

## MESMO AND THE NP IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

SUSAN KLEIN  
(USP)

**RESUMO** Nesse estudo analisamos o emprego do elemento *mesmo* junto ao NP nos casos em que *mesmo* se encontra numa posição anterior ao núcleo nominal. Verificamos a relação entre a interpretação semântica do sintagma nominal e sua estrutura sintática, e sugerimos uma explicação através de uma categoria funcional de foco diretamente vinculada ao NP.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we aim to investigate the nature of a specific element of Brazilian Portuguese (hereafter BP): *mesmo*. A thorough study of *mesmo*'s uses would take us far beyond the scope of this paper. We will therefore limit the present discussion to a partial analysis of the distribution of *mesmo*: its usage in connection with an NP when it appears prior to the N°. We will be especially interested in the orrelation between the structural position of *mesmo* and possible interpretations of the NPs in question.

### 1. MESMO

#### 1.1 STRUCTURAL POSITION

As *mesmo* can take part in such a number of different structures, we will make an initial distinction between its use within the NP, as in [<sub>NP</sub>*a mesma professora*] *deu aula para nós dois* ('the same teacher taught both of us') and its use external to the NP, as in the sentence [<sub>NP</sub>*João*] *morreu mesmo* ('João really died'). Our present study aims to explain a portion of the NP occurrences only, though we do believe that further explanatory union, based on the remaining data, is possible.

Internally to the NP, *mesmo* may occur in a position likely comparable to that of pre-posed adjectives in BP, between the determiner and N°, as in *o mesmo médico* ('the same doctor'). In this case, there is gender and number agreement morphology on *mesmo*: *os mesmos filmes* ('the same movies'), *a mesma ocasião* ('the same occasion'), *as mesmas pessoas* ('the same people'). *Mesmo* may also appear at the left margin of the NP, as in *mesmo o João / mesmo a Maria* ('even João / even Maria'). Here, *mesmo*

does not exhibit agreement morphology. Finally, *mesmo* may occur at the right margin of the NP, as in *João mesmo* ('João himself') or *ele mesmo* ('(he)himself'). As in the case of pre-posed internal *mesmo*, gender and number agreement morphology is present: *eles mesmos* ('(they-m) themselves'), *ela mesma* ('(she) herself'), *elas mesmas* ('(they-f) themselves').<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2 INTERPRETATIONS OF *MESMO* IN EACH POSITION

### 1.2.1 *MESMO* INTERNAL TO THE NP AND ANTERIOR TO N°

When located inside the NP and anterior to the head N, a position which we will refer to as *anterior internal*, *mesmo* has a noticeable effect on the referential independence of that N. Let us take the two examples below (with feminine gender nouns in order to show the agreement which occurs between *mesmo* and N°) as a starting point:

- (1) a. Eu vi a mulher no parque.  
'I saw the woman in the park'
- (1) b. Eu vi a mesma mulher no parque.  
'I saw the same woman in the park'

In (1)a, there are two possible meanings. Either there is a woman in the park, and I saw that woman (small clause: [*a mulher no parque*]), or there is a woman under discussion, and I saw her in the park (PP *no parque* adjoined to the verb). This second reading of (1)a is similar to the interpretation of (1)b, in which the identity of *mulher* is dependent on the identity of another *mulher* whose occurrence preceded the current one in discourse. The difference is that in (1)b, it is not enough to know who the woman is; her identity must be explicitly checked against another's in discourse.

We might say that the use of *mesmo* creates referential dependence in the discourse by linking the use of a R-expression, normally understood as referentially free (as per Chomsky (1981)), to previous discourse material. This can be attested to by another set of examples, in which the use of *mesmo* is practically obligatory, for pragmatic reasons, if the sentence is to be considered felicitous:

- (2) a. ?Eu me casei com o homem duas vezes.  
'I married the man twice'
- (2) b. Eu me casei com o mesmo homem duas vezes.  
'I married the same man twice'

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<sup>1</sup> Although a topic of great interest and central to the larger study we have undertaken, right-adjoined *mesmo* will not be addressed again in this paper.

In principle, there should be nothing wrong with sentence (2)a: to marry a man twice is permitted by law and does occur, albeit rarely. Moreover, sentences such as (3) are perfect:

- (3) Eu chutei o assaltante duas vezes.  
'I kicked the mugger twice'

In fact, a sentence such as (3) may sound odd if we include *mesmo*, as in (4):

- (4) Eu chutei o mesmo assaltante duas vezes.  
'I kicked the same mugger twice'

The unnaturalness of (4) may be related to the type of verb involved: the verb *casar-se* "to marry" is not iterative in the context of a single event, in contrast with a verb like *chutar* "to kick", which may well be iterated in the same context (if the event is considered as being a single encounter between mugger and victim.) Whatever the reason, in (4), because such an action is not commonplace, it needs to receive special marking in the discourse, to the effect of "although you may not consider it likely to marry a man twice, this is in fact what I have done". In fact, such an example suggests that the speaker imagines the listener's "pragmatic" presuppositions and invokes *mesmo* to avoid a breakdown in communications.<sup>2</sup> The reason why (4) sounds odd is that we cannot imagine the same presupposition on behalf of the speaker, that is, that he would need to mark the sentence as such: "although you may consider it unlikely to kick a single mugger twice, that is what I have done." In fact, in the case of sentence (4), where *mesmo* is used, the tendency is to imagine two separate attacks (events) perpetrated by the same bandit, in which, each time, the victim reacted by kicking him once.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the use of *mesmo* NP-internally and anterior to the head noun implies an attempt by the speaker to link the reference of the NP to the discourse at hand. Until now, we have not addressed the question as to which Ns can enter into this configuration with *mesmo*. We observe that pronouns cannot host *mesmo* in this position:

- (5) \*Eu me casei com o mesmo ele duas vezes  
'I married the same him twice'

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<sup>2</sup> We seem to have an embedding of presuppositions here: the speaker is presupposing the listener's presuppositions (which we have termed "pragmatic" to differentiate from the traditional use of the term in semantics) and employing *mesmo* to avoid foreseeable confusion.

<sup>3</sup> There is another interpretation of sentence (4): "of the various muggers who attacked me, I kicked the same one twice". This interpretation is irrelevant for the immediate question at hand. For more on the semantics of elements like *mesmo* in BP and *same* in English, see Carlson (1987).

Lest we consider this restriction due solely to the basic fact that pronouns cannot enter into the NP-configuration *\*det pronoun*, the following example suggests that there must be another reason (probably structural as well):

- (6) \*Eu me casei com [mesmo ele] duas vezes  
'I married even/really him twice'

Note that, in the case of *mesmo pronoun* internal to NP, as exemplified in (6), it will not due to test for its possibility in subject position, as in (7):

- (7) Mesmo ele casou duas vezes.  
'Even he got married twice'

Although this sentence initially appears to be a counter example to (6), it is implausible that *mesmo* is in the relevant position here: internal to the NP, in *(det) mesmo N*. It is more likely that *mesmo* in (7) is at a left periphery, either of the entire sentence or of the NP in subject position. We will take up this question again in section 1.2.2 below.

Proper nouns are also unlikely to enter the anterior internal configuration with *mesmo*, unless they are being used to denote types. This distinction is exemplified by the examples in (8):

- (8) a. Eu me casei com o mesmo João duas vezes.  
'I married the same João twice'
- (8) b. ??Eu me casei com o mesmo João Silva duas vezes.  
'I married the same João Silva twice'
- (8) c. ???Eu me casei com o mesmo João Pedro Oliveira da Silva duas vezes.  
'I married the same João Pedro Oliveira da Silva twice'

Sentence (8)a is not a way of stating with emphasis that the speaker married João himself twice. The only relevant interpretation for this sentence is that, of all the people named João that the speaker knows, she married the same one twice. In fact, the possibility of using the indefinite pronoun *one* to characterize the proper noun in question attests to its interpretation as *type*. A sentence such as (8)a ostensibly would be spoken to correct a presumed pragmatic presupposition of the listener that, the speaker having twice married a man named João, the two Joãos must be different men. The relevant interpretation, not expressible by the examples in (8), must be expressed by something like:

- (9) a. Eu me casei com o João, ele mesmo, duas vezes.  
'I married João himself twice'

- (9) b. Eu me casei com o próprio João duas vezes.  
'I married João himself twice'

Further support of this is the increased unacceptability of sentence (8)b in comparison to (8)a, and that of (8)b in regards to (8)c. The point here is that, as the identity of the João in question is made increasingly more specific, the plausibility of the group reading (the only interpretation possible here) is weakened and the sentence with *mesmo* decreases in acceptability.

Let us turn now to the relative ordering of *mesmo* and NP-quantifiers in the structure in question. When speaking about a prison break-out, for example, one can say:

- (10) Alguns desses mesmos homens se entregaram no dia seguinte.  
'Some of these same men turned themselves in the next day'

Example (10) shows that anterior internal *mesmo* must come under the scope of the quantifier *alguns* in the syntax; we will leave the question of its precise position open for now.

### 1.2.2 MESMO AT LEFT MARGIN OF NP

The next usage of *mesmo* that we would like to explore is when it appears at the leftmost margin of the NP, a position which we will refer to as *anterior external*, as in:

- (11) a. Mesmo uma criança / a minha filha de três anos de idade sabe que fumar faz mal.  
'Even a 3-year-old child / my 3-year-old daughter knows that smoking is bad for you'
- (11) b. Mesmo Princesa Diana sabia que corria perigo de vida.  
'Even Princess Diana knew that her life was in danger'
- (11) c. Mesmo eles se deram conta de que não valia mais a pena brigar.  
'Even they realized that it wasn't worth fighting anymore'

As we can see from the examples in (11), *mesmo* can appear at the leftmost margin of NP before definite or indefinite standard nouns ((11)a), proper nouns ((11)b), and pronouns ((11)c). In this sense, its use is less restricted than that of internal anterior *mesmo*, and this is indicative of greater structural distance between *mesmo* and N° in the examples at hand.

The lack of agreement between *mesmo* and the noun undergoing modification, as shown by (11)a and (11)b, is another indication of *mesmo*'s position in the structure as being less proximate to the N° than that of anterior internal, agreement-marked *mesmo*.

In order to pursue the contrast between anterior external *mesmo* and anterior internal *mesmo*, let us verify the co-occurrence of anterior external *mesmo* with NP-quantifiers, as we did for anterior internal *mesmo* in (10) above:

- (12) *Mesmo alguns dos idosos queriam ir para Disneyland.*  
'Even some of the elderly wanted to go to Disneyland'

The sentence in (12) exemplifies the linear (and, therefore, hierarchical, as per Kayne 1994) order that holds between leftmost *mesmo* and NP quantifiers. We can contrast this case with example (10) above, in which *mesmo* is also anterior to N<sup>o</sup> but internal to the NP, and undoubtedly under the scope of the quantifier (we repeat both sentences below):

- (10) *Alguns desses mesmos homens se entregaram no dia seguinte.*  
(12) *Mesmo alguns dos idosos queriam ir para Disneyland.*

This pair of examples permits us to begin to analyze the correspondence of structural position and interpretation. The interpretation of anterior external *mesmo* in (12), though related to that of anterior internal *mesmo* in (10), is not exactly the same. While anterior internal *mesmo* is used to indicate identity among individuals which might otherwise be understood as unrelated or unique, the use of *mesmo* at the left periphery (of the NP, as we will show below) has a different effect on the pragmatic presuppositions of the sentence. In the latter case, the interpretation is basically the following: "besides all the plausible members of the group that is denoted by my sentence, please admit one more, the least likely member and the one I am marking with *mesmo*." The speaker is not contesting the accuracy of the listener's supposed pragmatic presupposition, per se, but rather its extension. Considering once again the examples in (11), the interpretations are the following:

- (11) a'. Of all the people who know that smoking is bad for you, even someone as implausible as a three-year-old child / my three-year-old daughter knows it.  
(11) b'. Of all the people who knew that her life was in danger, even Princess Diana herself knew it.  
(11) c'. Of all the people who knew that it wasn't worth fighting anymore, even they knew it. (they= the fighters themselves, presumably).

Let us interpret sentence (12) in the same fashion:

- (12)'. Of all the people who wanted to go to Disneyland, even some of the elderly wanted to go.

It is clear from the interpretation that *mesmo* in (12) has scope over the quantifier and that, as such, it must be in a hierarchically superior structural position in relation to the quantifier in order to take scope. This is in contrast with sentence (10), in which the quantifier *alguns* scopes over *esses mesmos homens*. This difference will have to be explained by a structural proposal for *mesmo*.

We can extend the explanation just given for sentences (11) and (12) to account for why a sentence such as (13) is not possible without the presence of the negative marker *nem*:

- (13) \*(Nem) mesmo todas as vantagens do cargo não foram o suficiente para que o funcionário não se demitisse.  
 ‘Not even all the benefits of the position were enough for the employee not to quit’

The reason for the unacceptability here is the contradiction that ensues from the use of *mesmo*. As we may recall from the discussion above, the interpretation of *mesmo* as determined by examples (11) above is: “besides all the  $x$  you could imagine, include  $x^{+1}$ ”. Through the use of *mesmo*, we are increasing the presumed set. But in sentence (13), the interpretation of *mesmo* is not as just mentioned; rather, the sentence is understood as: “of all the  $x$  that you could never imagine, not even  $x^{-1}$  can be included”. *Mesmo* is used here to reduce the plausible set, and must be accompanied by the negative marker *nem*.<sup>4</sup> In both instances, we are dealing with a scale of plausibility and *mesmo*’s effect on the interpretation of this scale, but there seems to be a difference in the direction of the scale.<sup>5</sup> And in order to mark the inversion of this direction, the use of *nem* is obligatory (assuming that the non-negative interpretation, as in (11), is the unmarked case.)<sup>6</sup>

The examples that we have explored until now have all presented the NP *mesmo N* in subject position, which is argumental. It is important to note, however, that the same construction is possible in positions where their argument status is not as clear:

- (14) Todos os linguistas queriam conversar com o Chomsky, mesmo os funcionalistas.  
 ‘All the linguists wanted to talk with Chomsky, even the functionalists’

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<sup>4</sup> While *nem* is obligatory in such sentences, *mesmo* is not. We will not venture an explanation for this fact here.

<sup>5</sup> Carlos Franchi, personal communication.

<sup>6</sup> It is interesting to observe that, in English, a language without negative concord, the presence or absence of *not*, as in *not even*, is correlated with the presence or absence of verbal negation lower in the structure (where # indicates unacceptability with the intended interpretation):

- (i) Not even all the king’s men {could/\*couldn’t} put Humpty together again.
- (ii) Even all the king’s men {#could/couldn’t} put Humpty together again.

In principle, the constituent *mesmo os funcionalistas* appears to be in adjunct position. But it may be that verb ellipsis has occurred, and if so, the NP is still in argument position, as in (14)':<sup>7</sup>

- (14)' Todos os linguistas queriam conversar com o Chomsky, mesmo os funcionalistas [queriam conversar com o Chomsky]

The *mesmo* phrase itself can also be the complement of V° as in (15):<sup>8</sup>

- (15) O presidente está cortejando (até) mesmo os seus maiores inimigos.  
'The president is courting even his worst enemies'

Returning to sentences (14) and (15), they provide us with evidence of something we have been assuming until now, that the position of leftmost *mesmo* in the examples above is at the left periphery of the NP, and not at the left periphery of the sentence as a whole. It has also been shown that the interpretation of *mesmo* in this position is one of what can be called *inclusion*. That is, the usage of *mesmo* signals to the listener that he should *include* more individuals in the group in question than he might imagine, in other words, that he should increase the extension of the group to include the individuals marked by the speaker via the use of *mesmo*.<sup>9</sup>

This inclusion is a type of focus, which we may call inclusive focus, and we would expect that it be given a similar analysis to that of emphasis and contrastive focus. If we adopt an analysis of focus being checked in a functional category at or near the left perimeter of the sentence, then the appearance of *mesmo* at the left perimeter of the NP in a position above that of quantifiers and with focal interpretation must ultimately lead us to consider the possibility of such a category existing inside the NP as well.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> However, we must still explain the following sentence, which has an identical interpretation to that of (14)':

(14)'' Todos os linguistas, mesmo os funcionalistas, queriam conversar com o Chomsky.

<sup>8</sup> The presence of *até* is permitted in all of the sentences that we have considered in this section, though its co-occurrence with *mesmo* is less acceptable when modifying the NP in subject position of the sentence.

<sup>9</sup> Although, as we stated in the introduction, we are restricting the scope of this study to uses of *mesmo* related to the NP, we would like to register an observation about a parallel between the use of *mesmo* at the left periphery of NPs and of certain other XPs. Take the case of adverbs, as in:

(i) Mesmo {hoje/depois de tanto tempo}, ainda me lembro bem do que ela falou.

The interpretation of *mesmo* in such a sentence is one of inclusion: the speaker has remembered what the other person said for a long time, up to and including the day that sentence (i) was spoken. This is the same interpretation as that of the NPs in the construction with *mesmo* at the left periphery. Moreover, the structural relationship between *mesmo* and the adverb seems comparable to that which holds between *mesmo* and the noun in this section (1.2.2). These facts lead us to believe that a unified explanation of the behavior of *mesmo* as a discourse focus marker will be possible.

<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, we know that there can be only focus per sentence (Zubizarreta 1997:6). If both the sentence and each NP may contain an FP, it is not clear how we restrict the sentence to having a single focus.



## 2. THE SYNTAX OF *MESMO* IN THE NP

A complex structure for the NP which supports such a focal category internal to the NP is suggested by Cardinaletti & Starke (1994:34). They adopt the analysis in Laka (1990), in which a category, SP, containing polarity and focus features, is posited between CP and IP; Laka's analysis is then extended to introduce SPs in NPs, the relevant structure being: [CP [SP [IP [LP]]]], where L is any lexical category. What is not clear is whether the SP of Cardinaletti & Starke, intended to host prosodic focal features (differently from Laka's sentential SP, which checks polarity and focal morphemes), can also be the position in which a lexical focal element may be checked.

Assuming that the nominal CP and SP of Cardinaletti & Starke can host lexical items for checking purposes, then a sentence like (16) poses a problem for checking focus in SP:

- (16) Mesmo quem entregou o trabalho com atraso esperava receber a nota máxima.  
'Even (those) who turned in their paper late expected to receive the best grade'

It is clear from the interpretation of sentence (16) that *mesmo* is taking scope over the CP. If this CP is the same one as suggested by the authors just mentioned, then there is a problem for the analysis of focus being in SP, which is c-commanded by the CP.

Perhaps the focus position SP below the CP, as suggested by Cardinaletti & Starke, could be used to account for the anterior internal use of *mesmo*, which, as outlined above, causes referential dependency on behalf of an element which should be free in the discourse. This would leave more external positions open for the quantifiers which scope over *mesmo* in these examples. If this is so, then the appearance of *mesmo* at the outer periphery of the NP, in the case of examples such as (11), requires a different explanation.

Whatever the specific answer, which we unfortunately do not have the space to discuss in detail here, this is the direction that an explanation of the structural and interpretative possibilities of *mesmo* must take. Besides explaining the correspondence between the syntactic structure and semantic interpretation of anterior external *mesmo*, as in sentence (16), an adequate proposal of the type we are working on must also identify the relevant syntactic-semantic correspondences shown by anterior internal *mesmo*, as in the sentences in (1). Finally, the proposed solution must account for the structural and semantic contrasts between one use of *mesmo* and the other as presented here, in addition to those of other uses not included in the present discussion.

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