significant provides compelling evidence for the ongoing nativisation process of MP. Recipient passives are thus illustrative of the evolution of an initially non-native variety, transitioning from the high linguistic variability associated with

⁷¹ This does not mean that EP speakers rejected the Recipient passive construction in 100% of the cases, as the ratings were typically mixed and showed considerable variation. Quite strikingly, there were instances where positive ratings outweighed negative ones. A constructional and cognitive perspective accounts naturally for this variability, which regards language as a complex dynamic system, inherently gradient and flexible. Moreover, clear structural patterns emerge in the responses, distinguishing EP speakers from MP speakers. While EP speakers tend to more widely accept Recipient passives formed with the verb *perguntar* 'to ask' (80%) and *permitir* 'to allow' (73%) both taking a clausal theme (probably analogically influenced by verbs like *interrogar*, *questionar* and *autorizar* respectively), they also reject more strongly prototypical Recipient passives involving verbs of material transfer such as *entregar* 'to deliver' (23%), *emprestar* 'to lend' (30%) and *oferecer* 'to offer' (30%), which typically take a nominal theme. The mean acceptance rate of Recipient passives among EP speakers was nevertheless notably lower than that of MP informants, amounting to 40.8%.

differing proficiency levels to a more stable variety that incorporates indigenisation effects (Röthlisberger et al. 2017). This process is most evident among the younger generations, who are more likely to acquire a truly nativised variety of Portuguese. The widespread acceptance of Recipient passives throughout our sample of participants points to their increasing conventionalisation (Schmid 2020), a trend bound to strengthen in the future as MP heads towards the stage of *endonormative stabilisation* (Schneider 2007 – see Chapter 2).

9.4.2. Structural parallelism

Shifting focus from language-external to language-internal factors, we will now discuss the formal hypothesis according to which the emergence of Recipient passives is “contingent upon grammars that license DOCs” (Gonçalves et al. 2022: 11). Overall, both construction types received relatively high acceptability scores (71% and 64% respectively), so that the occurrence of DOCs in MP cannot be denied. However, these numbers suggest that while DOCs may occur in MP, the kind of dependency link often posited between the two constructions (e.g., Cumbane, 2008: 348; Gonçalves, 2010: 42; Gonçalves et al., 2022: 11) is not tenable. Were Recipient passives truly derived from DOCs, the latter would be expected to have precedence in both frequency and acceptability. The present study, however, revealed that Recipient passives were by and large more broadly accepted than DOCs and that the difference in acceptability ratings for each construction type is significant, thereby confirming our third prediction (see section 9.2.3). Additional evidence undermining the idea of structural parallelism lies in the variability of participants’ ratings for the same verb. In other words, with a given verb, not infrequently would a participant accept the passive but reject the DOC, and vice-versa.

Arguably, the unexpectedly high number of accepted DOCs could be accounted for in terms of *perceptual salience*. While it is relatively easy to overlook the omission of a preposition, the structural changes involved when forming passives are more conspicuous and harder to ignore. A shift in the choice of subject and voice is more directly and easily perceptible than the deletion of a short and unstressed preposition. Perceptual salience could therefore provide one justification for the high acceptability scores of DOCs, as respondents may simply not have been fully attentive to, or failed to notice, the presence or absence of the preposition *a*. However, DOCs cannot be entirely dismissed. Further research is thus necessary to evaluate their frequency and better delineate their contexts of occurrence. Previous studies suggest that DOCs are most naturally produced in cases where the direct object is null or implicit (see examples

(7)-(8) from Gonçalves et al. (2022: 11)) or when the direct object takes the form of a clause (as illustrated in examples (9)-(10) collected during fieldwork).

(7) *Um belo dia pego o pneu, vou emprestar Ø um amigo meu.*
'One day I will take the tire and loan (it) to a friend of mine.'

(8) *Vou levar as coisas que tem aqui, dividir, entregar Ø cada um.*
'I will take the things that are here, split them up, and hand them to each one.'

(9) *Vou pedir Ø os oradores da primeira parte para começar.*
'I will kindly ask the speakers of the first part to begin.'

(10) *Exigir Ø os funcionários para se candidatarem voluntariamente à reforma antecipada.*
'Demand to the employees that they apply voluntarily to early retirement.'

While the results of the acceptability judgment task provided evidence for the absence of a causal relationship between DOCs and Recipient passives, emphasising the need for an autonomous analysis of these passives without reference to any hypothesised active counterparts, these results nevertheless call for a reassessment of the nature of the link holding between the two construction types. In congruence with a constructional perspective, we argue that these two constructions should be considered as being paradigmatically interrelated rather than formally interdependent.

Their connection, therefore, seems to operate at a more abstract, conceptual level. These constructional changes in MP appear to reflect a typological shift, with MP gradually moving from a structurally-driven direct/indirect object dichotomy (mirroring the accusative-dative distinction) towards a more flexible and semantically-driven primary/secondary object typology, characteristic of Bantu languages (Bresnan & Moshi 1990; Cumbane 2008). While the former type typically treats indirect objects as adjuncts or obliques, the latter tends to regard them as core arguments (Company 2001: 5).

Probably under Bantu influence, MP thus seems to be developing a system in which either object can be assigned primary focus, depending on contextual factors such as animacy and discourse givenness. In contrast to standard EP, the 'dative' participant or indirect object in MP comes to be increasingly treated as a core argument rather than an oblique. This would provide a plausible and natural explanation for its promotion to subject position in the passive.

To deepen our understanding of the link between Recipient passives and DOCs, future research should explore these constructions in terms of primary objectivity rather than through the accusative-dative lens. Such an approach may shed light on the conceptual reorganisation

of the object system underlying these changes,⁷² and clarify the paradigmatic (rather than structural) relationship between the two construction types. Further research, ideally in collaboration with Bantuists, is required to substantiate this tentative hypothesis.

9.4.3. Language contact

As argued in section 9.1.3, the constructionalisation of Recipient passives in MP emerges as a case of *contact-induced* change, more specifically of structural borrowing between typologically unrelated languages.⁷³ In Mozambique, the pervasive and extensive language contact situations coupled with a high rate of bilingualism among the population support the plausibility of a Bantu origin for Recipient passives. Despite the typological distance between the languages, a grammatical pattern typical of Bantu has thus been imported into Portuguese. Language contact, however, does not boil down to a transfer of features from one language to another, but typically involves some process of adaptation or assimilation in accordance with the grammatical system of the receiving language.

Palacios (2011: 33) emphasises that grammatical borrowings are typically situated along a continuum between direct and indirect transfer. The case at hand is a fitting illustration of this continuum: the incorporation of the Recipient passive construction into MP was facilitated by the existence in Portuguese of similar passive constructions with recipient-like subjects, with verbs such as *autorizar* ‘allow’, *obrigar* ‘oblige’, *deixar* ‘leave’, *informar* ‘inform’, *convidar* ‘invite’, among others (see examples (11)-(13) from the *Corpus do Português*). The perception of these structural similarities between Portuguese and Bantu languages may have triggered a process of reanalysis of these subjects, leading to analogical extensions to novel contexts.

- (11) *Nenhum passageiro deveria ser autorizado a embarcar para Moçambique sem visto.*
‘No passenger should be allowed to board a plane to Mozambique without a visa.’
→ *Daviz Simango não vai ser permitido a concorrer.*
‘Daviz Simango will not be allowed to participate.’

⁷² Among related linguistic developments, one noteworthy trend is the extended use of the preposition *a* (typically employed to mark the indirect object in EP) for introducing animate direct objects in MP, as a kind of differential object marker (e.g. *informar aos moçambicanos* ‘inform the Mozambicans’; *apoiar aos colegas* ‘support the colleagues’; *felicitar aos dois oradores* ‘I congratulate the speakers’) (Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 22).

⁷³ Palacios (2010: 52) demonstrated, with reference to Spanish in contact in Latin America, that structural or grammatical borrowing between typologically different languages occur productively provided that the required conditions of intensive language contact are met, which turns out to be the case in Mozambique. Typological convergence, therefore, does not appear as a requirement for successful contact-induced changes.

- (12) *Fomos informados de intensas atividades.*
 ‘We were informed of intense activities.’
 → *Sete horas depois é que fomos comunicados do resultado da votação.*
 ‘Only seven hours later were we notified of the outcome of the vote.’
- (13) *Lá permaneceu, tendo sido obrigado a exilar-se de novo.*
 ‘There he stayed, as he had been forced to go into exile again.’
 → *Tendo sido ordenado para que fosse buscar ao quarto dinheiro, fê-lo.*
 ‘As he was asked to fetch and bring money from his room, he did it.’

This systemic potential for change identified and tapped into by MP speakers is also reflected in the answers from the control group: the passives with the highest acceptance rates corresponded to the verbs exemplified in (11) and (12). Additionally, Portuguese, among Romance languages, appears to exhibit a certain constructional predisposition, a greater syntactic adaptability regarding passive constructions, which aligns to some degree with the extensive passive flexibility characteristic of Bantu languages. The linguistic system of the receiving language (i.e., Portuguese) also plays a substantial part. Successful contact-induced changes are thus best characterised as resulting from a creative and dynamic process of transfer and (mutual) accommodation, shaped by both the internal structural possibilities of Portuguese and external influences of Bantu languages.

The extent to which language contact continues to play a role in the formation of Recipient passives in contemporary speech, however, remains unclear. While the case was made for the Bantu origin of these constructions,⁷⁴ findings from the acceptability judgement task suggest that language contact is no longer a prominent factor influencing their perception. The results obtained in section 9.3 revealed no significant differences in acceptability between L1 and L2 speakers of Portuguese, and even Portuguese monolinguals overwhelmingly rated Recipient passives as natural. It might therefore be inferred that these passives, which originally emerged in contact scenarios, have grown out of their initial conditioning to become increasingly conventionalised. Thus, while language contact may have shaped their emergence, it appears to no longer influence their formation and actual use. Recipient passives in MP appear to have become nativised and therefore illustrate a later stage of development: they entered the receiving language’s system and started being acquired by the new generations of monolingual

⁷⁴ Considering the widespread use of Recipient Passive constructions in English, one might question whether English influenced the emergence of this linguistic innovation in MP. However, it is highly improbable that English played a causal role, as Mozambique lacks the conditions of stable and widespread historical bilingualism with English necessary for fostering contact-induced innovations (Palacios 2010). Moreover, only 16 participants in our sample reported proficiency in English, indicating that English has minimal influence on the acceptability of these passives.

speakers of Portuguese. The direct interference of underlying Bantu structures on the development of these passives seems to have diminished over time. Such enduring incorporation reflects how contact-induced features, initially tied to bilingual contexts, diffuse broadly across the community to the point where they are no longer perceived as foreign elements (Palacios 2011: 34).

The contact-induced constructionalisation of Recipient passives may represent only the surface of a broader shift in MP towards treating dative participants as core arguments, aligning with the typological features of Bantu languages. In their pursuit of effective communication, speakers (particularly bilinguals) rely on all the grammatical resources available to them and subconsciously work towards harmonising the two linguistic systems' ways of conceptualising and categorising reality (Otheguy 2013; Palacios 2011). This process of conceptual convergence often activates grammatical strategies in the receiving language that mirror cognitive structures of the contact language (Palacios 2011: 26; 2021: 41). Conceptual convergence could also possibly underlie the reorganisation of the object system and of the dative category in MP.

9.4.4. Closing remarks: the nativisation of Mozambican Portuguese

All the discussion thus far makes the case for the nativisation of Portuguese in Mozambique, marked by a transition from a predominantly non-native variety (Gonçalves 2004) to the emergence of the first generations of monolingual Portuguese speakers. This evolution corresponds to the third stage in Schneider's Dynamic Model for postcolonial varieties, in which structural features typical of local usage emerge (Schneider 2003: 247). Recipient passives stand out as an emblematic example of this process.

Schneider (2003: 240) relies on two theoretical prerequisites to account for how and why local forms and structures arise within a given speech community: *identity* and *ecology*. First, speakers tend to select and prioritise in-group forms of communication as a means of identity expression, fostering linguistic convergence for effective communication and social cohesion. In the context of MP, it is plausible that, in earlier stages, more proficient speakers of Portuguese may have used Recipient passives when interacting with less fluent fellow Mozambicans to express mutual sympathy or a shared sense of belonging. Second, the linguistic outcomes of this convergence process are constrained by the input provided by all the languages in contact

(i.e., the ecology), stressing once again the role of both Portuguese and Bantu in shaping linguistic innovations.

Although findings from the acceptability judgement task suggest that Recipient passives have moved beyond the stage of direct interference from Bantu languages to become integrated into the constructional network of MP, it is essential to emphasise that contemporary Mozambican society remains deeply multicultural and multilingual (Firmino 2021: 185; 2024: 819). The pervasiveness of language contact situations in Mozambique – an intrinsic aspect of the daily linguistic experience of every Mozambican, including monolinguals insofar as they live in a multilingual environment – makes it a significant driver of change still expected to weigh on current and future linguistic developments.

9.5. Final considerations

The present study aimed to contribute to the understanding of Recipient passive constructions, identified by many researchers as a hallmark of MP. Some research questions still lingered on, especially regarding the social distribution of these constructions and their relationship with related structures, such as Double Object constructions (DOCs). To address these issues, this research sought to collect experimental data by means of an acceptability judgment task, to complement previous corpus-based studies and provide further empirical insights into the nativisation of MP, using Recipient passives as a case study.

The results obtained revealed that Recipient passives are broadly accepted, more consistently so than DOCs, although these were not outrightly rejected. Furthermore, Recipient passives showed no sensitivity to external factors such as participants' first language or region of origin. This suggests that while language contact remains a central sociolinguistic reality in Mozambique, it no longer directly impacts the use of these passives. Recipient passives have thus become an indigenised feature of MP, emblematic of the language's ongoing nativisation process.

These findings would nevertheless benefit from further exploration, ideally with a more diverse sample of participants and a shift from perception-based to production-oriented analyses that focuses on oral and spontaneous data. This would enable a finer-grained understanding of the social and functional distribution of Recipient passives and shed light on their real usage. Additional research into processes of structural borrowing from Bantu into Portuguese is furthermore essential to address the complex challenge of disentangling the

effects of language contact from MP's internal grammatical developments such as constructionalisation.

Language contact, ultimately, emerged as a pivotal and complex factor underlying much of the discussion. On the one hand, the apparent structural parallelism between DOCs and Recipient passives seems better explained in terms of a deeper conceptual shift, namely a latent approximation of MP towards the primary/secondary object typology characteristic of Bantu languages. This shift entails a reconceptualisation of the Portuguese dative participant as a core argument capable of being assigned focal prominence. The relationship between the two constructions should thus be interpreted in conceptual rather than in purely formal terms. On the other hand, while the innovative Recipient passive construction appears to have a Bantu origin, it has now become embedded in the grammar of MP monolinguals and can therefore no longer be reduced to direct Bantu interference or incomplete acquisition (Palacios 2021).

Instead, Recipient passives should be regarded as an emergent linguistic solution resulting from the fruitful interaction of Portuguese with the many Bantu languages with which it interacts in Mozambique, and from the creativity of its speakers who, while engaging with each other, make the most of the linguistic resources at their disposal to achieve successful communication (Palacios 2011: 20). MP speakers do this in two steps: (i) by exploiting Portuguese as a common medium for communication between speakers of mutually unintelligible Bantu languages, and (ii) by identifying in the Recipient passive construction a shared Bantu substrate which they can use to create a sense of belonging despite not being able to communicate with each other in their own mother tongues.

Thus, language contact should not be viewed as a standalone explanation, but as one of several key factors that help account for language change in postcolonial contexts. As Palacios (2019: 31) argues, it is essential for linguists to describe how bilingual speakers creatively integrate features from both languages into emergent, highly productive linguistic solutions consistent with the systems of the languages involved. This perspective calls for a more comprehensive and dynamic approach to contact-induced change. Achieving this goal requires a tighter collaboration between MP scholars and specialists in Bantu languages. After all, as Firmino (2021: 185) aptly notes, Portuguese in Mozambique cannot be fully understood in isolation from its interaction with Bantu languages.

10. Conclusions

The present thesis has aimed to further document the process of *nativisation* of the Mozambican variety of Portuguese (MP), understood as the evolution and adaptation of a new national variety of a pluricentric language according to its intrinsic and ecological dynamics. Specifically, we did so through the examination of a linguistic innovation that the literature identifies as characteristic of MP: the Recipient passive construction. The findings from the four studies presented in the final chapters of this dissertation – each exploring a different facet of the development of the innovative passive construction – provide supportive evidence for the interpretation of Recipient passives as a token of the MP’s nativisation. In addition, given the steady rise in the number of native speakers of Portuguese in Mozambique – from 10,7% in 2007 to 16,6% in 2017 (Chapter 2) – it is reasonable to expect this construction to further consolidate its position within the grammar of MP in the near future.

First, the results revealed how a pattern characteristic of southern Bantu languages (see Chapter 9) has been naturally integrated into the constructional network of Portuguese, exemplifying a case of successful contact-induced constructionalisation. The constructionalisation of Recipient passives in MP suggests that these constructions have become an established and legitimate new “node” within the variety’s linguistic system. Second, this development has been reinforced by analogical processes with other related constructions in Portuguese, illustrating the role of horizontal relations (Chapter 8). Further evidence for these analogies comes from the responses of the European Portuguese (EP) control group, who showed a greater tendency to rate Recipient passives as acceptable when formed with verbs for which an equivalent exists that admits a recipient-like participant in the passive construction, such as *permitir* (calqued onto *autorizar*) and *perguntar* (modelled after *questionar*, *interrogar*) (Chapter 9). Additionally, three semantic constraints on their formation were identified, which appear to be operational in MP but not in Bantu languages, further

emphasising that the constructionalisation process unfolds in accordance with Portuguese's internal structural tendencies (Chapter 7). Finally, rather than leading to linguistic simplification or loss, the contact-induced constructionalisation of Recipient passives has expanded MP's structural repertoire, giving rise to a new constructional alternation subtly governed by conceptual and pragmatic factors (Chapter 8).

Taken together, these findings indicate that Recipient passives in MP reflect an advanced stage in the linguistic development of the Mozambican variety, which is progressively moving towards the establishment of independent linguistic norms (i.e., an endonormative orientation). Consequently, these constructions can no longer be considered mere artifacts of Bantu substrate influence or incomplete Portuguese acquisition. Likewise, MP itself should no longer be classified as an L2 variety but rather as a fully-fledged and evolving national variety of Portuguese, contributing to the language's increasing pluricentricity. In the remainder of this chapter, we will review the most relevant findings of this dissertation in greater depth. While the first study served as a preliminary analysis primarily aimed at testing the plausibility of the transitivity hypothesis, establishing the need for an alternative approach (Chapter 6), the three subsequent case studies each introduced and examined a specific research hypothesis (**RH**), that helped us refine our understanding of the construction (Chapters 7, 8 and 9). In what follows, we will review each hypothesis in light of the dissertation's main findings. A closing section highlights the study's main contributions, as well as its limitations and directions for future research.

10.1. Constructionalisation of Recipient passives

One of the central premises of the present dissertation revolves around the notion of *constructionalisation*: we hypothesised that the Recipient passive construction constructionalises, meaning that it consolidates both formally and semantically as a new node within the grammar network of Mozambican Portuguese. As a result, it developed into a stable, productive and semantically homogeneous form-meaning pairing that functions as a fundamental building block in the language, readily available for speakers to use. This initial hypothesis, which supports a constructional approach, underpins all four case studies presented in Chapters 6 to 9.

RH1: *The development of the Recipient passive construction in MP corresponds to a case of ongoing constructionalisation, i.e., the development of a new form-meaning pairing, in contrast to the derivational view that consider Recipient passives to result from a change in the argument structure of verbs.*

By framing the emergence of Recipient passives as an instance of constructionalisation, we emphasised their autonomous development rather than viewing them as structurally dependent on or subordinate to pre-existing syntactic rules or constructions. Moreover, postulating a constructional level allowed us to account for the *constructional meaning* of Recipient passives, arising from the interaction between the construction itself and the various verbs participating in it. Over time, through the domain-general cognitive mechanisms of generalisation and schematisation, this constructional meaning (in this case a TRANSFER semantics) became an intrinsic feature of the construction, gradually detaching from specific lexical verbs and enabling its extension to new verbs – a phenomenon known as constructional coercion (Lauwers & Willems 2011).

The constructional approach offered two main advantages: it enabled us to formulate generalisable claims about argument structure changes, moving beyond earlier verb-specific analyses (e.g., Nhatuve 2022), as well as to capture constructional meaning as an emergent, system-wide phenomenon rather than isolated changes in individual verbs. This perspective thus helped us provide a more unified account of the variation. Furthermore, the network model advocated by both Cognitive Grammar and Construction Grammar emphasises that each construction is defined through its relationships with others, which collectively determine its unique position within the linguistic system. A node does not exist in isolation, but at the confluence of its multiple interactions within a multidimensional network that is shaped by language processing, which is itself reliant on general cognitive mechanisms. Importantly, even if a constructional schema displays connections to other schemas, and although it might be less frequent, or less *entrenched* in the speakers' minds, this does not render it secondary, subordinate or derived from another.

A key objective of this thesis was thus to demonstrate the constructional autonomy of the innovative passive construction, rather than viewing it as derived from a primary underlying structure. In a Cognitive Grammar perspective, this implies the recognition of the construction's intrinsic *conceptual foundations*, i.e., that the constructional semantics of the Recipient passive are conceptually motivated. This formed the core of Chapter 7, where we examined the key conceptual categories involved in the formation of Recipient passives: namely passive, ditransitive and dative constructions. Drawing on Chapter 6, which highlighted the limitations

of traditional syntactic derivation in accounting for the full range of variation, the analysis in Chapter 7 centred on the semantic characteristics of the innovative constructional schema. Our findings revealed that Recipient passives form a conceptually interpretable innovation, with the inherent ambivalence and complexity of the ditransitive and dative categories facilitating both conceptual and formal variation.

Indeed, it was shown that these complex categories intrinsically bear the possibility of perspectivising the event in different ways that can be instantiated in alternate syntactic patterns, tying in with the Cognitive Linguistics' conception of meaning as not only encyclopaedic but also perspectival (Chapter 3). More specifically, the hybrid conceptual nature of the dative participant/indirect object, at the intersection of both the semantic roles of Agent and Patient and the status of core or peripheral participant (Langacker 1991: 328), as well as the possibility in ditransitive events of focalising either the possessive relationship between the Recipient and the Theme or the path followed by the Theme (Langacker 1991: 359), provide a strong conceptual grounding and motivation for the development of Recipient passives.

This conceptual analysis of the semantics of the Recipient passive construction laid the groundwork for exploring broader implications of constructionalisation. As a new node gradually integrates into the system of any (variety of a) language, it typically undergoes changes along three gradient and interrelated dimensions that pervade the linguistic network: schematicity, productivity and compositionality (Traugott & Trousdale 2013: 13). As regards the latter, Recipient passives appear to remain fairly transparent and analysable. *Schematicity*, which involves abstraction and generalisation of the constructional meaning, is particularly relevant to their development. We argued that Recipient passives have progressively acquired an internally coherent semantic structure centred around a schematic TRANSFER reading, initially shaped by the semantics of the verbs that first entered the construction. In Chapters 4, 7 and 8, we identified over 50 verbs that participate in the construction. However, the occurrence and distribution of these verbs in the Recipient passive construction are constrained by three semantic factors, having to do with the centrality and affectedness of participants as well as the perspectivisation of the transfer event. Our findings indicated that Recipient passives favour verbs expressing functional and result-oriented transfer events, whereas verbs highlighting manner or spatial dimensions of transfer were only rarely attested. These characteristics came to form the core constructional meaning of the Recipient passive.

Once the schematic constructional meaning has become sufficiently established, forming a stable, semantically coherent category prototype, it begins to license semantic extensions, thereby enhancing constructional *productivity* (Barðdal 2008). As shown in Chapters 7, 8 and

9, a few instances of Recipient passives were found with non-prototypical transfer verbs. Productivity, however, is a gradient phenomenon, oscillating between semantic homogeneity (centred around the prototypical meaning) and innovative extensions. Schematicity plays a supportive role in this process by providing an abstract, coherent and generalisable template that facilitates further constructional expansion (e.g., through analogy or constructional coercion). Schematicity also turns out to be key in another aspect of the analysis, namely language contact, as it helps explain the growing independence of the Recipient passive schema in MP relative to its counterpart in local Bantu languages (see section 10.3).

These findings suggest that the constructionalisation of Recipient passives in MP remains an ongoing process, requiring a nuanced understanding of constructional autonomy. While the construction has developed a stable core meaning and exhibits signs of increased productivity, its usage remains contextually specific and constrained (as shown in Chapters 7 and 8). In addition, language contact remains a significant factor in multilingual Mozambique (see Chapters 2 and 9). Nonetheless, the consolidated schematicity of the Recipient passive and its integration into a new constructional alternation supports its autonomy, as the contextual constraints governing the use of each variant function as cues that shape their own unique distribution in specific linguistic contexts (see next section).

10.2. Constructional alternation

Thus far, we have shown that the new construction stands out as a productive and stable innovation, occurring systematically within well-defined linguistic contexts. Importantly, this innovation did not emerge at the expense of earlier constructions. Rather than resulting in linguistic loss following the replacement of one form by another, our findings indicate that Recipient passives contribute to enrich the grammatical network of MP. This semantic enrichment manifests as a new syntactic option that coexists with pre-existing structures, especially Theme passives, broadening the range of structural possibilities available in the Portuguese language for this specific national variety (Chapter 4). This leads us back to our second hypothesis, which has been put to the statistical test in Chapter 8.

***RH2:** The Recipient passive construction integrated the constructional network of Portuguese as a new syntactic possibility existing alongside standard forms (such as Theme passives) and entering into complementary distribution rather than competition with them, thus creating a constructional alternation.*

A multifactorial statistical analysis performed on corpus data (Chapter 5), employing random forests and conditional inference trees, uncovered structured variation between the two constructional variants tested for – Recipient and Theme passives –, subtly shaped by a set of language-internal predictors. A crucial issue was to identify which contextual factors most prominently influence the selection of one construction over the other. The analysis revealed that pragmatic and conceptual variables, in particular *discursive salience* (i.e., the topicality and discursive accessibility of participants) and *conceptual perspectivisation* (i.e., differences in the construal of the transfer event), were the key drivers of the alternation between the two passive variants. Compared to Theme passives, Recipient passives more readily emphasise the affectedness of a highly topical recipient and tend to frame the transfer event in terms of its end result rather than its process. As for language-external factors, it emerged that register (i.e., formal vs. informal) did not display any significant influence on the alternation. However, text genre did, with more stylistically constrained genres (i.e., journalistic or administrative texts) slightly disavouring the occurrence of Recipient passives. Sociolinguistic variables were explored in our last case study, based on another dataset (Chapter 9) and will be discussed next (10.3).

Overall, Recipient passives appear to be primarily driven by the pragmatic salience of the recipient participant – pragmatic factors stood out as the strongest predictors in our analysis – and to be consistently associated with a less dynamic reading of a transfer event, emphasising its effective result – the variable coded for conceptual construal emerged as a secondary predictor. These findings highlight, on the one hand, that Recipient passives essentially function as Topic-constructions. They appear to be more dependent on discourse structure and sequencing than Theme passives, with the recipient participant more likely promoted to subject position when it closely aligns with the discourse topic. On the other hand, the statistical importance of the construal variable underscores the role of conceptualisation in shaping grammatical structure and variation – an insight of theoretical significance for Cognitive Grammar. Our findings therefore suggest avenues for further research, encouraging deeper discussion on how construal may operate as a driving force behind linguistic variation and change, in support of the claim that, despite its elusive nature, conceptualisation is not “beyond the scope of scientific inquiry” (Langacker 2008: 4).

Additionally, our results also bear important implications for the study of language contact: while contact-induced change is often examined from a structural perspective, the relevance of

construal in the analysis underscores the need to consider the interaction of worldviews and categorisation systems in contact (Zenner et al. 2019: 6), highlighting conceptual factors as fundamental drivers of linguistic change in contact settings (Chapter 3). Moreover, by showing that Recipient passives have developed in complementary distribution with Theme passives, with each construction associated with distinct linguistic and discourse-related factors, we challenged the often-projected scenario of replacement and highlighted instead a process of functional differentiation within the linguistic system. These findings echo Palacios' research (2021), who frequently observed the maintenance of older forms alongside innovative structures, i.e., that linguistic forms or subsystems often coexist within speakers' repertoires, as in the case of pronominal systems in Mexican Spanish – or in the present Recipient/Theme passive alternation. Both standard forms and local solutions thus remain equally available, viable options, and the choice between them is influenced by a range of factors, including internal linguistic elements and external social considerations such as education level, linguistic awareness, prestige, attitudes and evaluations of local forms (Palacios 2021: 42).

The constructional alternation between Recipient and Theme passives, as analysed in this thesis, was nevertheless partly a methodological choice that we established for the present investigation, and should by no means be considered as a thoroughly self-contained phenomenon. On the contrary, Recipient passives interact with other neighbouring constructions, underscoring the role of Portuguese's own linguistic system in shaping their development through analogical connections with similar, related or partially overlapping constructional patterns within the network of Portuguese. For instance, passive constructions with a recipient-like subject, such as in *somos convidados a* 'we are invited to' or *somos chamados a* 'we are called to', provide templates readily available for analogical extension. In addition, the conventional and widespread use of the verb *autorizar* 'authorise' and *obrigar* 'oblige' in passive constructions with a recipient-like subject allows similar patterns to be extrapolated to closely related verbs such as *permitir* 'permit' and *ordenar* 'demand'. These analogy-based patterns support the notion that the constructionalisation of Recipient passives has been aided by horizontal connections with other Portuguese constructions, rather than through a derivational process. This view, in turn, aligns with a network-based model rather than a rule-based derivational framework.

The systemic potential for change within Portuguese itself thus appears to play a crucial role in the constructionalisation process, suggesting that Recipient passives did not arise solely from external contact influences, but also reflect internal analogical tendencies inherent to Portuguese grammar. This supports the idea that their development was not exclusively contact-

induced but also guided by language *drift*, highlighting the need to move beyond a rigid dichotomy between drift and contact, as will be discussed below. Another avenue for future research could involve investigating the apparent greater syntactic flexibility of Portuguese passive constructions compared to other Romance languages such as French and Spanish, to determine whether this structural adaptability could have facilitated the development of Recipient passives in MP.

10.3. Interaction with Bantu languages

From the outset, this thesis adopted the stance of describing the innovative construction on its own terms, highlighting its internal development and systematicity in MP independently of contact languages. Building on Cognitive Grammar, which prioritises the conceptual and semantic contributions of grammatical structures, we argued that the new construction can – and should – be accounted for as an independent grammatical phenomenon. The analyses performed in Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrated that Recipient passives are fully embedded into the grammar network of MP. Findings from an acceptability judgment task conducted in Chapter 9 further support this claim, by revealing that Recipient passives are widely accepted even among monolingual MP speakers. This suggests that they are not merely a byproduct of bilingualism or contact-induced interference from Bantu languages but have instead become an autonomous, self-contained feature of MP, unattached to any particular social group or speaker profile (especially bilinguals or Bantu L1 speakers).

These findings align with Palacios' research, which shows that deep and stable contact-induced changes can even be spotted among monolingual speakers. As such changes become intergenerationally transmitted, speakers eventually lose awareness of their contact-induced origin. Over time, these variations acquire their own schematic meaning, become routinised at the individual level and conventionalised socially, and ultimately integrate into the local variety, which can no longer be regarded as a transitional stage of imperfect acquisition (Palacios 2011: 21; 2021: 42). This echoes our third research hypothesis:

RH3: *Recipient passives were initially introduced into the grammar of MP through contact with the Bantu languages of Mozambique, subsequently underwent internal reinforcement through analogical processes, and eventually stabilised as a nativised construction of MP.*

Yet despite Recipient passives' internal consolidation within MP for which we provided evidence, the historical development of Portuguese in Mozambique cannot be entirely disentangled from sustained contact with Bantu languages. With around 80% of the Mozambican population speaking a Bantu language as their mother tongue (Chimbutane et al. 2023; Firmino 2024: 810), achieving a comprehensive understanding of Recipient passives – without undermining its constructional autonomy – requires engaging with language contact. This essentially means acknowledging the Bantu *origin* of the Recipient passive constructional schema. As shown in Chapter 9, several indigenous languages, including Changana, Xitshwa, Chuwabo, Makhuwa and Swahili, typically promote the indirect object to subject position in passive constructions – being even the preferred syntactic strategy for most of them.

If Recipient passives in MP were solely the result of contact with Bantu languages, speakers with a dominant Bantu language would be expected to show a stronger preference for their use. However, the results of the acceptability judgment task challenge this assumption. No significant differences in acceptability ratings were found among the various groups tested, regardless of region, mother tongue or education level. Instead, Recipient passives were attested and accepted across diverse Mozambican speakers' profiles, including among monolingual speakers of Portuguese. This widespread acceptance reinforces the argument that Recipient passives are not merely a direct borrowing but a fully integrated grammatical feature that followed an endogenous development in MP, mirroring its advanced stage of nativisation. Although language contact with southern Bantu languages – many of which exhibit similar passive structures – likely played a foundational role in their emergence, Recipient passives appear to have acquired their own schematic constructional meaning in MP. As a result, their continued use no longer seems to be directly dependent on Bantu influence (see the discussion on schematicity in section 10.1).

As argued throughout this thesis, acknowledging the role of language contact as an important trigger for change in the evolution of Portuguese in Mozambique does not mean equating contact with linguistic contagion. That is, contact-induced change cannot be reduced to a matter of replication or direct transfer of linguistic structures from one language to another. Rather, it unfolds through processes of convergence, accommodation and adaptation within the receiving linguistic system. Indeed, establishing direct structural parallels between Recipient passives in MP and in Bantu languages proves challenging. For example, while Recipient passives were shown to be the dominant strategy in Bantu languages, they remain less frequent than Theme passives in MP (as stated in Chapter 8). In addition, their use in MP was shown to be dependent on the presence of a highly affected and discursively salient recipient. Finally, we

demonstrated how their development closely aligned with existing systemic tendencies within Portuguese, as passive constructions involving recipient-like participants are attested in EP with verbs like *convidar* ‘invite’, *chamar* ‘call’, *autorizar* ‘authorise’ and *obrigar* ‘oblige’, among others. MP, in turn, seems to have extended this existing constructional schema to other Portuguese three-place verbs, e.g., *perguntar* ‘ask’, *permitir* ‘allow’, or *ensinar* ‘teach’.

The development of Recipient passives therefore perfectly illustrates the interplay between external contact-induced influences and internal systemic potential, as highlighted by Cognitive Sociolinguistics. This, in turn, dissolves any dichotomy between contact-driven change and internal linguistic evolution, or drift (Lemos de Souza 2020). Instead, contact maps onto pre-existing structural possibilities detected within the receiving language, acting as an “accelerator” of linguistic innovation rather than its sole determinant (Palacios 2011: 26). While contact often motivates change, it rarely dictates it. Language changes are ultimately shaped by the speakers, whose creativity “disrupts the predictions, constraints and hierarchies proposed by linguists.” (Palacios 2011: 22).

Language contact is therefore not just a meeting of linguistic systems but a convergence of speakers’ cognitions. What comes into contact are not abstract languages but individuals who bring their cultural worldviews and conceptual frameworks into social interaction. This approach, central to Cognitive (Contact) Linguistics (Chapter 3), shifts the focus beyond transfer of linguistic features to examine how speakers negotiate linguistic conceptualisations in bilingual and multilingual settings (Zenner et al. 2019: 6). This entails a sweeping shift in perspective in which, at its most radical, linguistic change emerges as an “epiphenomenon in relation to changes in the organising principles of categorisation” (Lemos de Souza 2020: 17). While we do not fully endorse such an extreme view, it nonetheless invites reflection on the deeper cognitive realignments and new cognitive relationships that are established between experience and category formation. In this light, language contact involves more than the transfer of lexical or grammatical elements across languages; it also shapes abstract ways of thinking and categorising reality.

The findings of this dissertation therefore pave the way for further research into the broader conceptual shifts underlying the emergence of Recipient passives in MP, particularly the hypothesis, proposed in Chapter 9, of a reorganisation of the conceptual category traditionally labelled as ‘dative’. Given the structural differences between passive formation in Portuguese (an analytical construction built with an auxiliary verb) and in Bantu languages (a synthetic form created through the addition of a passive affix), it is plausible that what has been borrowed is not a structural pattern but rather a conceptual one. Specifically, Bantu languages tend to treat

the indirect object (dative) participant as a core argument rather than an oblique, i.e., as a central participant that can be assigned primary focus (Bresnan & Moshi 1990; Cumbane 2008). Since Bantu languages do not seem to operate with a dative category comparable to that of Portuguese, it would be worth investigating whether conceptual mappings in contact have led to conceptual borrowing, ultimately driving a gradual restructuring of argument structure patterns in MP. In fact, the Recipient passive construction is not the only MP innovation involving the dative participant: the occurrence of Double Object constructions and the use of the dative clitic in accusative contexts are cases in point (Soares da Silva & Mevis 2024: 22-23).⁷⁵

Future research could thus set off to explore the relationship between structural and conceptual borrowing in contact-induced constructionalisation processes – particularly how the transfer of morphosyntactic properties is “licensed by the compatibility between conceptualisations distributed across the cognitions in contact” (Lemos de Souza 2020: 16). Investigating conceptual mappings in contact could reveal latent patterns of conceptualisation shared within a speech community and reflected in linguistic structures. Key questions for further inquiry include: (i) To what extent do conceptual categories in contact reshape argument structure in receiving languages? and (ii) How do local cultural models influence the construal of concepts and reality in varieties of the same language? (e.g., Zenner et al. 2019: 13). Last but not least, deeper insights into Bantu linguistics would contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how these processes unfold in MP specifically.

Throughout this thesis, we have sought to emphasise the creativity of the speakers – often bilinguals – who leverage existing structures within the receiving language to accommodate new cognitive distinctions, conceptual categories and communicative needs (Palacios 2007: 276). When speakers from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds engage with Portuguese, inevitable differences in conceptualisation and categorisation influence the development of local varieties. Contact thus shapes the trajectory of linguistic drift, allowing speakers to integrate conceptual distinctions from their native linguistic framework in ways that align with – but cannot be predicted from – the structural and conceptual affordances of the receiving language. Such an approach to language contact requires a shift in perspective, from viewing contact as a mere interaction between linguistic products to understanding it as a dynamic process of cognitive adaptation and restructuring (Zenner et al. 2019). Additionally,

⁷⁵ Such a line of research would naturally also require the development and/or adoption of more suitable labels, given the limitations of traditional Latin terms such as “dative” or “accusative”.

bilingualism in highly multilingual postcolonial contexts needs to be reevaluated, beyond the traditional monolingual norm and the incomplete acquisition paradigm (Palacios 2021).

10.4. Colonial heritage

The diffusion of the Portuguese language overseas has led to its appropriation by communities of speakers with diverse sociocultural backgrounds. This has resulted in Portuguese coexisting with languages from different typological families, leading to cross-fertilisation between the languages and cultures in contact. In Mozambique, this process has fostered the emergence of a distinct variety of Portuguese (MP) that reflects both external influences and local adaptations, a process referred to as *nativisation*, the third stage in Schneider's (2003) Dynamic Model. In his five-stage developmental model, Schneider highlights that the natural course of evolution for postcolonial varieties is a progression towards increasing endonormativity, i.e., a tendency to increasingly rely on local linguistic norms which have emerged through the implantation of the ex-colonial language into a new sociolinguistic environment. His model thus outlines a continuum from external reliance (exonormativity) to linguistic independence in terms of language norms and usage (Schneider 2003: 274). The emergence and development of the Recipient passive construction, as explored in this dissertation, is a prime example of this process.

Despite this general trajectory, however, several elements must be considered when assessing MP's degree of autonomy. A question therefore arises: after political independence in 1975, to what extent has MP truly achieved linguistic independence? While the development of indigenised features like the Recipient passive point to an observable movement towards an endonormative orientation, a series of external factors can obstruct or slow down the advancement of MP towards the model's fourth stage of *endonormative stabilisation*. The persistence of external norms and a certain tendency to cling to them continue to exert influence, delaying full linguistic emancipation. In addition, emerging postcolonial varieties often face both social and academic prejudice, fostering negative attitudes among speakers as well as linguistic insecurity. Finally, the lack of adequate public language policies can hinder the natural tendency of any speech community to develop its own endonormative standard. An unresolved tension thus persists between the European reference norm and the local variety in development. Despite its cultural and geographical distance, EP remains ideologically present, fuelling continued normative pressure as well as linguistic insecurity.

Moreover, these considerations about the evolution of MP cannot be examined in isolation from the current situation of the Bantu languages of Mozambique (Chapter 2). This raises another fundamental question: can MP's endonormative stabilisation be considered separately or independently of the local languages, and what should be the role of the latter within Mozambican society? This question, in turn, takes us back to the past: although 1975 marked the end of historical colonialism, *coloniality* as a mindset persists, reflected in social structures and shaping linguistic choices. Mozambique continues to experience a situation of diglossia reminiscent of colonial times, where Portuguese, as the former colonial language, maintains higher prestige over Bantu languages. The role of Portuguese in Mozambique is inseparable from its history of nation-building, with indigenous languages often perceived as obstacles to modernity and national identity. The lingering impact of this colonial ideology remains evident in contemporary language attitudes and policies.

The dual role of Portuguese – both as a symbol of privilege/exclusion *and* of national unity – thus continues to shape its sociolinguistic legacy in present-day Mozambique (Chapter 2). As Ponso (2012) argues, echoing Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's renowned 1987 essay, the struggle for linguistic emancipation is not only institutional but also psychological, unfolding in the minds of formerly colonised populations. This tension is even reproduced within households, where families have become the new theatre of diglossic negotiations, deciding whether to preserve indigenous languages or shift towards Portuguese. As Chimbutane and Gonçalves (2023) observe, these choices dramatically influence language transmission across generations. Language policies further reinforce this imbalance, as Bantu languages do not benefit from any state support, apart from limited bilingual education programs (Macaringue 2017; Patel 2022). Language attitudes also play a decisive role in shaping language dynamics. Indeed, the perceived social value of a language is not fixed but continuously renegotiated in every communicative act (Ponso 2012: 137; Palacios 2021: 43). All this brings us to a last critical reflection: is the gradual displacement of indigenous languages by MP a genuinely endonormative and liberating process, or does it represent a perpetuation of colonial linguistic hierarchies under a different guise?

Currently, MP appears to occupy an in-between position: on the one hand, it exhibits undeniable signs of nativisation, with localised linguistic innovations reflecting the adaptation of Portuguese to its new sociocultural context. The constructional autonomy of features such as the Recipient passive attests to this process, pointing to a coherent and enduring linguistic restructuring. Additionally, the first signs of endonormative stabilisation are beginning to emerge, with these changes gradually gaining recognition and social value (Firmino 2021). On

the other hand, the enduring normative pressure and prestige of EP continue to slow down the process of linguistic emancipation, affecting both MP and the status of Bantu languages. While Mozambique achieved political sovereignty in 1975, true linguistic independence remains an ongoing challenge.

Despite these tensions, Portuguese in Mozambique can no longer be considered a ‘foreign’ language. It has become a key component of the country’s sociolinguistic reality, reinforcing Mozambique’s claim to the status of legitimate norm-setting centre in the management of Portuguese norms (Muhr 2016; Soares da Silva 2024). Nonetheless, significant efforts are still required to amplify the voices of non-dominant Portuguese varieties in order to achieve a truly multilateral management of Portuguese on a global scale. This effort, however, should not come at the expense of indigenous languages, but rather embrace a framework of linguistic inclusion and diversity.

10.5. Main contributions and future directions

This final section briefly summarises the main descriptive, theoretical and methodological contributions of the present dissertation. First, it presents an original contribution to the description of Mozambican Portuguese (MP), as part of the broader descriptive endeavour of documenting the ongoing nativisation process of African varieties of Portuguese. Theoretically, it aims to advance knowledge on constructional variation and change, especially in contact settings. It stands as innovative with respect to previous constructional research by taking passive structures as the starting point of analysis. It provides a contribution along the lines of Cognitive Grammar to the considerable body of literature about both passive and ditransitive constructions, as well as the versatile dative participant, especially regarding their conceptual basis. Moreover, our study emphasises the role of discourse structuring as well as of construal (i.e., the perspective from which a given event is conceptualised) as key factors in constructional variation and change. Finally, by highlighting the intricate interactions between constructions within the constructional network and the role of horizontal relations, it provides evidence for the complexity and multidimensionality of constructional changes and reinforces the view of language as a *complex dynamic system*. Methodologically, the dissertation’s originality lies in its integrative, usage-based approach, bringing together different empirical

methodological designs to achieve a fuller understanding of the grammatical phenomenon under investigation.

As regards its main limitations, this thesis would have unquestionably benefitted from sharper insights into Bantu languages. A deeper engagement with Bantu linguistics would have strengthened the explanatory hypotheses, but this was constrained by our own limited expertise in the field. In addition, we were confronted with limited amounts of spontaneous spoken data from Mozambican speakers, although the insights gained during our ten-week fieldwork period proved invaluable in that respect. Finally, regarding the experimental design, shifting from perception-based to production-oriented analyses would yield complementary perspectives into the actual usage of these passive constructions in MP. Parallel to these limitations, some research questions naturally remained open, while other arose during the investigation, pointing to several promising directions for future research. In addition to the constitution of a large oral corpus – and to collecting more data in general –, further research could explore the debatable hypothesis of typological shift, suggested by the way MP assigns focal prominence to core participants, which entails a restructuring of the “dative” category. Additionally, a more in-depth examination of processes of structural *and* conceptual borrowing from Bantu into Portuguese appears essential to disentangle the effects of language contact from MP’s internal grammatical developments, such as constructionalisation. A cross-linguistic comparison of Recipient passives across different languages, as well as an exploration of their relationships with other types of passives, could further refine our understanding of the specificities of passive constructions. Finally, another interesting avenue for investigation involves exploring the overt attitudes of Mozambican speakers towards these passives, their variety of Portuguese, as well as indigenous languages. The study of language attitudes has recently gained prominence as a full-fledged object of linguistic inquiry, particularly within Cognitive Sociolinguistics, which aims to investigate the “meaning of variation” as reflected in the speakers’ beliefs (e.g., Kristiansen et al. 2022).

By investigating emerging patterns of linguistic use in postcolonial varieties, this dissertation sheds light on the real usage of Portuguese across diverse geographical and social contexts, as well as on the ongoing restructuring of national varieties. In doing so, it contributes to advancing research on constructional variation and change in the context of pluricentric languages, especially in postcolonial contact settings. Recipient passives in MP proved an illustrative case study for examining the complex interplay of social and linguistic influences. The new syntactic possibility has seamlessly integrated into the constructional network of Portuguese, shaped by conceptualisations typical of Bantu languages, reinforced by universal

conceptual motivations and domain-general cognitive processes, and further supported by analogical processes within Portuguese itself. The multicausal emergence and multidimensional development of the Recipient passive construction, as explored throughout this dissertation, exemplify the gradual and thrilling process through which emerging varieties of pluricentric languages start living a life of their own.

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DECLARAÇÃO DE CONSENTIMENTO INFORMADO

Eu, _____, natural de _____

a pedido do projeto de tese doutoral da Alice Mevis desenvolvido no Centro de Estudos Filosóficos e Humanísticos (CEFH) da Universidade Católica Portuguesa, declaro autorizar, sem contrapartidas, sob a preservação total do meu anonimato, a recolha e o tratamento de dados pessoais exclusivamente para fins científicos.

Local: _____

Data: _____ de _____ de 2024

Assinatura:

A completar pelo pesquisador:

Nº de participante:

Código:

Questionário / Entrevista



DADOS PESSOAIS DO/DA PARTICIPANTE

Nome:

Idade: Sexo: Mulher / Homem

Lugar de nascimento:

Lugar de residência atual:

Nível de estudos realizados (ou em curso):

Língua(s) materna(s) (L1):

Língua(s) em que está fluente (L2):

Língua(s) falada(s) em casa/com os pais:

Língua(s) falada(s) com os amigos:

O português é a minha primeira / segunda língua.

Ao responder voluntariamente a este questionário, declara que concorda com a recolha e o tratamento das suas informações apenas para efeitos de investigação científica, sendo garantidos o anonimato e a confidencialidade.

Local: _____

Data: _____ de _____ de 2024

Assinatura:

A completar pelo pesquisador:

Nº de participante:

Código:

Questionário / Entrevista



INQUÉRITO: TESTE DE JUÍZO DE ACEITABILIDADE

Caro/a informante, para fins de investigação em Linguística Descritiva, vimos solicitar a sua colaboração, respondendo às perguntas deste inquérito.

Leia atentamente as frases (1) a (45) a seguir. Assinale na frente de cada frase o grau de aceitabilidade, escolhendo entre a opção “totalmente natural” ou “nada natural”. Note que não existe resposta correta ou errada. Por isso, responda de forma fluída sem passar muito tempo pensando na sua resposta.

	Totalmente natural	Nada natural
1. Vou construir um galinheiro no quintal da casa para a minha família.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Essas verdades precisam que sejam ditas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Fui emprestado uma caneta para poder tomar notas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Os professores cobram os alunos dinheiro de fichas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. O seu pedido de visto foi sido recusado pela embaixada.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Muitos turistas já foram ditos que Moçambique é maningue nice.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. O patrão pediu para que retornássemos ao trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Ao meu cunhado roubaram a bicicleta.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Não se pode recusar ninguém o acesso à saúde e à educação.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Fomos cozinhados uma matapa feita segundo a receita tradicional do país.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Podes emprestar o teu irmão a tua camisola do Ronaldo?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Façam os exercícios em casa antes de pedirem o professor para dar mais assistência.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. A actriz foi perguntada se voltará a actuar em breve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Diz o teu pai que já estou indo ter com ele.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Eles entregaram o escritor um prémio pelo conjunto da sua obra.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Quando fui criança, dava muito trabalho aos meus pais.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Depois de longas horas de espera, os estudantes foram permitidos entrar na sala.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Emprestaram-me algum dinheiro porque tinha esquecido a carteira em casa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. A minha tia foi construída uma casa bem bonita no centro da aldeia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Esta ONG ofereceu camponeses alguns terrenos para criar novas machambas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



INQUÉRITO: TESTE DE JUÍZO DE ACEITABILIDADE – GRUPO CONTROLE (PORTUGAL)

Caro/a informante, para fins de investigação em Linguística Descritiva, vimos solicitar a sua colaboração, respondendo às perguntas deste inquérito.

Leia atentamente as frases (1) a (45), apresentadas a seguir. Assinale à frente de cada frase o seu grau de aceitabilidade, escolhendo entre as opções “totalmente natural” e “nada natural”. Responda de forma relativamente imediata, sem passar muito tempo a refletir na sua resposta.

	Totalmente natural	Nada natural
1. Vou construir um galinheiro no quintal da casa para a minha família.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. Essas verdades precisam que sejam ditas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. Fui emprestado uma caneta para poder tomar notas.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. Os professores cobram os alunos dinheiro para fotocópias.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. O seu pedido de visto foi sido recusado pela embaixada.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Muitos turistas já foram ditos que essas praias são as mais bonitas do país.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. O patrão pediu para que voltássemos ao trabalho.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Ao meu cunhado roubaram a bicicleta.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. Não se pode recusar ninguém o acesso à saúde e à educação.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Fomos cozinhados um bacalhau feito à moda tradicional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. Podes emprestar o teu irmão a tua camisola do Ronaldo?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. Façam os exercícios em casa antes de pedirem o professor para dar mais assistência.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. A atriz foi perguntada se voltará a atuar em breve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Diz o teu pai que já vou ter com ele.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Eles entregaram o escritor um prémio pelo conjunto da sua obra.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Quando fui criança, dava muito trabalho aos meus pais.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Depois de longas horas de espera, os estudantes foram permitidos entrar na sala.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. Emprestaram-me algum dinheiro porque tinha esquecido a carteira em casa.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. A minha tia foi construída uma casa muito bonita no centro da aldeia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Esta ONG ofereceu agricultores alguns terrenos para cultivarem.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix V. Recipient passives collected during fieldwork

Spoken

- (1) *Já foi arrancado os seus bens?* (vendedores de rua – reportagem, 1/03/24)
[lit.] ‘Have you already been ripped out your goods?’
- (2) *Também estou a ser tirado o meu mérito.* (Maputo, 10/03/24)
[lit.] ‘I am being taken away my own merit.’
- (3) *Se ele não for permitido concorrer.* (Chokwe, 13/03/24)
‘If he is not allowed to run for office.’
- (4) *Eles foram usurpados os seus bens.* (edil de uma cidade – em entrevista, 12/03/24)
‘They were usurped their goods.’
- (5) *Uma estudante tinha sido oferecida uma bolsa de estudo para estudar nos EUA.* (UEM, 3/04/24)
‘A student had been offered a scholarship to study in the United States.’
- (6) *A Célia disse que não foi dada [a flor].* (Quelimane, 09/04/24)
‘Célia said that she had not been given [the flower].’
- (7) *Tem etapas que [elas] tem a oportunidade de serem entregues os celulares para saudarem a família.* (Quelimane, 11/04/24)
‘There are stages in which they have the opportunity to be given their phones to talk to their family.’
- (8) *Fui dado esse nome não sei bem porque.* (Mocuba, 15/04/24)
‘I don’t know exactly why I was given that name.’
- (9) *Quando você é dada o pau de mussiro.* (Ilha de Moçambique, 19/04/24)
‘When you are given the mussiro stick.’
- (10) *Por isso [o edifício] foi dado esse nome.* (Ilha de Moçambique, 19/04/24)
‘Therefore, the building was given that name.’
- (11) *As pessoas que produziam [estes móveis] eram cortadas a mão.* (Ilha de Moçambique, 19/04/24)
[lit.] ‘The people who produced these pieces of furniture were cut their hand.’
- (12) *O que nos temos feito nas apresentações, quando somos dados a palavra.* (UEM, 06/05/24)
This is what we’ve been doing in our presentations, when we are given the word.’

- (13) *Os testes que os alunos **são submetidos**.* (UEM 06/05/24)
 ‘The tests that the students are being submitted to.’
- (14) *Desculpa se estão a **ser invadidos** a vista pela cor.* (speaking about the PPT’s bright colours, UEM, 06/05/24)
 [lit.] ‘Sorry if you are being invaded the sight by the colour.’
- (15) *Dizem que as crianças não **eram permitidas** circular no bairro.* (reportagem – 08/05/24)
 ‘They said that the children were not allowed to circulate in the neighbourhood.’

Written

- (16) *Onde está seu fio, o colar que **foste dada**?* (Mia Couto – Terra Sonâmbula, p.117)
 ‘Where is the necklace you were given?’
- (17) *Faz conta **tinhas sido dado** parto assim mesmo.* (Mia Couto – Terra Sonâmbula, p.56)
 ‘As if you had been given birth just like that.’
- (18) *Acredito que não será má vontade da equipa que **foi indicada** fazer esse estudo, que faz com que não haja respostas.* (Maputo, 20/02/24)
 ‘I believe the absence of answers is not due to the lack of good will from the team that was indicated to do this study.’
- (19) *A empresa **foi multada** a pagar 132 mil meticais.* (jornal do 5/03/24)
 [lit.] ‘The company was fined to pay 132 thousand meticals.’
- (20) *A nossa reportagem viu um camião que **tinha sido mandado** voltar porque a fábrica está suspensa.* (jornal do 5/03/24)
 ‘Our reporting team saw a truck that had been ordered to return because the factory was suspended.’
- (21) *A região de Nhangoma começou a **ser explorada** o ouro faz dois anos por um grupo de nigerianos.* (jornal, 04/04/24)
 [lit.] ‘The region of Nhangoma began being explored its gold two years ago by a Nigerian group.’
- (22) *Um dia **foi confiado** para ir buscar accionistas da empresa no aeroporto daquela cidade.* (from a book)
 [lit.] ‘One day, he was trusted to go and fetch shareholders of the company at the airport of that city.’
- (23) *Meu nome é Albertina, de 56 anos, em 2019 **fui diagnosticada** Câncer.* (10/04/24)

‘My name is Albertina, 56 years old, in 2019 I was diagnosed a cancer.’

(24) *Estou off-line faz quase 2 semanas, **fui roubado** celular em Maputo.* (personal correspondence, 14/05/24)

‘I have been offline for almost 2 weeks, I was robbed my phone in Maputo.’

(25) *Pessoas a **serem colocadas** papelão e retalhos de caixas no braço por falta de gesso no Hospital Geral de Nampula.* (Facebook, 15/07/24)

‘People have their arms being put in cardboard and shreds of old boxes for lack of gypsum in the public hospital of Nampula.’