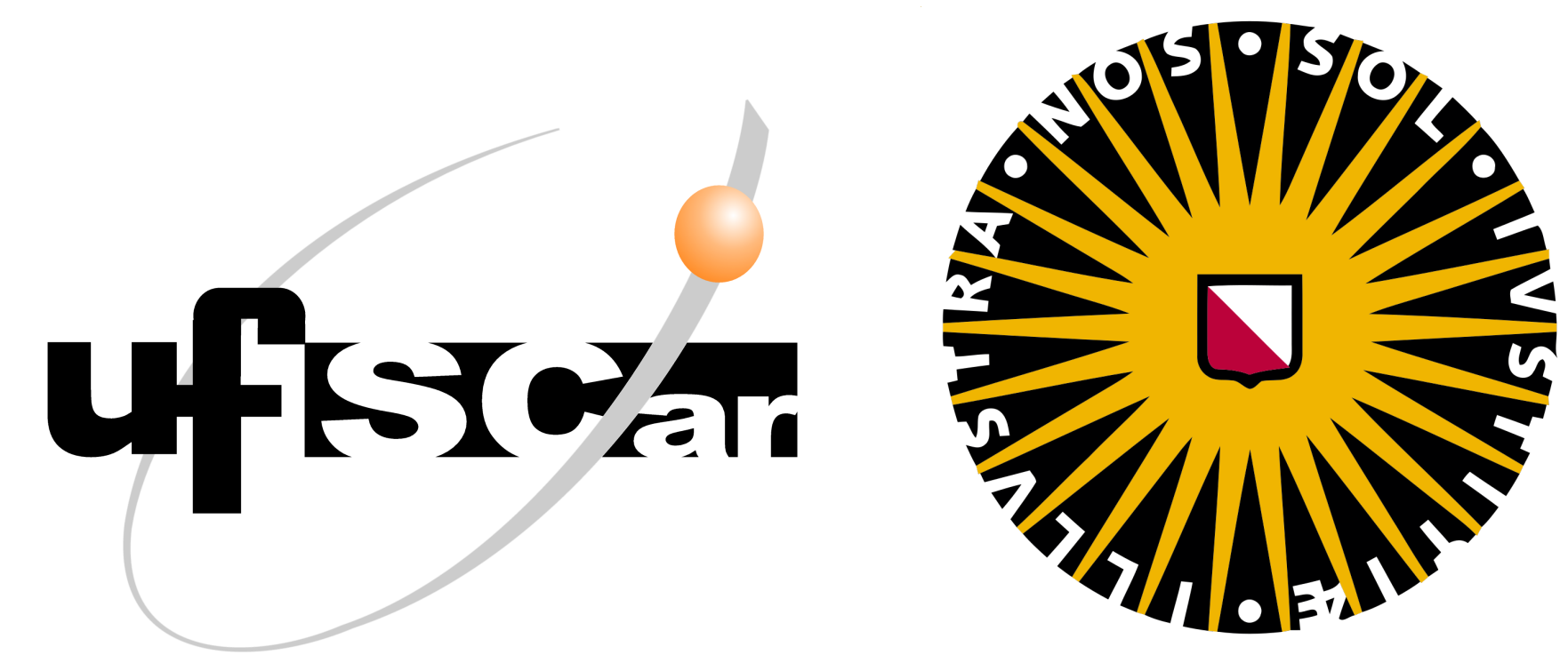


# Reflexive and reciprocal interpretations of se-clauses in Brazilian Portuguese

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## Ambiguity or Underspecification?

Brazilian Portuguese (BP) conveys reflexivity (REFL) and reciprocity (REC) with the same form:

- (1) Ana e Bia se ouviram  
Ana and Bia SE hear  
‘Ana and Bia heard themselves/each other’

### Ambiguity or underspecification?

- Identity test (Zwicky & Sadock 1973):
- (2) Ana and Bia are wearing a **light** coat  
✗ Ana’s coat is light in weight and Bia’s coat is light in color = **ambiguity**
- (3) Alex and Bob are **children**  
✓ Alex is a girl and Bob is a boy = **underspecification**

## Previous studies

REFL and REC overlap structurally in several languages (Heine & Miyashita 2008).

- **ambiguity**: Gast & Haas (2008)  
Heine & Miyashita (2008), Palmieri (2020)  
► **underspecification** Murray (2004),  
Cable (2012), Haug & Dalrymple (2018)

- Do BP *se*-clauses allow ‘mixed’ readings (3)?
- no → **ambiguity**
- yes → **underspecification**

## Lexical reflexivity

The verb choice may influence the availability of a ‘mixed’ interpretation:

- (4) Ana, Bia e Clara se depilaram = each individual in the antecedent set is epilated by an unspecified agent,  
A, B and C SE epilate while being collaborative  
‘A, B and C epilated (themselves/each other)’

Some BP verbs may express REFL without *se* (5). Their interpretation is in line with lexical reflexives in other languages (Doron & Rappaport-Hovav 2009).

- (5) Ana (**se**) depilou ► **unproductive** strategy  
Ana SE epilate ► **optional co-reference** between agent and patient; **volition** required  
‘Ana epilated (herself)’ ↔ ‘Passive-Collaborative’ (PCo)
- (6) Ana **se** ouviu ► **productive** strategy  
Ana SE hear ► **obligatory co-reference** between agent and patient  
‘Ana heard herself’

### Predictions:

- The possibility of expressing reflexivity without *se* is a manifestation of lexical reflexivity (L-REFL)
- L-REFL verbs do not require the agent and the patient to coincide: they allow a PCo interpretation with a singular subject and a ‘mixed’ interpretation with a plural subject.

## Questionnaire

TVJT: stories accompanied by a sentence with a *se*-clause to judge TRUE or FALSE.

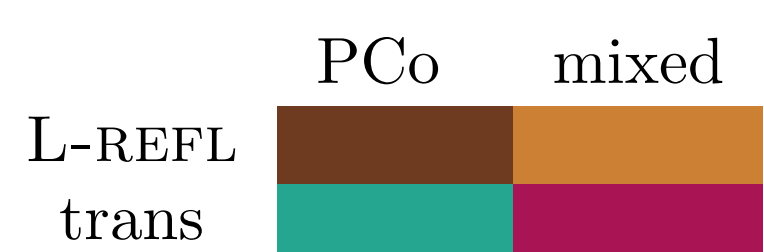
### ► Materials:

- **Two types of verbs:**
  - 5 L-REFL: *depilar* ‘epilate’, *vestir* ‘dress up’, *maquiar* ‘apply make up’, *pentear* ‘comb’, *arrumar* ‘suit up’
  - 5 TRANSITIVE: *admirar* ‘admire’, *criticar* ‘criticize’, *punir* ‘punish’, *premiar* ‘give a prize’, *escolher* ‘choose’
- **Two scenarios:**
  - PCo: a story with an individual A who has an action performed on herself by another person, while being collaborative. ►TARGET: ‘A se verb’
  - ‘MIXED’: a story with four individuals A, B, C and D, of which two are carrying out an action on themselves while the other two are carrying out an action on each other. [TARGET: ‘A, B, C and D se verb’]

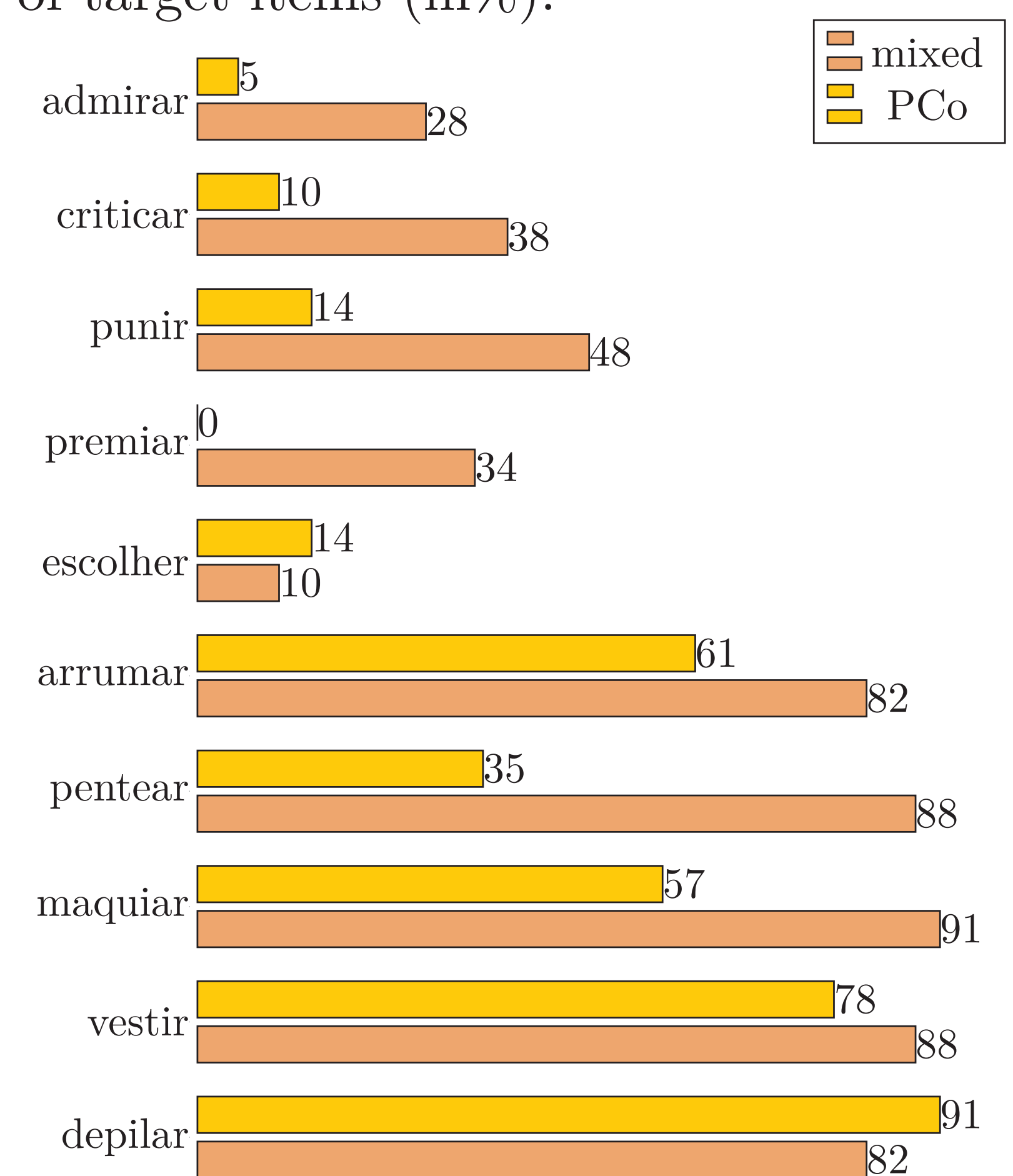
- **Participants:** 154 native speakers of BP (107 selected based on fillers’ accuracy)

- **Procedure:** ► run online with LimeSurvey

- 5 target and 10 filler items
- four versions of the questionnaire, each with one type of verbs in one scenario:



- **Results:** Correspondence between L-REFL and availability of PCo and mixed readings. Acceptance rate of target items (in%):



## Conclusions

- ‘Mixed’ interpretations of BP *se*-clauses are widely accepted with L-REFL verbs. Yet, this should not be taken as support for underspecification between REFL and REC, but rather as a property characterizing this class of verbs.
- ‘Mixed’ readings are marginally accepted with transitive verbs: **BP *se*-clauses are ambiguous.**
- The effects of L-REFL may hold cross-linguistically (Palmieri 2020) and should be taken into account in studies investigating the relation between REFL and REC.

## References

- Cable (2014) ‘Reflexives, reciprocals and contrast’, *JoS* • Doron & Rappaport-Hovav (2009) ‘A unified approach’, *Brill’s Annual* • Gast & Haas (2008) ‘On reciprocal and reflexive uses’ in König & Gast (ed.) • Haug & Dalrymple (2018) ‘Reciprocal scope revisited’, *SALT28* • Heine & Miyashita (2008) ‘The intersection’, in König & Gast (ed.) • Murray (2004) ‘Reflexivity and reciprocity’, *SuB12* • Palmieri (2020) ‘On the ambiguity’, *NELS50* • Zwicky & Saddock (1973) ‘Ambiguity tests’, *S&S*