Ter/Haver-Constructions and Verbal Agreement

DINAH CALLOU
JUANITO AVELAR

Abstract

The aim of this paper is twofold: (i) to analyze the use of the verbs ter and haver in the history of Portuguese and, more specifically, in a recent stage of Brazilian Portuguese, in which the possessive ter is used as an existential verb; and (ii) to discuss some properties involving ter and haver in possessive and existential domains, in both European and Brazilian Portuguese, pointing to the possibility of verbal agreement with ter/haver--existential constructions. Exploring results from previous analyses it is shown that some properties of existential constructions, in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese, can derive from changes involving subject position, related to the weakening of flectional paradigm.

1. Introduction

Throughout the recorded history of Portuguese language, *ter* (<tenere) and *haver* (<habere) may be considered verbs with broad functionality. Their multiple functions range from main verb, indicating (1) possession and/or (2) existence to (3) auxiliary indicating time, mood, and aspect. They may even occur as (4) "light" or functional verbs that transfer the predication to their internal argument.

  (1) Ele <u>tem</u> muitos carros na garagem
         has
      "He has many cars in the garage"

(2) *Há / Tem* muitos carros na garagem
    there are / have
    "There are many cars in the garage"

(3) Ele *tinha / havia* comprado muitos carros
        had bought
    "He had bought many cars"

(4) Ele *tem tempo* para fazer o trabalho
        has time
    "He has time to do the work"

   In this paper we will focus on the ongoing flow of change, pointing out to the historical, structural and social constraints involved in the competition between *ter* and *haver*. We will emphasize (i) the role of the reduction of verbal paradigm on the emergence of *ter*-existential, in Brazilian Portuguese, as well as (ii) the possibility of agreement between the existential verb and its complement in constructions such as *tinham/haviam pessoas na festa* ("had/there were persons at the party"), considered incorrect by normative grammatical tradition.

   Our results are based on qualitative and quantitative sociolinguistic variation analyses in real time and in apparent time. The written sample (200 possessive clauses with *ter* and *haver* in Medieval Portuguese), spanning the 13th to the 16th century, were extracted from the *Corpus Informatizado do Português Medieval* (CIPM). For the facts in contemporary European and Brazilian Portuguese, we analyzed a sample of 1.528 existential clauses, referred to in previous papers by Callou & Avelar (2002, 2003 and 2006). The spoken data, stratified by age and gender, were taken from informal interviews of University graduates (standard dialect) from Rio de Janeiro (NURC sample) and Lisbon conducted in the 1970's and 90's (20th century) for a trend study (Labov, 1994). More recently, a new sample of standard speech (around 1000 existential clauses), recorded in some areas of Rio de Janeiro (BP-Copacabana/Botafogo) and Lisbon/Oeiras (EP) at the beginning of the 21th century, has been added.

2. An overview of the past

Since the earliest documents in Portuguese (Mattos & Silva, 1989/1996/ 1997) and Spanish (Camareno, 1997, *apud* Viotti, 1999), there is a tendency to use *ter* as a verb of possession and, by the mid-16th century, *ter* had displaced *haver* from this semantic domain. On the other hand, *haver* replaced *ser* ("to be") as the main existential verb, and the frequency of the use of *ter* in existential clauses increased gradually over time (Figure 1). This change may also be traced back to the 16th century, the same period when *haver* no longer indicated possession, except in specific contexts. The

structural overlapping of these verbs seems to have its roots in developments that took place much earlier in Latin.

Figure 1 – Use of *ter/haver*-existential clauses in written texts in the history of Portuguese
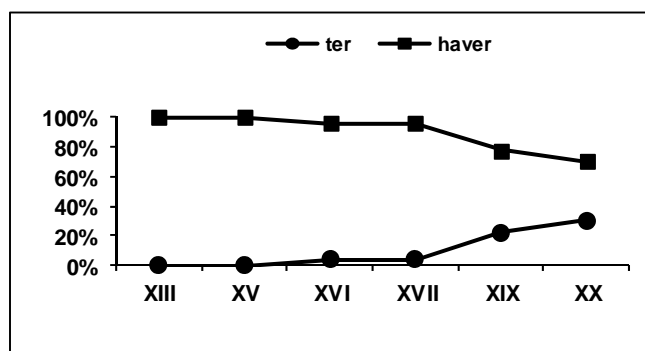
Many authors class existential and locative sentences together. Lyons (1979) has observed that in almost all modern languages possessive and existential clauses may be considered to be syntactically derived – both synchronically and diachronically – from locative constructions. Guéron (1986, *apud* Franchi *et alii,* 1998) justifies this hypothesis based on the use of the same verb, *avoir*, in existential and possessive sentences in French. The same is true for Brazilian Portuguese, where the use of *ter* in the third-person singular gives rise to an existential expression.

Observing the history of the verb *ter* in Brazilian Portuguese, Viotti (1999) concludes that all sentences with this verb – regardless of semantic domain – have the same syntactic origin. Franchi *et alii*, based on the properties observed in the analysis of a *corpus* of spoken Brazilian Portuguese, say that "*existential sentences belong to a class of constructions called impersonal constructions*". Many linguists also mention that the noun phrase following the verb is usually indefinite – the so-called definiteness effect noted by Milsark (1979).

As for the facts regarding the verb *haver* in Medieval Portuguese, the causes for reanalysis of this verb as an existential item, with its losing the possessive interpretation, are not yet clear. In that period, both *haver* and *ter* occurred as possessive verbs, as can be seen in examples (5) and (6).

(5) **Possessive sentences with *haver* in Medieval Portuguese**
   a. ...nẽhuu nẽbro nõ pode <u>*auer*</u> saude sen sa cabeça... (18ᵗʰ century–
   AfonsoX, Foro Real – CIPM)
   "no limb (?) not can have health without his head"

b. ...costume he q(ue) nẽhua molher q(ue) *aj'a* máá ffama... (Dos Costumes de Santarém – 1294. Source CIPM)
   "custom is that no woman that have bad fame"

c. ...outra moller que *a i* marido... (Foros de Garvão, 1280 (?). Source: CIPM)
   "another woman that had husband"

(6) **Possessive sentences with *ter* in Medieval Portuguese**

a. sse o caualeyro *teuer* o caualo quando morer ssa molher...(Dos Costumes de Santarém– 1294.Source: CIPM)
   "if the horseman (knight) have the horse when die his wife"

b. queremos e demãdamos que todo crischão *tenha* esta fé (Afonso X, Foro Real 1280 (?). Source: CIPM)
   "want and ask that all Christians have this faith"

Figure 2 shows the frequency of *haver* and *ter* in possessive contexts from the 13th to the 16th century. Note that there is stability until the 15th century, the rates of *haver* and *ter* being, respectively, 72% and 28%. This scenario changes abruptly in the 16th century, when the rate of *ter* rises to 90% and overtakes the rate of *haver*.

Figure 2 – Frequency of *haver* and *ter* in Medieval Portuguese possessive sentences
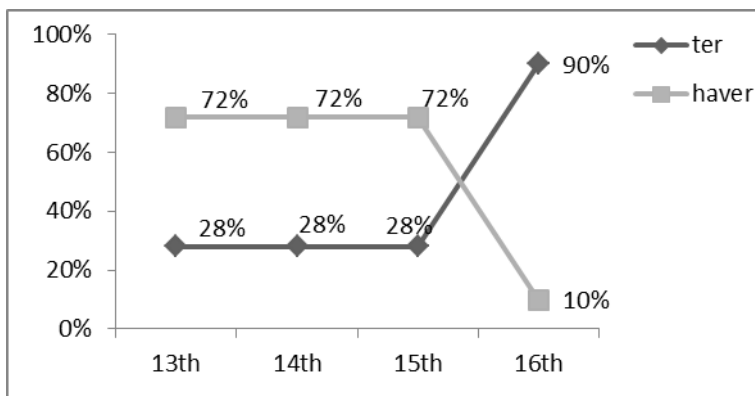
From the 16th century on, *haver* was completely removed from possessive contexts and acquired exclusively existential meaning, occurring in impersonal sentences like the ones exemplified in (7). It is significant that *haver* had occurred as an existential verb since the 13th century, sharing this expression with the copular verb *ser*, as in (8).

(7) **Existential sentences with *haver* in Medieval Portuguese**

a. se na terra *ouuer* malfeitores (Foros de   Garvão – 1267. Source: CIPM)
   "if in-the Earth (there) are villains"

b. En hua abadia huu tesoureiro <u>*avia*</u> (18th century – in Mattos & Silva1997:262)

"in an abbey a treasurer (there) was"

c. ...que non <u>*avia*</u> y mouros nem judeus (18th century – in Mattos & Silva 1997:262)

"that there was no Moors nor Jews"

(8) **Existential sentences with *ser* in Medieval Portuguese**

a. Todo homen que no Reyno <u>*for*</u>.... *((L017))* no~ lj   responda~. (Foros de Garvão – 1280. Source: CIPM)

"every man that in-the kingdom were"

b. Todo crischão crea firmemente qu'*é* hũu soo e uerdadeyro Deus, padre e fillo esprictu sancto [...].(18thcentury–Nunes, 1943:8)

"every Christian believes firmly that is one only and real god father and son and spiritholy"

3. An overview of the present

Nowadays, the use of **ter**-existential (as opposed to **haver**-existential) is predominant in contemporary spoken Brazilian Portuguese. Considering the two decades, the 70's and in the 90's, the results suggest change in progress (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Frequency of the verbs (ter/haver) in spoken language (NURC-RJ), considering the distribution in both decades
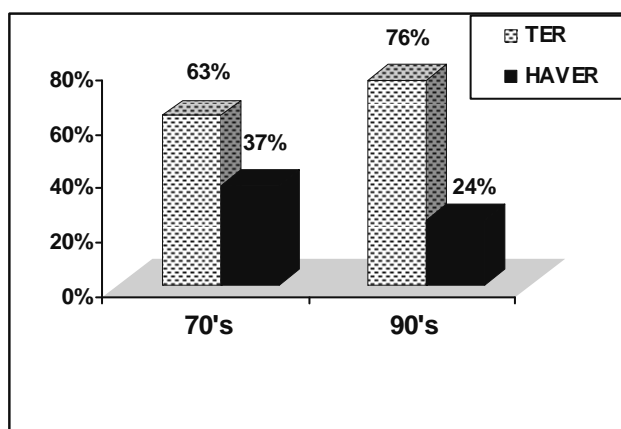
It has been assumed that certain syntactic, semantic and social factors are related to the variation between the two verbs. For spoken language (1528

tokens), in both decades (the 70's and 90's), the multivariate analysis[1] shows that the most significant structural factors are the verbal tense and the semantic nature of the internal argument. Relevant social variables are age group and gender. *Ter*-existential sentences usually occur in the present tense, and *haver* in the past (perfect and imperfect). The Table 1 shows this contrast and the increase in use of *ter* in the 90's, when the verb is in the perfect.

Table 1 – Frequency and Relative Weight of the use of *ter* (NURC sample) in the two decades
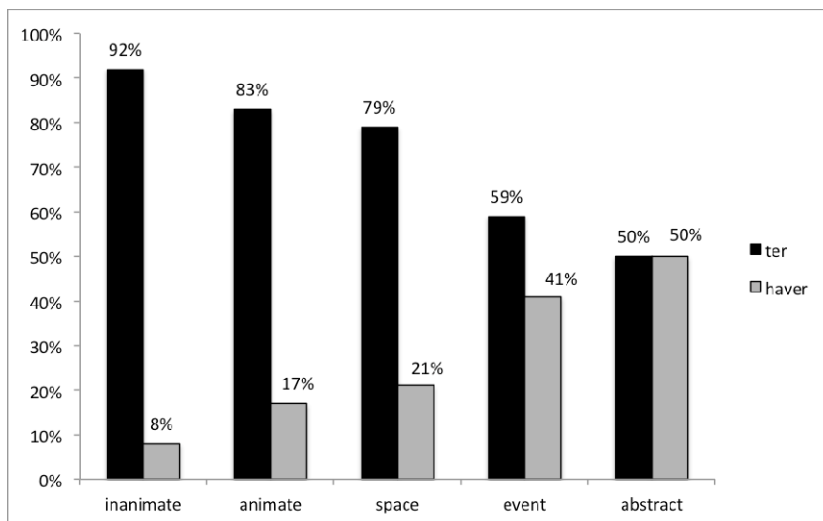
TENSE	70's			90's		
	Occ/ total	Percentage %	Relative weight (RW)	Occ/ total	Percentage %	Relative weight (RW)
Present	340/486	70%	.60	350/397	88%	.60
Perfect	05/48	10%	.09	15/43	35%	.38
Imperfect	159/250	64%	.44	137/205	69%	.45

The statistical results suggest that, in spoken language, the use of *haver* has almost become restricted to the past tense. For the semantic nature of the internal argument, the factors postulated were: animate (9 and 10), inanimate – concrete – (11 and 12), abstract (13 and 14), space – public place, district, region– (15 and 16), and event (17). The possessive verb **ter** "to have" replaces **haver** "to exist/there to be" even in elapsed-time expressions (18 to 20), but the two elapsed-time expressions reflect variation between two distinct structural patterns.

(9) *há* mulheres que se comportam... (70-233)
    there are
    "There are women who behave themselves"

(10) aqui no Leblon *tem* o padre ...(90-347)
                    has
     "Here, in Leblon, there is the priest"

(11) *havia* muita banana... (70-141)
     there were
     "There were a lot of bananas"

(12) *tinha* biscoitos na Colombo... (90-002)
     had
      "There were cookies at Colombo"

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[1] The analysis makes use of VARBRUL/ GOLDVARB computational programs.

(13) não *havia* uma censura tão grande, não *havia* exagero... (70-259)
          there was   there was
      "There was not so much censorship, there was no exaggeration"

(14) não *tem* mais o charme que tinha... (70-255)
             has
      "There was no more the former charm"

(15) *havia* alguns cinemas na cidade ...(70-259)
     there were
      "There were some movie theaters in town"

(16) *tem* bairros sensacionais fora de Salvador ...(70-255)
       have
        " There are sensational neighborhoods outside of Salvador"

(17) quando eu fiz quinze anos, *teve* uma festa maravilhosa... (90-002)
                                 had
      "On my fifteenth birthday, there was a wonderful party"

(18) *Há/tem* três meses que voltei da Europa.
       " There are three months ago I returned from Europe"
       Lit.: " There exist/have three months since I returned from Europe"

(19) Já vive cá *há* uns anos (OEI A3H)
                  there are
      "He has lived here for some years"

(20) *Tem* mais ou menos um ano (OEI A3H)
       has
      "It has been about a year"

   Generally, when the internal argument is an "event", the verbs *ter* and
haver have the meaning of "occur", "happen" or "take place", as in examples
(21) to (23) and can be translated by "there is/are". In all contexts, the
frequency of use of *ter*-existential sentences has increased over time.

(21) um dia *houve* uma enxurrada (70-273)
      "one day there was a heavy rain"

(22) quando *há* uma seca muito violenta (70-247)
      "when there is a violent drought"

(23) toda vez que *há* uma festa (70-247)
      "each time there is a party "

   As can be seen in Figure 4, the use of *haver* is almost exclusively
restricted to [+abstract] and [+event] arguments.

Figure 4 – Frequency of *ter/haver* by type of semantic argument

The great majority of cases that favor the use of *haver* refer to prototypical cases of the so-called "light" verbs, the object of which is neither definite nor referential, as in examples 24 to 26.

(24) não *há* vantagem ...90-164
      "there is no advantage"

(25) *há* possibilidade ..70-114
      "there is [a] possibility"

(26) não *havia* jeito ...70-088
      "there was no way"

The distribution patterns by age group are similar, but in the 90's there is a clear opposition between younger speakers, on the one hand, and adults and older speakers, on the other: the curve shows change in progress towards reduction in the use of *haver*-existential. Nowadays, it seems that the use of *ter* is less stigmatized in school, even in written language. Gender may also have a significant effect, mainly in the 70's (Figure 5). It seems that women led the process, since younger women show higher frequency in the 70's (80% female *versus* 46% male), the use of *ter* being almost categorical (98%) in the 90's, in both male and female speech. Parallel to Labov's reasoning (1994: 65) on the stratification of sound changes, we assume that in a change near completion, as in the last decade of the 20[th]century, gender is neuter, while in a new and vigorous sound change, as in the 70's, gender is still a significant conditioning factor.

Figure 5 – Use of *ter*-existential (NURC) in male and female speech in both decades
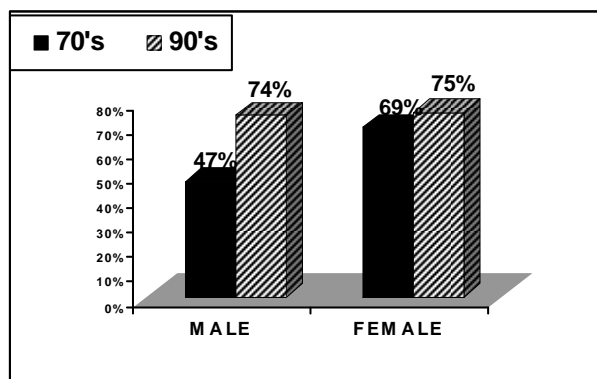
4. The emergence of possessive verbs in existential environments

As indicated in Avelar (2009a), the sentences exemplified in (27) are interpreted as a possessive construction in European Portuguese. By contrast, in out-of-the-blue contexts, a Brazilian Portuguese speaker interprets them as existential. To receive a possessive interpretation, in Brazilian Portuguese, it is necessary to project a possessor subject, as in (28). In European Portuguese, *ter* is rarely used in existential constructions, almost only *haver*: '*Há várias calças dentro do armário*'.

(27) a. <u>*Tem*</u> várias   calças dentro do   armário.
        have   several pants inside of-the closet
    EP: "He/She has several pants inside the closet."
    BP: "There are several pants inside the closet."
   b. <u>*Tinha*</u> um documento   na   carteira.
       had   a   document in-the wallet
    EP: "He/She had a document in the wallet."
    BP: "There was a document in the wallet."
   c. <u>*Tem*</u> dois computadores no   escritório.
      has two   computers in-the   office
    EP: "He/She has two computers in the office."
    BP: "There are two computers in the office."

(28) a. Ele <u>*tem*</u> várias calças dentro do   armário.
       he has several pants inside of-the closet
    EP/BP: "He has several pants inside of-the closet."
   b. <u>*Há*</u> várias   calças dentro do   armário.
      exist several pants inside of-the closet
    BP/EP: "There are several pants inside of-the closet."

In a previous paper, Callou & Avelar (2000) suggested that a strong candidate for the trigger to the reanalysis of *ter* as an existential verb is the inflectional reduction of verbal paradigm in Brazilian Portuguese. As pointed in many studies (Duarte 1995; Tarallo 1996; Figueiredo Silva 1996; Galves 1996; Kato 2005; among others), this inflectional reduction had a drastic consequence in the use of referential null subjects: the contexts licensing referential null subject in Brazilian Portuguese became extremely restricted, as we can see in sentence (29a), '*Comprou um carro*', corresponding to '*Bought a car*'. In European Portuguese, this sentence can mean '*He/She has bought a car*'. In Brazilian Portuguese, however, it would be necessary to fill the subject position, in order to yield an acceptable sentence, as we can see in (29b).

(29) a. *Comprou um carro*.   (EP: ok / BP: *)
     bought   a   car
    'He/She has bought a car.'
   b. *Ele comprou um carro*.   (EP: ok / BP: ok)
     he   bought   a   car
    'He has bought a car.'

Returning to the possessive verb, it is almost impossible for a speaker of Brazilian Portuguese to interpret *ter* sentences with referential null subjects as it would be the case if these contexts were interpreted as possessive. For instance, in *ter* constructions, as in (30), European Portuguese grammar can license a null referential possessor: (30a) '*has a book*' = '*He/She has a book*'. But these same constructions are unacceptable in Brazilian Portuguese, because it is impossible for a Brazilian Portuguese speaker to license a null referential possessor in such contexts.

(30) a. *Tem* um livro.   (EP: ok / BP: *)
     has   a   book
    "He/She has a book."
   b. *Tinha* dinheiro.   (EP: ok / BP: *)
     had   money
    "He/She had money."

All studies dealing with the variation of *ter* and *haver* in Brazilian Portuguese (Cardoso 1986; Callou & Avelar 2000, 2003, 2006, Silva 2003; and others) conclude that *ter* is much more frequent in speech than *haver*. As illustrated in Figure 6, *haver* is largely preferred in formal written language, but its frequency is extremely low in spoken language, even among people with a high level of education.

Figure 6 – Frequency of *ter* and *haver* in existential clauses of spoken and written language in contemporary Brazilian Portuguese (as presented in Callou & Avelar, 2006)
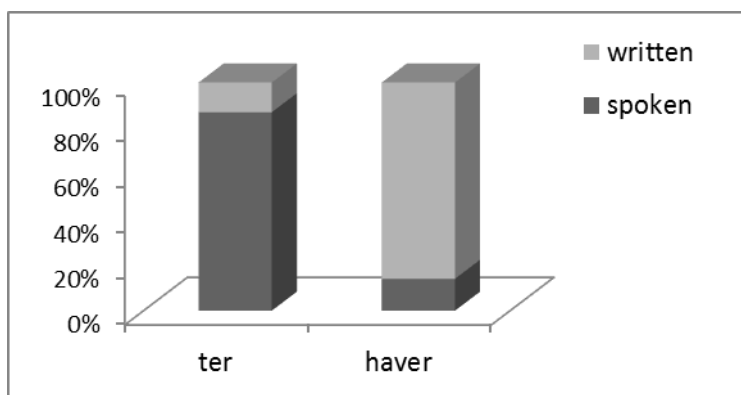
Avelar (2009a) and Marins (2013) show that there is a temporal parallelism that reinforces the hypothesis of a relation between the restrictions to the use of null subject in Brazilian Portuguese and the generalization of *ter*-existential: the existential use of *ter* began to appear at the end of the 19th century, and it is exactly in this period that the first signs of the null subject loss are detected in written documents (Duarte, 1995; Tarallo, 1996). As it is shown in previous analyses, there is no clear example of existential *ter* until 18th century in written documents in Brazil, but the frequency of *ter*, opposite to the frequency of *haver* in existential environments, reaches 22% in the second half of the 19th century, as we can see in Figure (7). A study by Duarte (1995) reveals that, in this same period, the rate of null subjects corresponding to the third person began to decrease, going from 83% in 1845 to 55% in 1992, as in Figure (8). In this sense, the variation of *ter* and *haver* in Brazilian Portuguese may reflect a syntactic solution in the domain of the possessive-existential constructions to deal with the loss of referential null subject.

Figure 7- Frequency of existential *ter* (as compared to the frequency of *haver*) in documents written in Brazil, from the 17th century to the 20th century (Avelar 2005; Callou & Avelar, 2002)
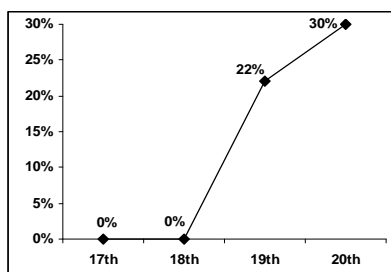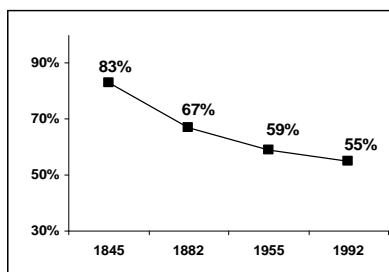
Figure 8- Frequency of referential null subject corresponding to the third person in documents written in Brazil, from 1845 to 1992 (Duarte 1995; 2005)

It is important to notice that, in European Portuguese, some constructions with the verb *ter* can be analyzed as existential, even if we consider that this use was registered in a no-transparent environment, the so-called 'opaque' (Mattos e Silva, 1982) environment (examples 31 and 32). The examples were taken from young speakers (25 to 35 years old) with high level of education. It is not clear, however, whether these examples of *ter*-existential are the result of possessive constructions that, in a specific context, can receive an existential interpretation.

(31) Já *teve* pessoas inclusivamente que me disseram (OEI A3H)
     "Already *there were* some persons that inclusively have told me"

(32) *Teve* uma consulta de anestesia num hospital público (OEI A3H)
     "There was an anesthesia appointment in a public hospital"

4. Generic pronouns in subject position in Brazilian Portuguese existential clauses

One possible consequence of the restriction to licensing null subjects on the configuration of existential constructions, in Brazilian Portuguese, is the increase of the frequency of use of *ter*-existential clauses with a generic pronoun (Avelar 2009b; Marins 2013; Duarte 2007), usually *você* ("you"), in subject position, as seen in examples (33) and (34).

(33) em Kioto, que era a antiga capital do Japão, **você** *tem* esses templos lado a lado com ...*(90-012)*
     "In Kyoto, which was the ancient capital of Japan, *you have* these temples, side by side with [...]"

(34) **a gente** <u>tem</u> uma aglomeração de pessoas aqui na Tijuca (90-002)
  "we [=people] have a bunch of people here in Tijuca"
  "In Kyoto, which was the ancient capital of Japan, *you have* these temples, side by side with [...]"

This usage increases in the 90's (Figure 9) and it has been explained within the general tendency towards the loss of the status of canonical pro--drop language (Duarte, 1995). As pointed out in Callou & Avelar 2002, the rate of '*você*' in existential environments attains 21% among younger speakers. Note that it is impossible to insert '*você*' when we use the verb *haver*, as we can see in (35).

Figure 9- Distribution of use of generic *você* ("you", "people"),
in the 70's and 90's, by age group (Callou & Avelar, 2001)
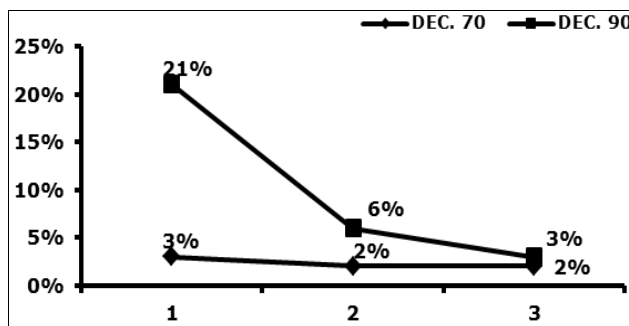
(35) a. **Você** <u>tem</u> / *há prédios altíssimos em Nova York.
      you have / exist buildings very high   in   New York
      "There are huge buildings in New York."
   b. **Você** <u>tem</u> / *há muitos museus   na   Europa.
      you have / exist   many   museums in-the Europa
      "There are many museums in Europe."

This contrast can be explained as constructions involving *ter*, even as an existential verb, retaining a subject position to be filled, while *haver*, an impersonal verb, has no position to receive a subject. In other words, the structural properties of the possessive *ter*, regarding acceptance of an external argument, were maintained in the existential version of this verb.

When *haver* lost its possessive status and became an existential verb in Medieval Portuguese, it usually occurred with the deictic locative pronoun *hi* as a subject (Said Ali 1964, Mattos & Silva 1997), as can be seen in sentences like (36). This property indicates that, even though *haver* has lost the ability to receive a subject in contemporary Portuguese, it did exhibit this property in its early stage as an existential verb. Although it is not clear why

haver lost this property, the occurrence of a deictic locative pronoun as subject reveals that, in its first steps as an existential, this verb exhibited a property of its possessive version.

(36) a. Não *ha i* segredo (16th century – presented in Said Ali 1964)
         not exist there secret
     "There is no secret."
     b. *avya hi* muytos mouros vezinhos acerca da cidade (Crônica de
        D. Afonso, Chapter II – 14th Century. Source: CIPM)
        were there many Moors neighbors around the city
        "There were many neighbor Moors around the city"
     c. ...que non *aviay* mouros nem judeus (13th century – Presented in
        Mattos e Silva 1997: 262)
        that not were there Moors nor Jews
     d. con sua herdade que *y ha* e co suas pertijças (13th century –
        Presented in Silva 1997: 262)
        with his heritage that is there and with his belongings

5. Verbal agreement

In this section, we focus on the possibility of agreement between the existential verb and the NP traditionally analyzed as its direct object. As a starting point, it is necessary to call attention to the structural contrast between possessive and existential versions of *ter/haver*, in the history of Portuguese: when *haver* and *ter* indicate 'possession' they behave as personal verbs and agree with its external argument -- {-plural]→[-plural] and [+plural] →[+plural]; when *haver* and *ter* indicate 'existence', they behave as an impersonal verb and do not check agreement. Traditional grammar points to the fact that the verb is invariant -- does not accept number and person inflexions -- and the post verbal argument, necessarily indefinite, is interpreted as an object.

One instance of variation to be examined is verbal agreement with *ter/haver*-existential constructions when the subsequent complement is [+plural]. The case illustrated here (example 37) is so-called *"object-verb"* agreement.

(37) aí me lembrei que *tinham* duas senhoras (BP-COP B3H)
                        had
     "Then I remembered there were two ladies"

The phenomenon of verb-agreement in existential constructions is not restricted to Portuguese. It occurs in American Spanish, in standard speech, as registered by De Mello (1991). He points to the high frequency of use in Lima, La Paz, Caracas, San Juan de Porto Rico and Santiago do Chile, low frequency in Bogotá and Havana, and rare cases in Mexico City and Buenos

Aires. According to Montes Giraldo (1982), based on Colombian speech, it is sometimes considered a regular and usual form.

Like *haver* in Portuguese, *haber* in Spanish is considered the prototypical existential verb, but the verb-agreement phenomenon as in (38) and (39) has been studied in greater depth in Spanish than in Portuguese. In some areas of Spanish American countries, it is not uncommon for the verb *haber* to agree with its sole argument, as in (38) and (39). In other areas, verbal agreement is even considered the standard pattern.

(38) *Habían* hacendistas como José María Castillo y Rada. (Colômbia)
"There *were* financial experts like […]"

(39) En el frente agrario *habían*   problemas adicionales. (Chile)
"On the agrarian front there *were* additional problems"

Some authors, including Bello (1847), Cuervo (1939) and Ureña (1940), have attested to the appearance of the phenomenon in Spain. Addressing the instability between subject and object – that is, interpretation of the argument as a subject or an object – these authors say that the complement of some impersonal verbs, such as *haver*, maintains a semantic relation with the verb equivalent to that of a non-active subject. They also mention that the NP that occurs with the impersonal verb *haver* displays some properties that distinguish it from the direct object of regular transitive verbs: (i) it cannot become passive; and (ii) the argument is necessarily indefinite, with partitive interpretation in most cases.

Fontanella (1992) confirms that, in existential constructions, in contemporary American Spanish, the verb *haber* very often agrees with the direct object.

(40) *hubieron***.**..charlas

(41) *hayan* causas

Some authors say that, from a diachronic perspective, this phenomenon is the result of a slow ongoing change. Due to its original possessive value and action as an auxiliary, *haber* had always competed with *tener*. The use of existential *haber* has persisted since the 16th century, and the construction is represented by the verb plus a noun phrase complement (V + NP) with no number agreement between the two elements. From the 18th and 19th century on, cases of *haber-existential* have been detected in which the verb agrees with the NP [+plural] (42).

(42) que no *hubiesen* más fondos nacionales para atender con justicia a la petición de Vd.(1853).

In Bosque & Demonte's descriptive grammar (1999), it is possible to verify that the impersonal verb *haber* has been studied from different perspectives and that, although it should be only used in the third person singular, given that it is an impersonal verb, it may also occur in the third personal plural (42.10.1.4: 2770).

> It is really the verb *haber* the one that occurs in the majority of constructions – so frequent as so much stigmatized – in which a plural noun, a direct complement, is seen as a subject and consequently triggers the plural form of the verb […] *hubieron accidentes* ("There were accidents")[2].

In our 21st century sample, in Brazilian Portuguese, no data were detected with the verb *haver*, only with *ter* (example 43).

(43) <u>*tinham*</u>   duas concorrências
    "There were two submissions"

The above authors refer to a stigmatized use, in Spanish, in the first person plural, as on example (44) and a similar example was recorded in contemporary European Portuguese, but, once again, only with the verb *ter* (45).

(44) Alli <u>*habíamos*</u> muchas personas en el cine

(45) <u>*Temos*</u> exemplos de pessoas (OEI A3H)

It is important to note that grammarians of the past have long interpreted the complement of *haver* as an external argument (a subject), consequently leading the verb to agree with the nominative form: [-plural] → third person singular and [+plural] → third person plural. Lack of agreement was considered a peculiarity of speech (*idiotism*).

Nowadays, agreement may be observed, especially in contexts where the speaker is in a formal situation and wishes to be well regarded; in political discourse, for instance. As *haver* is rarely used colloquially, when the speaker uses the plural form – as with *ter-existential* – it is immediately striking. Switching between the two uses – as a personal verb (indicating possession) or as an impersonal verb (indicating existence) – could be the reason for the possibility of inflection when the internal argument of the verb is [+plural], as noted by many grammarians and linguists.

Diaz-Campos (2003) observed the behavior of the verb from a sociolinguistic perspective in two *corpora* of Caracas Spanish, one recorded in 1977 and another in 1979. All the constructions with com *haver-*

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[2] The authors are responsible for the translations into English.

-existencial + plural noun phrase were analyzed, taking into account structural and social variables. He concluded that we are dealing with stable variation, although previous studies have detected a higher frequency of use among young speakers. The phenomenon has no social marker, but its relative weight reaches .50, in the middle-class group, in the 80's. The feature [+human] is important mainly when the NP is the discursive topic, which corroborates the interpretation of the NP as a subject and, for this reason, triggers verb agreement. As in Portuguese, pluralization is not recorded in the present tense of the indicative mood.

Many authors have attested to this variation of use [+singular] ~ [+plural] of the verb *haver*–examples (46) and (47) – and native speakers identify and stigmatize them. Nonetheless, although educated speakers consider the plural form a grammatical violation of the standard pattern, there is no detailed comparative analysis in Portuguese to establish the exact conditions in which it occurs.

(46) *havia(m)* muitos livros sobre a mesa

(47) *había(n)* muchos libros sobre la mesa
       "There were many books on the table"

One of our concerns is to observe this possibility of verbal agreement rather than to identify the moment at which traditional and prescriptive grammar fixed the obligatory impersonal use of *haver*-existential, as referred by Castro (2003:13)

> I do not know the exact circumstances in which it was inserted in Portuguese grammar the idea that *haver* meaning 'to exist' ' to have existence' is exclusively an impersonal verb, when many writers and many speakers think and act in another way.

As attested by modern prescriptive and descriptive grammars from both Brazil and Portugal, *haver*-existential is considered an impersonal verb; it consequently has no subject position and should be used only in the third person singular.

In ancient texts from the 1540's and 50's, there is already evidence (although rare) of the use of third person plural forms of *ter* -- which are not mentioned in classic studies of historical syntax – and *haver* as an existential verb with agreement, a use referred to some centuries later (18th) by Said Ali as an innovation.

To Castro (2003), although prescriptive grammars base their rules on literary examples, and pluralization is attested in written and spoken varieties even among well-known writers, the third person plural form of the verb is rejected when *haver* is in the existential domain. He signals an example (*op. cit*. 12) that is considered incorrect – *houveram risadas* ("there were laughs")

– in order to show that it is not the writer, but the normative grammarian, who sets the standard pattern of use: the writer represents the pretext.

> It happens that along with many other examples of *houveram* e *haviam* it can be found in the manuscript of the *Tragédia da Rua das Flores*, written by Eça de Queiroz. It will be in vain that we will look for it in any edition, as far as editors corrected the use of the writer in the name of normative grammar [...].

Note that four examples of verbal agreement (48 to 51) were detected in 19th-century written texts.

(48) *havião* muitos exemplos de iguaes mercês (1820 – private letter/RJ)
    "There were many examples of equal mercies"

(49) *haviaõ algumas meninas* (1887 – private letter from a grandmother
    to her grandchildren/RJ)
    "There were some girls"

(50) não deve admirar que *hajão* portugueses (1844 – newspaperletter/RJ)
    "No wonder that that *there are* Portuguese men"

(51) o que devia envergonhal-os he que no Brasil **hajão** brasileiros que
    tenhão recorrido (1844 – newspaper letter/RJ)
    "What should shame them is that in Brazil *there are* Brazilians who
    have requested"

Two 18th-century grammars – Argote (1725) and Lobato (1770) – declare, in their chapters on agreement and "idiotisms" (Ch. V, pp. 258-259), that the verb *haver* in existential constructions should be in the third person plural form when the NP is [+plural], a rule that runs counter to 20th-century grammar. Argote's grammar reproduces a dialogue between Master and Disciple.

D. There are idiotisms in a verb's agreement with its nominative.
M. Why?
D. Because the verb *haver* in the third person does not agree in number with its nominative.
M. Give an example.
D. *Há muitas flores nesse jardim* ("there are many flowers in this garden"). The verb *haver* is in the singular, and its nominative *Flores* ("flowers") is in the plural. [...] Which is an Idiotism and very irregular Grammar.

In Lobato's grammar, Lesson II (On a verb's agreement with its nominative), we can read: "It seems that the rule mentioned for the verb have is not observed when, based on language usage, a plural nominative is added to a third person singular, as when we say Ha muitos homens, que amão as ciencias ("There are many men who loves the sciences"). [...]

He explains that this is a case of *Silepse*, verb agreement being related to an implicit unexpressed nominative '*número*' *("a number of ...")* and, for that reason, the verb is in the third person singular.

Data from standard speech, extracted from www.letras.ufrj.br/nurc-rj and www.letras.ufrj.br/concordancia, in BP (Rio de Janeiro-Copacabana) and EP (Oeiras/Lisboa) were analyzed in order to confirm these points. Comparing these results to those of De Mello (1991), Bentivoglio (1992) and Diaz--Campos (2003), who studied several Spanish varieties, it can be concluded that the use of the third person plural form of *haver* is much less frequent in Portuguese, at least in the standard variety.

The analysis shows that, in standard speech, agreement of the verb with a plural internal argument is rare. First of all, the use of *haver*-existential in spoken language, as shown in Figure 6, is less common (13%) and only the tokens with a plural argument can be computed: of the 616 tokens from Rio de Janeiro (NURC samples), only 83 met the conditions and only two (less than 3%) were recorded with the third person plural form of the verb.

(52) E os cachorros que sempre ...sempre... *haviam* muitos lá, bassês, conhece? (RJ-inq.189/70)
  "And the dogs that always ... always *there were* many there, bassets, you know?

(53) com as Embaixadas que *haviam* então (RJ-inq. 133/90)
  "with the Embassies that *there were* then"

It should be observed that in one of the examples (53) the verb is in a relative clause and the preceding NP is more easily interpreted as a subject. No plural agreement was detected in spoken language in any of the 40 tokens of European Portuguese.

In the *concordância* data, in Brazilian Portuguese, use of *ter*-existential was predominant –86% frequency (342/396) –with *haver* occurring mostly in the past (example 54).

(54) mas houve um abandono nesse intervalo (COP B3H)
  "but *there was* neglect on that interval"

On the other hand, no example of *haver*-existential in the third person plural was recorded in this sample. However, three examples (1%) were detected and only with with ***ter***-existential, as in example (55).

(55) mas aí vou te contar... <u>*tinham*</u> dois guias na nossa excursão (COP C3H)
    "but then I will tell you... *there were* two guides on our excursion"

In European Portuguese, only 6% (20/312) admit existential interpretation, as in examples (56) to (57), and verbal agreement does not occur with either *haver* or *ter*.

(56) de fazeres o que tu gostas ...no fundo ... e depois <u>*tem*</u> suas vantagens...
    tens muitos contactos,   fazes muitos contactos (OEI A3H)
    "To doing what you like – at the end –and afterwards have (*there are*)
    its advantages.. you have many contacts, you make many contacts"

(57) e para falar dos problemas ...estão lá... e querem um bocadinho de
    atenção ... já <u>*teve*</u> pessoas inclusivamente que me disseram (OEI A3H)
    "and speaking about the problems – they are there ... and (they) want a
    bit of attention ... already had (*there were*) people that have told me"

6. Final remarks[3]

To sum up, verbal agreement with existential verbs is a phenomenon that occurs not only in Portuguese (less frequently), but also in Spanish (where it is more frequent). This may be because, at least in Brazilian Portuguese, the impersonal verb *haver* has been replaced by *ter*, which usually allows inflection as a possessive or existential verb. In both languages, the plural form is blocked when the verb is in the present tense and is more likely to occur when the verb is in the past, in both indicative (*houveram-tiveram/haviam--tinham*) and subjunctive moods (*houvessem-tivessem*). These are verbal forms in which the difference between the singular and the plural is much more salient. Analysis shows that the use of the third person plural of *haver/ter*--existential constructions when the post-verbal argument – interpreted as either nominative or accusative – is [+plural] is rare. Nevertheless, it is very conspicuous, perhaps due to the high phonic salience of the forms.
    This paper has also shown that (i) there is a real-time change taking place (*haver*-existential ➔ *ter*-existential); (ii) age-grading seems to be involved in the process (in Brazilian Portuguese, younger speakers no longer use *haver*--existential sentences in speech, although this is not the case in European Portuguese); (iii) the use of *haver*-existential (78%) prevailed until the 19th century; (iv) *haver* has become a typical verb of narrative, a modality of discourse that favors the use of the past tense; (v) the use of *ter*-elapsed time expressions, in standard dialect, is detected only in the 1990's sample and it must be asked whether we are not dealing with a strict variation here, because

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there are differences between the two types of constructions at the syntactical level; and, most importantly, (vi) the analysis reveals a crucial aspect of major changes in the history of Portuguese: the existential versions of *ter* and *haver* have inherited syntactic-semantic aspects of their possessive versions, comproving that an item can emerge into a new context without changing its essential selection properties.

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Dinah Callou
Faculdade de Letras (Departamento/Programa
de Pós-graduação em Letras Vernáculas)
da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro
dcallou@gmail.com

Juanito Avelar
UNICAMP
(temporary external collaborator)
juanitoavelar@uol.com.br