

Answers to yes / no questions and clitic placement: the question of adverbs¹

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This paper seeks to evaluate several possibilities of analyzing a certain pattern of minimal affirmative answers to yes / no questions in European Portuguese (EP). It also seeks to raise questions for further research. The term “minimal answer” will be taken to mean the shortest possible answer in a given discourse context and, in this case, four types of minimal answers to yes / no questions will be considered: “sim” answers (yes), verbal answers (the answer consists of a form of the verb in the question), SER answers (the answer consists of a 3rd sg form of the verb SER – “to be” absent in the question) and adverbial answers (the answer consists of an adverb present in the question). From these four types of minimal answers, this paper will focus on adverbial answers.

I. The analyses in Martins (1994 / 1996) and in Laka (1990)

Martins (1994 / 1996) presents an analysis of verbal answers to yes / no questions in Portuguese which relates these patterns to patterns of clitic placement.

She notices that verbal answers to yes / no questions are available in EP and in Galician, but they are unavailable in other Romance languages, such as Spanish, Catalan, French or Italian. Furthermore, EP and Galician allow enclisis as a pattern of clitic placement, a pattern not observed in the other Romance languages.

(1) Deste – lhe o livro?

gave_[2nd sg] CL the book

(Sim,) dei.

(yes) gave_[1st sg]

(2) Décheslle o livro?

gave_[2nd sg] CL the book

(Si,) din.

(yes) gave_[1st sg]

¹ I thank Inês Duarte and Tjerk Hagemeijer for several comments to this paper.

- (3) Le diste el libro?
 CL gave_[2nd sg] the book
 Sí (, se lo di).
 yes CL CL gave_[1st sg]
- (4) Li has donat el llibre?
 CL have given the book
 Si (, l'hi he donat).
 yes CL have given
- (5) Lui as-tu donné le livre?
 CL have you given the book
 Oui (, je le lui ai donné).
 yes, I CL CL have given
- (6) Gli hai dato il libro?
 CL have given the book
 Sì (, gliel'ho dato).
 yes CL have given

(data from Martins, 1994: 368)

Portuguese and Galician would then pattern as English, a language also allowing verbal answers:

- (7) (Yes) we did. (Laka, 1990: 148)

In Martins' (1994 / 1996) perspective, verbal answers in Portuguese are related to the nature of the functional category Σ . Martins follows Laka (1990), who defines Σ as a functional category related to truth-value operators like negation and affirmation², but, unlike this author, she assumes that ΣP projects in all affirmative sentences, i.e., it projects also in non emphatic contexts. In addition, Martins assumes that in answers to yes / no questions the unique lexically realized element is an element in the head of ΣP and that in EP Σ would have strong V-features. Verbal answers would then be instances of VP ellipsis and the result of verb movement to Σ in order to check its features. Enclisis would be derived assuming that clitics always move to AgrS, a category dominated by Σ .

Martins (1994 / 1996) does not give an account of adverbial answers like the one in (8). However, if we consider her analysis of proclisis induced by adverbs and the essence of her general analysis of answer patterns, it is clear what this analysis would look like.

² In fact, Pollock (1989) or Belletti (1990) had also admitted the need of a functional projection AssP (Assertive Phrase) or PosP (Positive Phrase), respectively.

- (8) O Pedro já o encontrou?
 the Pedro already CL_[3rd sg ac] found
 Já.
 already

Martins (1994 / 1996) argues that in sentences as (9) below or in the question in (8) the adverb occupies [Spec, F(ocus)P], where FP is an instantiation of Σ P. FP does not have v-features and, consequently, the verb does not move to its head. The obvious consequence of Martins' analysis would then be to say that, in answers like (8), the adverb appears in the answer because it is the only element in Σ P / FP (I will call this hypothesis the "extended analysis of Martins, 1994").

- (9) O Pedro já o encontrou.
 the Pedro already CL_[3rd sg ac] found

This kind of analysis would indeed have advantages, since it would allow the unification of verbal and adverbial answers under the same structure. However, it faces several problems:

(i) in the case of minimal answers in general, it should be noticed that the pattern of clitic placement in Brazilian Portuguese (BP) is different from the one found in EP even though both languages allow verbal answers (cf. Oliveira, 1996);

(ii) in the case of adverbial answers, it should be noticed that:

a) the answer in (10) is not the only grammatical answer to the question.

- (10) O Pedro já o encontrou?
 the Pedro already CL_[3rd sg ac] found
 Já. / Encontrou. / Sim. / Foi.
 already / found / yes / was

b) the set of adverbs inducing proclisis does not coincide with the set of adverbs that may occur in answers to yes / no questions:

Table 1 – Adverbs inducing proclisis and their behavior in answers to yes / no questions

Adverbs that are difficult / not frequent in questions	Adverbs that cannot appear as an adverbial answer	Adverbs that may appear as an adverbial answer
Assim Bem Mal Cá	Lá Sempre (non temporal)	só, até, sempre (temporal), quase, talvez, já, também, ainda

c) adverbial answers are not disappearing in EP but proclisis induced by adverbs is disappearing in the language.

In the next sections, I will consider other possible analyses for adverbial answers.

II. Is an adverbial answer an instance of VP ellipsis?

Castro & Costa (this volume) claim that some monosyllabic adverbs may behave as X^0 which adjoin to the verb (or to AgrO or to T) or to negation. In fact, this type of analysis may be correct if applied to adverbs allowing adverbial answers, since it could explain the fact that *for some speakers* these adverbs may appear in interpolation contexts.

- (11) A Teresa afirma que lho só entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ only gave
 na segunda.
 on monday
- (12) A Teresa afirma que lho até entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ even gave
 na segunda.
 on monday
- (13) A Teresa afirma que lho sempre entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ always gave
 à segunda.
 on monday
- (14) A Teresa afirma que lho talvez entregue
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ maybe give
 na segunda.
 on monday
- (15) A Teresa afirma que lho quase entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ almost gave
 na segunda.
 on monday
- (16) A Teresa afirma que lho já entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ already gave
 na segunda.
 on monday
- (17) A Teresa afirma que lho também entregou
 the Teresa says that $CL_{[3rd\ sg\ dat]} + CL_{[3rd\ sg\ ac]}$ also gave
 na segunda.
 on monday

- (18) A Teresa afirma que lho ainda entregou
 the Teresa says that CL_[3rd sg dat] + CL_[3rd sg ac] still gave
 na segunda.
 on monday

If we assume that proclisis is an instance of X° adjunction involving the clitic, the verb and functional heads such as AgrO, T and, maybe, AgrS or the XP which defines the minimal domain of the operator inducing proclisis (cf. Duarte & Matos, 2000 and 19 below), it must be accepted that the interpolation facts presented above are an argument in favor of the analysis of these adverbs as X° .

- (19) The derivation of proclisis in Duarte & Matos (2000):
 [AgrSP [AgrS CL [AgrS [T [AgrO V AgrO] T] AgrS]] TP]

But what is interesting at the moment is that, in case we accept (at the least, the possibility of) the X° nature of these adverbs, we should evaluate the hypothesis that adverbial answers are VP ellipsis structures, i.e., structures exactly parallel to what we may think are verbal answers.

Matos (1992: 222) presents the following structure as the structure of a VP ellipsis:

- (20) O João tem lido esse livro e a Maria também [IP tem_lido
 the João has read that book and the Maria also has read
 [VP V [VP V [NP -]]]]

Given this structure, an adverbial answer could be analyzed as a particular instance of VP ellipsis in which only the higher lexical material would be phonetically realized. Taking the principle of VP ellipsis licensing in Matos & Cyrino (2001),

- (21) licensing of VP ellipsis is allowed under local c-command of the functional head subcategorizing the VP, which is instantiated by a phonetically realized lexical head.

one would assume that the lexical head able to instantiate the functional head licensing a VP ellipsis is the head (in this case, the adverb) appearing as the highest adjoined material to the relevant functional head.

This analysis would have the advantage we could find in the "extended analysis of Martins (1994)", i.e., it would allow to reduce adverbial and verbal answers to a single structure. It would also allow to relate the patterns of answers in English with all patterns of answers in Portuguese. In fact, verbal answers as well as VP ellipsis structures are possible in English (cf. 22 and 23); the impossibility of

adverbial answers in the same language would be expected given the fact that in English these adverbs never precede the auxiliary verb in I.

(22) (Yes) we did. (Laka, 1990: 148)

(23) Sandy goes to Boston and Betsy should [_{SV} -] too. (Sag, 1980 *apud* Matos, 1992: 99)

However, this analysis too presents serious problems:

(i) in case the possibility of occurrence in answers would depend on the X^o nature of the adverb or on the possibility of adjoining to a node implied in the derivation of proclisis, we should expect that only adverbs allowing adverbial answers would be able to occur in interpolation structures. But this is not what we find – (24) is an example of interpolation (with the same grammaticality status as those presented in 11 to 18) of an adverb that does not allow an adverbial answer (cf. 25).

(24) A Teresa disse que o lá tinha encontrado.
 the Teresa said that CL_[3rd sg ac] actually had found

(25) A Teresa lá o encontrou?
 the Teresa actually CL_[3rd sg ac] found
 *Lá. / Encontrou. / Sim. / Foi.
 finally / found / yes / was

(ii) this hypothesis does not explain the reason why the adverbial answer is preferred with certain adverbs but optional with others:

Table II

Behavior of adverbs allowing adverbial answers when they appear in a question	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal answers are excluded or at least very difficult. • SER answers are possible.³ • SIM answers are possible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verbal answers are possible. • SER answers are possible. • SIM answers are possible.
Só ⁴ Talvez Quase	Já Também Até Ainda Sempre (<i>temporal</i>)

³ For some speakers, SER answers in EP are difficult (for others, they are current); however it should be noticed that there are no grammaticality contrasts to this respect concerning the two classes of adverbs presented in the table.

⁴ In the case of focalisation adverbs such as *só* (only), *também* (also) and *até* (even), speakers were tested concerning scope of the pre-verbal adverb over the object DP or over the V. No grammaticality contrasts were noticed in these cases.

(iii) this analysis does not explain why Spanish does not license VP ellipsis (nor verbal answers – cf. 3. in section I) but it licenses adverbial answers:

(26) *Juan no vio a Marta pero Pedro vio.
 Juan not saw PREP Marta but Pedro saw
 (Zagona, 1988 *apud* Martins, 1994: 367)

(27) *Juan esta leyendo esa novela y Maria está también /
 Juan is reading this novel and Maria is too
 también está.
 too / also is
 (Zagona, 1988 *apud* Martins, 1994: 367)

(28) Pedro también ha hecho el trabajo?
 Pedro also has done the work
 A: También.
 also

(29) Pedro ya ha hecho el trabajo?
 Pedro already has done the work
 A: Ya.
 already

III. Should adverbial answers be considered instances of stripping?

There is another classical ellipsis structure that in this case should be evaluated as a possible candidate for the structure of an adverbial answer: stripping.

In fact, stripping and adverbial answers co-exist in Spanish:

(30) Juan trabaja hoy y mañana también.
 Juan works today and tomorrow too
 (Zagona, 1988 *apud* Matos, 1992: 173)

However, this hypothesis would be immediately excluded for empirical reasons:

(i) Stripping exists in French and in English (cf. Matos, 1992) but adverbial answers are not available in these languages:

(31) Jean était critiqué et Marie aussi.
 (32) Est-ce qu' il y est aussi allé?
 A: *Aussi.

(33) John has read Shame and Mary too. (Kempson, 1990 *apud* Matos, 1992)

(34) Did you also go to the party?

A: *Also.

(ii) The set of adverbs licensing stripping – *sim* (yes), *não* (no), *também* (also / too), *também não* – is more restricted than the set of adverbs available in adverbial answers;

(iii) In adverbial answers, an XP with a phonetic counterpart does not typically precede the adverb, even though this happens in stripping structures:

(35) Stripping:

O Pedro vai ao cinema e [a Maria também].
 the Pedro goes to+the cinema and the Maria too

When an XP precedes the adverb, the reading of the adverbial answer is clearly different from the reading of a minimal adverbial answer: in that case, the answer takes a contrastive Focus reading.

(36) A Maria já foi ao cinema?

the Maria already went to+the cinema

A: A Maria já (mas o Paulo não).

the Maria already but the Paulo not

Given the fact that stripping has been analyzed as a focalization construction (cf. 37), there is no reason to consider a minimal adverbial answer to be an example of stripping.

(37) ... mas frisou [_{CP} que [_{FP} [ao restaurante] [_{FP} [F^o não] [_{TP}]]]
 but insisted that to+the restaurant no

(Matos, 1996: 277)

At this point, it seems clear that a classical ellipsis analysis is not available for adverbial answers, at least as far as VP ellipsis or stripping are concerned.

IV. Adverbial answers and strategies of recovering material in the question – some facts

There is another type of facts concerning adverbial answers that deserve further discussion. Even though Table II in section II pointed to the fact that adverbial answers occurred in contexts where other types of minimal answers were also possible, this (apparent) optionality was not discussed. Until now, adverbial

answers were looked at in isolation from their discourse context; I will try to show that if this discourse context is evaluated, other interesting facts concerning answers in general will show up.

In an analysis of adverbial answers, all of the following facts indicating that the choice among several possibilities of answering a question is not a matter of optionality should be considered.

The first fact comes from the interaction between word order in the question and the choice of an answer. When the adverb in the question is not pre-verbal, an adverbial answer is not licensed (even in the cases where the interpretation of the adverb is not affected by the change of position):

- (38) Ele tem muitos já?
 he has several already
 A: Tem. / # Já. / Sim. / É.
 has / already yes is
- (39) Pedro ha hecho también el trabajo?
 Pedro has done also the work
 A: # También.
 also

The second category of facts concerns the distribution of SER answers in the case of questions with adverbs. There are some reasons to assume that a SER answer is not equivalent to a verbal answer. First, a SER answer is possible in the case of questions built with adverbs not allowing verbal answers (cf. 40 and 41 and Table II in section II).

- (40) O João quase comeu o bolo?
 the João almost ate the cake
 A: Foi. / *Comeu. / Quase. / Sim.
 was ate almost yes
- (41) O João talvez venha à festa?
 the João maybe come_[subj] to+the party
 A: É. / *Vem / *Venha. / Talvez. / Sim.
 is / come_[ind] / come_[subj] / maybe / yes

Secondly, there is a preference for SER answers as well as adverbial answers when an adverb licensing a verbal answer precedes the subject in the question:

- (42) Até o João comeu o bolo?
 even the João ate the cake

A: Foi. / #Comeu. / Até. / Sim.
 was ate even yes

Third, if an adverb modifies the interpretation of the verb in some relevant manner, the verbal answer is not possible but a SER answer remains available:

(43) A Teresa mal viu o João?
 the Teresa hardly saw the João
 A: Foi. / *Viu. / *Mal. / Sim.
 was / saw / hardly / yes

This behavior of SER answers extends to questions with no adverbs. Notice that there is a preference for a SER answer when a pre-verbal constituent receives Focus stress:

(44) NO CINEMA a Maria desmaiou?
 at+the cinema the Maria fainted
 A: Foi. / # Desmaiou.
 was / fainted

Notice also that, if we take confirmations instead of answers and enlarged discourse contexts, it also becomes clear that a SER answer is not equivalent to a verbal answer. In (45), the two possible confirmation “answers” of speaker Z have different meanings: the verbal answer would mean “yes, they eat bananas” whereas the SER answer would be ambiguous between an interpretation equivalent to the one attributed to the verbal answer and an interpretation such as “yes, they are bad because they eat bananas”. This means that the SER answer may recover more than the immediately preceding sentence, it seems that it may also recover the answer status of that preceding sentence.

(45) Speaker X: eles são maus porquê?
 they are bad why
 Speaker Y: comem bananas.
 eat bananas
 Speaker Z: comem. / é.
 eat is

All these facts seem to go in the same direction: SER answers recover more material from the question than verbal answers, more precisely, they recover material placed higher in the question. So it seems that when a pre-verbal adverb in a question blocks a verbal answer this happens because the verbal answer cannot recover the adverb itself or the structure created by that adverb. It also seems clear

that the choice of an answer is not optional and that the different types of minimal answers do not have the same discourse status. In this sense, the analysis of adverbial answers may shed light upon the general analysis of minimal answers.

Conclusions:

The main conclusions of this work may be summarized as follows:

- . there is a clear impossibility of reducing both verbal and adverbial answers to a single structure;
- . the analysis of adverbial answers as VP ellipsis or as stripping is inadequate;
- . adverbial answers have to be studied in the context of the different types of possible answers;
- . understanding SER answers may be a way to gain deeper understanding of answer patterns.

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