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On the presence and absence of definites articles with anthroponyms in rural varieties of Madeiran Portuguese

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European Portuguese (EP) generally manifests a systematic use of the definite article with anthroponyms in communicative immediacy (in the sense of Koch & Oesterreicher, 1986). In Brazilian Portuguese (BP), there is a well-documented variation in the use of determiners in these contexts. A vast body of literature on this phenomenon in BP varieties shows that –among other internal factors– the extralinguistic factor of proximity between speaker and referent crucially affects the usage of the definite article with anthroponyms (cf. Amaral, 2007; Callou & Silva, 1997; Campos Júnior, 2010; de Carvalho, 2017; Lima & Moraes, 2019).

This paper analyses the variable use of definite articles preceding anthroponyms in rural varieties of Madeiran Portuguese (MP) in contexts of communicative immediacy. The results of a qualitative and quantitative analysis based on a corpus of semi-directed interviews and free conversations between elderly rural speakers, suggest that in MP rural varieties, anthroponyms may occur without definite articles in communicative immediacy contexts. Furthermore, building on the findings of previous studies regarding the significance of the factor of proximity between speaker and alluded individual, this study proposes a categorization of intersubjective proximity considering different types of kinship and social relations. Thus, the data suggest that along this continuum of proximity, anthroponyms alluding to members of the nuclear family most commonly occur without definite articles in rural MP varieties.

1. Introduction

The variable use of the definite article preceding anthroponyms is a well-known phenomenon in Romance languages. Due to their referential and grammatical properties, anthroponyms do not need a definite article for their actualization. In those Romance languages displaying variation between the presence and the omission of the definite article in these contexts, there is a vast scope of different possible interpretations that these variants entail. Portuguese is known to display a particular case of article usage with personal proper names. Following Raposo and Nascimento (2013, pp. 1023–1024) the determiner is systematically omitted in denominative and vocative uses.[1] However, in their prototypical referential use, anthroponyms in EP are generally preceded by a definite article in discursive immediacy contexts (in terms of Koch & Oesterreicher, 1986).

Interestingly, it is in discursive immediacy contexts that rural Madeiran Portuguese (MP) varieties manifest a variable use of the definite article with anthroponyms. This phenomenon of variation has been broadly documented for various Brazilian Portuguese (BP) varieties; however, it has not yet been described for MP.[2]

(1)   A: O pai nunca trabalhou com[3] **A_PPN(M)**?
        '(Dad), did you ever work with A_PPN(M)?'

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[1] Apart from the primary referential use, considered in the present study, Raposo and Nascimento (2013, pp. 1012–1017) find two secondary uses: the vocative (*Érica, não sejas má*; 'Érica, don't be mean') and the denominative use (*Ele chama-se Tobias*; 'He is called Tobias'). These two uses inhibit the co-occurrence of a determiner in the same nominal phrase.

[2] All examples of MP in this text are taken from oral interviews recorded with the informants' permission. All informants gave their consent verbally before the registration. The identity of the participants is anonymized. To guarantee the anonymization of the data, the mentioned anthroponyms are replaced by their initial letter and the abbreviation "PPN" for personal proper names or "NN" for nicknames, followed by the gender of the anthroponym (F/M). The label "LN" has been used as a place holder for last names (i.e., surnames). For example: "Jane" = J_PPN(F); "Jane Doe" = J_PPN(F) + LN.

[3] It is worth noting that in Portuguese the definite article may contract with enclosing elements, especially with prepositions. For instance, in example (1) reproduced here as (i), the preposition *com* ('with') might contract with the definite article *o* ('the') resulting in the loss of the nasal ending of *com*, thus phonetically manifesting itself as [ku]. However, when the definite article is omitted and thus no contraction is realized, the preposition is articulated in its original form [kõ]. This perceivable difference is found in contrast between examples (i) and (ii) below. Both utterances were produced by the same speaker.

(i)   O pai nunca trabalhou **com A_PPN(M)**?
      '(Dad), you never worked with A_PPN(M)?'

(ii) Será que ele dá-se bem **c'o F_PPN(M)**?
      '(I wonder if) he gets along with F_PPN(M)?'

The definite article might well also be subject to other assimilation phenomena. For example, with anthroponyms whose onsets are homophonic with the feminine (*a* [æ]) or the masculine (*o* [u]) definite article. The difference between a contracted definite article and an omitted one can be perceived by the elongation of the given phoneme – i.e. [æ:] in *Eu vi a͜ Ana* ('I saw Ana').

The consideration of these factors requires a more detailed phonetically or experimentally (Wall, 2017) grounded analysis that exceeds the scope of this paper (see also Wall, 2019, for an insightful discussion on the significance of such phono-syntactic phenomena in the treatment of article syntax). Thus, in the present analysis, inconclusive cases regarding the presence or omission of the article were excluded.

B: Não!
'No!'

(2)   C: O **A_PPN(M)**, ele foi levantar o dinheiro quando **A_PPN(F)** não [es]tava.
        'A_PPN(M), he withdrew the money when A_PPN(F) wasn't around.'

These illustrative examples stem from the same conversation but were uttered by different informants who have different relationships with the alluded individual A_PPN(M). In example (1), a conversation between the daughter (speaker A) and her parents (speakers B and C), A asks her father (speaker B) whether he had worked with her cousin A_PPN(M) before. Later in the conversation, the mother (speaker C) explains why her husband would not want to work with their nephew A_PPN(M). The reason, illustrated in example (2), is that A_PPN(M) had stolen money from his mother, A_PPN(F), C's sister. Considering the kinship relations between the speakers and the alluded individuals in this particular conversation, two primary observations can be made: i) speaker A refers to her cousin A_PPN(M) without using a determiner, and ii) speaker C refers to the same individual by using the definite article before his proper name. However, when referring to her sister A_PPN(F), C omits the article. A considerable number of previous studies has already shown that the variable use of the definite article insinuates different attitudes of the speaker towards the person mentioned by their name and thus might reflect the intersubjective proximity between speaker and referent (cf. Amaral, 2007; Callou & Silva, 1997; Campos Júnior, 2010; de Carvalho 2017; Lima & Moraes, 2019; Silva, 1998, among others).

Considering the findings of the forecited studies on BP varieties, the present study focuses on the extralinguistic factor of proximity and its influence on the variable use of the definite article with anthroponyms in MP. This phenomenon of variation has been left unaccounted for in previous studies on EP regional and insular varieties. Therefore, this paper's primary goal is to shed light on this thus far undocumented phenomenon.[4]

The present study is structured as follows: the following section introduces the corpus and methodology used in this study. Section 3 describes the discourse-pragmatic features of anthroponyms. This description is followed by a synoptic overview of studies on the definite article preceding anthroponyms in some Ibero-Romance languages to identify prevalent shared patterns and to visualize the role assigned to proximity in terms of the variation under investigation. Finally, section 5 presents an approach to analysing intersubjective proximity

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[4] Even though this paper focuses exclusively on the analysis of the extralinguistic factor of proximity, this should not be taken to deny the importance of other linguistic factors. Previous studies on this variation in Romance languages have pointed out the significance of factors such as gender of the anthroponym (cf. De Mello, 1992), prosodic aspects (cf. Callou & Silva, 1997) and syntactic context (cf. Silva, 1998). Future research on this morphosyntactic variation in MP varieties will need to address the role of linguistic factors in order to provide a more complete description of this phenomenon.

between the speaker and the referent based on a categorization of kinship and other types of social relations. Final observations and schemes for future studies are summarized in the conclusion.

2. Corpus and methodology

To date, there are only two available corpora enabling the study of morphosyntactic variation in MP varieties: the corpus CORDIAL-SIN[5] and the more recent *Corpus de Concordância*.[6] The former gave rise to many dialectal studies on phonetic, syntactic, and morphological variation across varieties of Portuguese. However, it provides only a limited number of Madeiran speech samples. The latter solely includes sociolinguistic interviews with informants from the capital of Madeira Island, Funchal. Furthermore, in the same vein as other traditional dialectal corpora, the corpus CORDIAL-SIN focuses on local traditions and customs, both of which are contexts that do not encourage the mention of individuals by their proper names. The *Corpus de Concordância*, on the other hand, includes questions covering a vast range of thematic fields, such as professional, social, and familiar environments. Although the informants mention individuals pertaining to these environments, they do not usually allude to them by their names. Thus, the main reason for the scarcity of anthroponyms in data stemming from interviews probably lies in the asymmetric relationship or lack of shared knowledge between the interviewer and the interviewee.

In light of these limitations that hinder the occurrence of anthroponyms in the corpora mentioned above, this study relies on two different sources of linguistic data: 16 semi-directed interviews and six free conversations between members of the same family, friends, or neighbours. The interviews were generally carried out with one informant; however, as expected, anthroponyms commonly occur when another participant is present with whom the speaker is familiar. This was the case in three interviews.

The free conversations between individuals who know each other complete the semi-directed interviews in that they effectively compensate for these gaps. In order to promote the most natural environment, the informants were not given any instructions or conversation guide. Although this strategy proved to be very efficient in propagating the appearance of anthroponyms, the mere presence of a recording device indubitably influenced the speaker's linguistic behaviour. Once the conversation ended, I proceeded to ask the informants about their intersubjective relationship

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[5] The CORDIAL-SIN (*Corpus Dialectal para o Estudo da Sintaxe*) is a project directed by Ana Maria Martins. The data stem from 42 survey localities in continental Portugal and the archipelagos, Madeira and the Azores. The corpus CORDIAL-SIN is available at: https://www.clul.ulisboa.pt/projeto/cordial-sin-corpus-dialectal-para-o-estudo-da-sintaxe.

[6] The *Corpus Concordância* integrates sociolinguistic interviews and transcriptions of oral speech samples of EP varieties (Oeiras and Cacém, in Lisbon, and Funchal, the capital of Madeira Island), BP (Copacabana, Nova Iguaçu, in Rio de Janeiro) and a sample of São Tomé. The interviews concerning EP and BP are available at: https://corporaport.letras.ufrj.br.

with the referents who had been mentioned. Despite these efforts, some anthroponyms remained unclassifiable and were therefore excluded from the analysis (cf. Section 5).

Based on the observation that the omission of the definite article with anthroponyms is most commonly found in rural PM varieties, spoken by elderly speakers, this study only includes informants who roughly meet the standards known by the acronym NORM (non-mobile, rural, old, male) (Chambers & Trudgill, 1980). The selected informants present low educational levels, none having received more than four years of primary education. Despite all efforts to ensure a balance between male and female informants, the corpus turns out to be predominantly female. The reason for this imbalance is that most men living in rural areas of Madeira emigrated at some point in their lives.

Three types of anthroponyms were extracted from both subsamples: forenames (3), nicknames (4), and a combination of forenames and surnames, as illustrated in example (5). Nevertheless, the last two types of anthroponyms account for only 15 of the anthroponyms in the data, so that they could not be considered independent variables in the present analysis.

(3)   Depois **A_PPN(F)** então fez uma coisa para ele.
        'Afterwards, A_PPN(F) finally cooked something for him.'

(4)   Vou por cima que'o maldito do **C_NN(M)** [es]tá acolá além!
        'I'll go over the hill because the damn C_NN(M) is there!'

(5)   [Es]tava falando c'o **M_PPN(M) + LN**.
        'She was talking to M_PPN(M) + LN.'

Among the excluded cases were also anthroponyms preceded by determiners other than definite articles, such as demonstratives (6) or indefinite pronouns (7).

(6)   Era irmã **desta A_PPN(F)**.
        'She was this **A_PPN(F)** 's sister.'

(7)   Eu não conhecia **outro J_PPN(M)+ LN**.
        'I did not know any other J_PPN(M)+ LN.'

Furthermore, only cases of the sequence [(definite article) + anthroponyms] were considered. Thus, anthroponyms preceded by common nouns were excluded from the analysis.[7] Examples (8) and (9) show the excluded noun phrases:

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[7] These constructions and their discourse-pragmatic properties have been subject to various linguistic analyses. Whilst some authors consider that the anthroponym maintains its prototypical referential functions, others argue against this (cf. Amaral & Seide, 2020, for a discussion).

(8)   Ele não ouve **a tia A_PPN(F)**.
        'He does not listen to aunt A_PPN(F).'

(9)   [...] **o senhor M_PPN(M)** no Funchal não tem a porta assim
        '[...] Mr. M_PPN(M) in Funchal does not have his door like this'

A total of 26 occurrences of anthroponyms were excluded from the original data set, leaving 399 relevant occurrences with and without the definite article. Before turning to the analysis of the remaining 399 tokens, a description of the properties displayed by anthroponyms will be provided in section 3, followed by some remarks on the extension of the variable use of definite articles with anthroponyms in Ibero-Romance varieties.

3. Discourse-pragmatic properties of anthroponyms

Anthroponyms are commonly subsumed under the category of proper names. As opposed to common names, proper names are known to be univocal items (Fernández Leboráns, 1999, p. 80). This category and its integral elements have been the subject of many studies. In the seminal work on proper names and definite articles in English, Berezowski (2001) reviews the body of literature on this topic, ranging from logical and philosophical to linguistic approaches. The author concludes that the traditional linguistic treatment of proper names and "its insistence on finding some morphological/syntactic properties" which would set them off from common nouns, fail to describe this category adequately (Berezowski, 2001, p. 52). The author accentuates that the linguistic approach focusing on "marginal properties of proper names" has often overlooked the insights of logical research and thus, has not accounted for the most essential function, i.e., that of unique reference (Berezowski, 2001, p. 52). This unique reference inherent to proper names and especially to anthroponyms is based on the act of naming (Berezowski, 2001, p. 96). The anthroponym is univocally bound to the referent to which it alludes, and its definiteness is independent of contextual factors. Hence, although thousands of entities might be referred to by the same proper name (e.g., persons called *João*), the referent "is uniquely alluded to in any utterance which contains its name and confusion is rare" (Berezowski, 2001, p. 55). However, when such confusion does occur, due to asymmetries in the shared knowledge of the interlocutors, speakers tend to apply strategies to discern more clearly the intended reference.

Example (10) illustrates a case of ambiguous reference, which is based on the fact that even though both interlocutors share the same knowledge about the bearer of the anthroponym A_PPN(M), who is speaker A's cousin and B's brother, they do not share the information coded in the predication: the fact that he has a girlfriend. The strategy applied here –i.e., the use of an article-less postnominal possessive pronoun such as *nosso* ('our')– could be interpreted as underlining the willingness of the speaker to reflect the intersubjective proximity with the

alluded individual, especially since the replacement of the anthroponym with any other noun would be ungrammatical in this variety.

(10)   A: Olha, e **A_PPN(M)** tem uma namorada então?
         '(Look), so does A_PPN(M) have a girlfriend then?'
         B: **A_PPN(M)** nosso?
         'Our A_PPN(M)?'

It is worth noting, however, that the generally univocal connection between a proper name and its referent (the person or entity who bears or is known by a specific name) can be altered in certain contexts resulting in non-prototypical uses. In those cases, the proper name maintains its referential properties but loses the characteristic of the univocal reference discussed above. In this sense, in a sentence like *Ela é a Marie Curie da turma* ('She is the Marie Curie of the class'), the use of the anthroponym *Marie Curie* alludes metaphorically to a known characteristic of the scientist Marie Curie (e.g., her intelligence), and ascribes such characteristic to the referent of the pronoun *ela* (cf. Duarte & Oliveira, 2003). Berezowski (2001, pp. 19–22) states, following Geach (1962), that in these predicative uses of proper names, their function is not to refer to a specific entity but instead to denote "the qualities of the entities they would refer to if they had been put to such a use" (Berezowski, 2001, p. 21).

In view of what has been mentioned so far, anthroponyms and proper names alike have been shown to be monoreferential and inherently definite linguistic elements. Definite articles, on the other hand, usually indicate that the referent of the noun is known to speech act participants, being thus characterized as definite within the scope of the respective discourse (cf. Coseriu, 1955–56; Stark, 2006, among many others). Due to this shared referential property of definiteness, the use of definite articles with anthroponyms might intuitively appear redundant. Nonetheless, in some languages –such as standard EP– the default use of anthroponyms requires a definite article. In a study on the grammaticalization of the definite article in Romance languages, Kabatek (2007) suggests the use of the article with proper names may have secondary –i.e., stylistic– functions beyond the grammatical ones. The next section, therefore, describes the variable use of the definite article with anthroponyms in some Ibero-Romance varieties and the secondary values it entails.

4. Variable use of the definite article with anthroponyms in Ibero-Romance varieties

In several Ibero-Romance languages, the variable use of the definite article with personal proper names in their referential functions entails a range of different discourse-pragmatic values. This section will provide a short overview of the possible interpretations of the two available variants –with and without article– based on previous studies. The purpose of this synopsis is twofold.

Firstly, it shows that there are recurrent factors at work conditioning the use of definite articles with anthroponyms, which materialize in different marking patterns across these varieties. Secondly, it outlines differences and similarities in terms of the use of the definite article in these contexts and ultimately allows us to position the variation found in the rural MP varieties within the frame of Ibero-Romance languages.

4.1. Spanish

Standard Spanish presents a canonical use of personal proper names without definite articles (*Vi a Juan*; 'I saw Juan'). However, studies have attested this variation in substandard Spanish varieties. The presence of the article in these contexts has traditionally been considered typical of familiar or colloquial contexts. Its use is shown to be especially widespread with hypocoristics, i.e., nicknames (Fernández Leboráns, 1999, pp. 112–113). This fact is attributed to the familiar nature of these types of derivations.

Another recurrent observation regarding the use of definite articles with anthroponyms is its association with rural varieties. In a study on the use of the article with anthroponyms in cultured speech from ten cities[8] across the Spanish-speaking world, De Mello (1992, p. 222) tests and confirms this general line of thought. In his corpus of urban cultured speech, he finds an overall marginal use of the article with anthroponyms deducing from these findings that this is indeed a predominantly rural phenomenon.

The notoriety of the referent is another reiterated factor promoting the use of definite articles across all social groups (cf. Calderón Campos, 2015). Moreover, this seems to especially apply to female celebrities being mentioned by their surnames preceded by the definite article ("*la Garbo, la Thatcher",* Fernandéz Leboráns, 1999, p. 113).

In terms of the extralinguistic factor of intersubjective proximity, De Mello (1992, p. 228) considers that the basis for its correlation with the use of definite articles with anthroponyms lies in the allusion to a shared knowledge regarding the individual being mentioned. In light of these findings, the author concludes that this shared knowledge is the basis for considering these structures –namely, the use of articles with anthroponyms– as familiar or reflecting proximity between speaker and referent or between the discourse participants. The fact that definite articles with anthroponyms allude to referents most accessible in the shared knowledge between the interlocutors of a communicative situation is also observed by Calderón Campos (2015, p. 91).

Referring to the discourse-pragmatic aspects of this construction in Spanish varieties, most linguists claim that the presence of the article endows the anthroponym with additive connotative

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[8] The cities accounted for in this study were Bogota, Buenos Aires, Caracas, La Habana, Lima, Madrid, Mexico City, San Juan (Puerto Rico), Santiago (Chile) and Sevilla (De Mello, 1992, p. 221).

values of disdain. However, in his forecited analysis on urban varieties, De Mello refutes this widely held premise by concluding that the affective reading is the most productive one in the pan-Hispanic sample analysed (1992, p. 227).

4.2. Catalan

As for Catalan, Andrés Díaz (2013) states that, alongside standard EP, this is the only Ibero-Romance variety that allows the use of the article with anthroponyms. The construction in question seems to be highly productive in certain varieties of Catalan. In insular Catalan, for instance, the use of the definite article in these contexts is relatively widespread. In contrast, the Valencian variety shows a less frequent use of the definite article with anthroponyms (Coromina i Pou, 2001, pp. 265–266), possibly due to its intensive contact with Spanish. A particularity of Catalan, in relation to other Ibero-Romance varieties, is the fact that it manifests dedicated personal articles, *en* (masc.) and *na* (fem.), which are used exclusively with personal proper names, e.g., *na Maria* or *en* Juan (Coromina i Pou, 2001, pp. 70–71). Besides these personal articles, the definite articles *la* and *el* are also used in these contexts.

(11)   Aquest és **en Jordi**.
        'This (one) is Jordi.'

(12)   **La Mireia** riu com una boja.
        'Mireia laughed like a lunatic.'
        (Coromina i Pou, 2001, p. 141; translations are mine)

More recent studies have referred to these special types of determiners as "preproprial" or "proprial" articles (cf. Matushansky, 2006; Muñoz, 2019).

4.3. Galician

In his study on the use of the article with personal first names in present-day Galician, Sousa Fernández (1994) states that the prevailing explanation, which defines the function of the article as carrying a familiar connotation, contempt or impoliteness, is unsatisfactory for describing the variable situation in Galician. Citing the unpublished thesis of Hermida Gulías (1971 *apud* Sousa Fernández, 1994; p. 311), the author points out the existence of diatopic variation within the Galician domain area. In a more recent and thorough analysis of the variable use of definite articles in these contexts, Louredo (2015) confirms Sousa Fernández' statements by identifying a predominant use of the definite article in the south-eastern part of Galicia. However, considering the three different syntactic functions the anthroponym can assume –namely "as a subject [(13)], as a Direct Object [(14)], or as a modifier of a noun phrase [(15)]"– the article is widely used, especially in the Ourense province (Louredo, 2015, pp. 179–180).

(13)   O Xan é o noso veciño.
       'Xoán [sic] is our neighbour.'

(14)   Ao Miguel collérono preso.
       'They took Miguel prisoner.'

(15)   Os bens do Miguel.
       'Miguel's property.'
       (Louredo, 2015, p. 179)

These findings for southern Galician varieties coincide with those for Portuguese, which will be discussed in the following subsection.

4.4. Portuguese

Portuguese varieties display a high degree of complexity concerning the use of definite articles with personal proper names. Grammarians such as Cunha and Cintra (1988, p. 227) observe structural differences in the treatment of anthroponyms between EP and BP. The authors state that its omission in EP is only possible in literary textual genres, whereas its presence in BP is associated with affectivity or familiarity. Furthermore, they argue that the presence of the article with certain anthroponyms conveys an interpretation of disdain (Cunha & Cintra, 1988, p. 238). Although not explicitly stated, the illustrative examples instantiate that this observation accounts for anthroponyms of celebrities only. In terms of standard EP, Raposo and Nascimento (2013) also point out the importance of discourse properties. Thus, the omission of articles with anthroponyms in registers of low formality, in both spoken and written discourse, is rather unacceptable. On the contrary, in literary registers the use of anthroponyms without articles is more frequent and acceptable (Raposo & Nascimento, 2013, pp. 1023–1024).

As far as diatopic variation within EP varieties is concerned, I am not aware of any studies addressing the variable use of definite articles with anthroponyms. However, a vast body of variationist sociolinguistic studies find regional differences within BP varieties. Callou and Silva (1997), for instance, show that there seems to be a correlation between southern varieties and a more predominant article use. Based on speech samples from Porto Alegre, Recife, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the authors account for an extensive series of linguistic and extralinguistic factors favouring or disfavouring the placement of definite articles with anthroponyms. Their results suggest that in Porto Alegre and São Paulo, the two geographically most southern localities under study, the rate of application of the definite article is higher than in the northern localities (Callou & Silva, 1997, p. 25). Based on these findings, it is worth highlighting the proposed correlation between the diatopic extension of the use of the article and

the timing of the colonization of these regions: the earlier the period of colonization, the lower the frequency of use of the article (Callou & Silva, 1997, p. 22). This statement suggests that in the early moments of colonization, Portuguese did not feature a generalized use of the article as currently found in standard EP.

Based on the comparison of two speech samples –one from Curitiba located in the southern state of Santa Catarina and another from João Pessoa in the north-eastern state of Paraiba– Menon (2016) reviews the tendency shown in the results by Callou and Silva (1997). The author confirms that southern varieties display a more frequent use of the definite article than varieties of the northern part of Brazil. It must be noted, however, that these observations are challenged by studies on varieties spoken in neighbouring localities, showing divergent frequencies in the use of the article in these contexts (cf. Amaral, 2007, on varieties spoken in the state of Minas Gerais).

As mentioned in the introduction to the present paper, proximity is an often-cited factor in the literature on this phenomenon (cf. Amaral, 2003, 2007; Callou & Silva, 1997; Campos Júnior, 2010; De Carvalho, 2017; Lima & Moraes, 2019, among others). However, there is no consensus on its actual significance, nor on which of both variants expresses a higher or lower degree of proximity. Interestingly, Amaral's (2007, p. 125) analysis on two varieties spoken in Minas Gerais, shows that in those varieties in which proximity had been selected as the most salient factor, the predominant variant –either with or without the definite article– is generally used when referring to individuals with whom the speakers share a high degree of proximity.

This chapter has provided an overview of the variable use of the definite article in Ibero-Romance varieties. Previous research has shown a widespread presence of this variation, whose variants may differ in their pragmatic-discursive values according to the variety they occur in. Variationist sociolinguistic studies suggest that there are several linguistic and extralinguistic factors at play determining this variation. Regarding the latter, the speaker's origin and the proximity between the speaker and the bearer of the mentioned anthroponym, are among the most cited ones. As stated by Amaral and Seide (2020, p. 131), the influence of intersubjective proximity on the treatment of the definite article, reflects how social relationships interfere in grammar, especially when using elements of personal importance, such as personal proper names.

The overwhelming number of studies on BP varieties contrasts with the complete absence of research on this variation in EP varieties. The only instances of the use of the article preceding anthroponyms are found in grammars (Brito, 2003; Cunha & Cintra, 1988; Raposo & Nascimento, 2013). The following section seeks to fill this gap by describing the variation found in rural MP varieties.

5. Analysis

As has been shown, standard EP displays a generalized use of the definite article in informal and "immediate" spoken communication (cf. Koch & Oesterreicher, 1986). However, the data analysed in the following sections show that rural MP varieties manifest variation between the presence and absence of the article with anthroponyms precisely in contexts of communicative immediacy, as demonstrated in the following examples extracted from informal conversations between members of the same family.

(16)   **O M_PPN(M)** pegou **no R_PPN(M)**, mas **J_PPN(F)** ainda [es]tava lá.
       'M_PPN(M) picked up R_PPN(M), but J_PPN(F) was still there.'

In example (16), the informant tells her sister about an incident that happened at her house while her daughter (J_PPN(F)), her son-in-law (M_PPN(M)) and their son (R_PPN(M)) were visiting. The example illustrates that, while some anthroponyms are preceded by the definite article (M_PPN(M)), others lack the determiner.

The divergent marking of different anthroponyms becomes even more obvious, when considering conversations in which different speakers mention the same individual by their name, as in the example below:

(17)   A: **A_PPN(M)** inventa muitas coisas?
       A: 'Does A_PPN(M) make up a lot of things?'

       B: **O A_PPN(M)** disse **qu'o F_PPN(M)** é que fez tudo!
       B: 'A_PPN(M) said that it was F_PPN(M) that did everything!'

Example (17) shows how different interlocutors refer to the same referents using different variants of the constructions under study. For instance, while speaker A refers to her cousin A_PPN(M) without the article, her interlocutor B mentions the same individual using the definite article. One probable explanation for this inter-speaker variation seems to be the different relationship each speaker has with the mentioned individual.

In what follows, I claim that this inter-speaker variation has its basis in different intersubjective relationship types between the speakers and the alluded referent. Before exploring how intersubjective proximity influences the use of the definite article, the next subsection provides a general description of the phenomenon in the data under study. Then, to account for the inter-speaker variation illustrated in the examples in (17) above, a categorization based on six types of kinship and other social relations between informants and mentioned individuals is used. Lastly, I conclude this section with some observations on the factor of shared knowledge between speaker and interlocutor, which seems to be linked to the factor of intersubjective proximity.

5.1. Results

The data show that, contrary to what was observed for standard EP varieties, rural MP varieties display a relatively high frequency of anthroponyms without articles in the explored contexts. Of the 399 anthroponyms analysed in the corpus, 44.9% were cases of the variant without the definite article. This approximate balance between the two variants in an exclusively oral and informal speech corpus suggests that MP seems to deviate significantly from the constraints in standard EP concerning article omission. Recall that the data stems from semi-directed interviews with mostly one interviewee and free conversations between speakers who know each other.

The following table summarizes the proportions of the data under analysis.

The results illustrated in **Table 1** show, as expected, that more than two thirds of the analysed tokens stem from the free conversations, whereas only 31.3% of the occurrences stem from the semi-directed interviews. One possible explanation might be the very nature of classic dialectological interview questions –i.e., on local traditions and customs– which do not generally favour the occurrence of anthroponyms. In an attempt to remedy this underrepresentation of occurrences, other topics have been included that touch on the personal lives of the informants.

	interviews		free conversations	
	occ./total	%	occ./total	%
def. article + anthroponym	88 / 125	**70.4%**	132 / 274	48.2%
Ø + anthroponym	37 / 125	29.6%	142 / 274	**51.8%**
total	125/399	**31.3%**	274/399	**68.7%**

Table 1: Analysed data according to data sample and presence or absence of the definite article.

Another possible explanation for the imbalance between occurrences of anthroponyms in the two subsamples under study could be the inherently asymmetrical communicative situation of interviews. The dynamics of the interviews are defined by the fact that the interviewer and the interviewee do not tend to be on familiar terms with each other. This asymmetry is furthermore associated with the lack of shared knowledge between the interlocutors. Thus, when speaking about their family, informants of semi-directed interviews will most likely refer to family members by using kinship names –i.e., "my sister"– or by using their personal proper names postponed to a kinship name –i.e., "my sister Mary".[9] Furthermore, data from semi-directed

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[9] Remember that these cases of anthroponyms were excluded from the analysis due to the polemic regarding their referential properties.

interviews with more than one informant suggests that the interlocutor plays a decisive role in how the anthroponym is marked, independently of the intersubjective relationship of the speaker and the individual being mentioned.

Before considering this aspect in section 5.3., the next section addresses the main focus of this analysis by shedding light onto the often-cited factor of intersubjective proximity and its influence in the omission or presence of the definite article.

5.2. Intersubjective proximity between speaker and referent.

Due to the highly complex nature of intersubjective relations, previous studies have relied on different indirect approaches to operationalize this factor. Some approaches (cf. Silva, 1998, among others) rely on the type of anthroponym used to refer to a particular individual (i.e., first name, nickname, first name and surname, etc.) to deduce the degree of proximity. Silva, for instance, differentiates between a) last, baptismal, or family name, b) first name and surname and c) mention with title (1998, pp. 130–131). The results show that anthroponyms of the first category are more often used with the determiner, from which the author deduces that proximity entails a greater use of the definite article (1998, pp. 136–137).

Other studies analyse the factor of proximity based on the degree of public renown of the referent; that is, the more famous the mentioned individual, the less likely it is that they pertain to the speaker's social network (Amaral, 2003, 2007; Callou & Silva, 1997, among others).

These indirect approaches to intersubjective proximities lead to several difficulties: Firstly, inferring the proximity from the type of anthroponym being used does not seem very fruitful since, as mentioned above, the asymmetric communicative context of interviews, could lead to forms of mentioning individuals that would not normally occur in more natural communicative contexts. Secondly, by deducing the degree of proximity from the degree of notoriety of the referent, linguistic analysis fails to consider the perspective of the speaker.

In this analysis, the degree of intersubjective proximity is defined as a continuum ranging from referents who belong to the speaker's nuclear family [+proximity] to people whom the informants regard as not pertaining to their close social network [–proximity]. I propose a more direct approach of operationalizing this factor by categorizing the mentioned individuals in terms of their relationship with the speaker. This information was gathered while collecting the data. The informants were queried about their relationships to the mentioned individuals after the conversations or interviews. However, some of the anthroponyms could still not be categorized according to this variable, as suggest the 21 occurrences subsumed in the category "N.A." (not available) in **Table 2** below.

Note that the data summarized in **Table 2** below, also include 8 cases of reported speech. In those cases, the primary type of relationship was documented, that is, the actual relationship between the person being quoted and the referent.

	social network		family		celebrities		N.A.	
anthroponyms	**occ.**	**%**	**occ.**	**%**	**occ.**	**%**	**occ.**	**%**
with def. article	94	91.3%	105	39.8%	5	55.6%	17	81.0%
without def. article	9	8.7%	159	60.2%	4	44.4%	4	19.0%

Table 2: Anthroponyms with and without article according to relationship type.[10]

Before breaking down the types of relationships in more detail, it should be noted that most of the mentioned anthroponyms belong to the speakers' family members. Moreover, **Table 2** shows a striking difference between anthroponyms of relatives and those of persons belonging to the speaker's social network in terms of their co-occurrence with the determiner. While 60.2% of the personal proper names of relatives are uttered without definite articles, only 8.7% of the anthroponyms of colleagues, friends or neighbours are not preceded by the definite article.

(18)   A: No ano passado, **J_PPN(F)** comprou duas caixas de feijão e mandou um saco para lá.
        'A: Last year, J_PPN(F) bought two cases of beans and sent a bag there.'

(19)   B: Eu acho a **J_PPN(F)** gorda.
        'I think J_PPN(F) is fat.'

These two examples were extracted from different conversations by different speakers mentioning the same person J_PPN(F). In (18) it is her mother mentioning J_PPN(F). Example (19) however, is uttered by her neighbour. These examples show the necessity of using a more fine-grained categorization. In previous studies, both examples would have been assigned a high level of proximity and the variation could not be accounted for. Moreover, as shown in **Table 2**, the variation between expression and omission of the definite article is also found with the nine occurrences of names of celebrities. Admittedly, this reduced number does not allow generalizations about whether the notoriety of the referent is a crucial factor for the omission of the article, as is the case in other languages.

Figure 1 shows, comparing the two most commonly mentioned groups of referents, that with the names of family members the definite article is more likely to be omitted. On the other hand, however, there is a relatively large number of references to relatives with definite article.

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[10] Two occurrences of auto-denomination by the speaker were excluded from this categorization. Interestingly, neither of them co-occur with definite articles.

To elucidate the deviances from the general pattern and to shed light on the granularity of the continuum "intersubjective proximity", I will propose three subcategories[11] for each group –i.e., the group of family members and the group "social network".[12] I will argue that there is a hierarchy of intersubjective proximity that depends on the relationship between the named referent and the speaker.
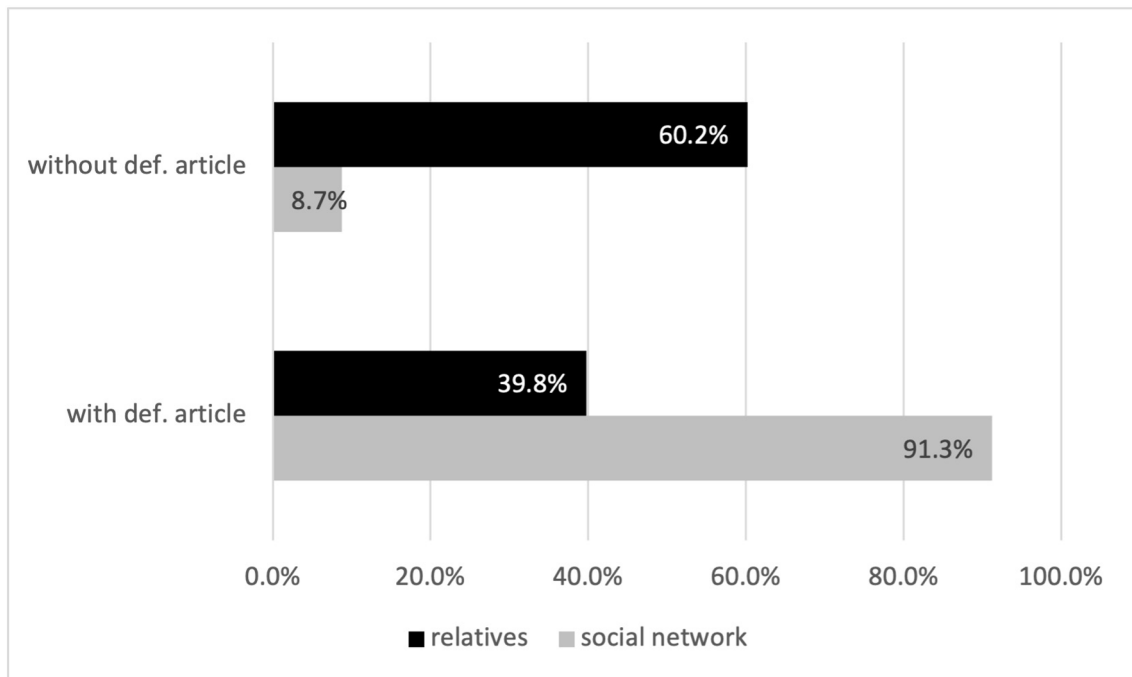

Figure 1: Use of definite articles with anthroponyms of relatives and individuals pertaining to the social network of the speakers.

Accordingly, **Figures 2** and **3** illustrate both proposed hierarchies: within the set of members of the same family and the speaker's social network. The concentric circles represent the degree of intersubjective proximity. Hence, the larger the radius, the lower the degree of intersubjective proximity.

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[11] These subgroups are based on the 11 types of interpersonal relations between speakers and referents that could be documented while compiling the data. The occurrences were classified into the following interpersonal relationships: "close friends", "neighbours", "colleagues", "acquaintances", "aunt/uncle – niece/nephew", "grandparents – grand-children", "spouses", "cousins", "siblings", and "kinship by affinity".

[12] Anthroponyms that could not be categorized or do not share any kind of relationship with the speaker –i.e., "celebrities"– and the instances of self-reference are excluded from this granular analysis.
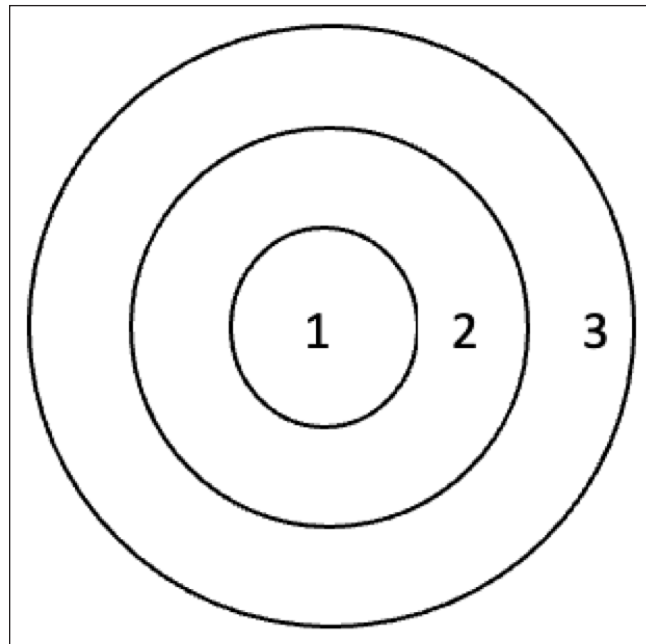
Figure 2: Individuals of the social network of the speaker: 1 = close friends; 2 = neighbours and colleagues; 3 = acquaintances.
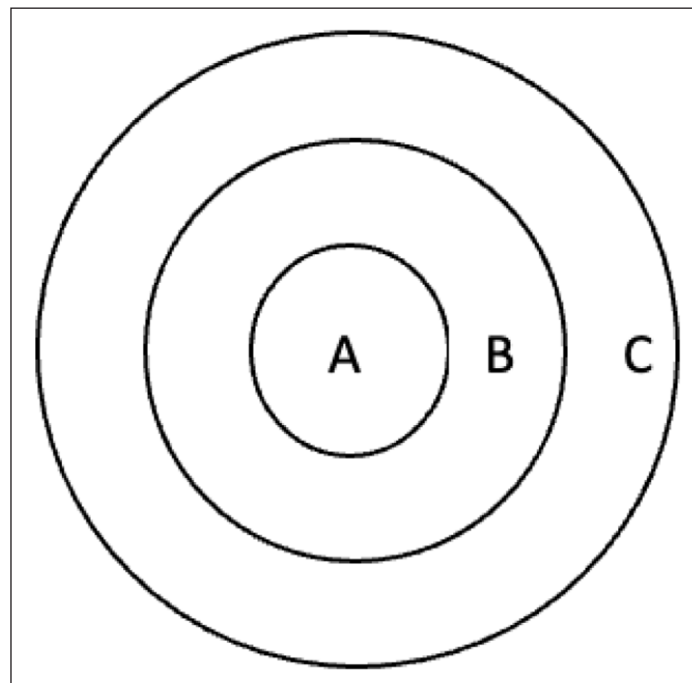

Figure 3: Relatives of the speaker: A = nuclear family; B = extended family; C = kinship by affinity.

While the subgroups within the set of individuals pertaining to the speaker's social network (cf. **Figure 2**) are already evident from the used labels, the categorization within the group of relatives requires further clarification. The "nuclear family" (A) comprises "spouses", "children" and "siblings". The referents categorized as "cousins", "nephews", "grandchildren" constitute the subcategory of "extended family" (B). The group C of relatives by affinity includes spouses of members of groups A or B. Other subcategories such as "parents" or "uncles and aunts" could also be subsumed within the group of relatives. Nonetheless, these individuals, possibly due to the rather conservative hierarchy of family relationships in these communities, are not mentioned by their first names.

Furthermore, it should be noted that this categorization takes into account the change of perspective assumed in reported speech situations, given the variable use of the definite article depending on the relationship of the quoted individual to the referent mentioned (see example (20)):

(20)   Ele dizia: "Ir, que **C_PPN(F)** dá!" O nome de minha mãe era C_PPN(F).[13]
        'He would say: "Go, C_PPN(F) can give you some of that!" My mother's name was C_PPN(F).'

In (20), the informant quotes her father (resumed by the 3SG pronoun *ele* 'he'). The name C_PPN(F), referring to the speaker's mother, is mentioned in direct speech whereby the speaker assumes the quoted individual's point of view, therefore the article is omitted. This example shows the importance of categorizing cases of reported speech assuming the perspective of the quoted individual.

The subdivision of both groups of referents –social network and relatives– into subcategories depicts more clearly the scalar nature of proximity between referent and speaker.

As far as the social network (cf. **Figure 4**) is concerned, the results approximately illustrate the situation found in standard EP. However, for family members with whom the informant shares a greater degree of intersubjective proximity (cf. **Figure 5**), the use of the article is less frequent. Hence, in the nuclear family (cf. **Figure 5**, category A), the article is omitted in 83.6% of the occurrences.

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[13] A reviewer notes that the omission of the definite article with a possessive pronoun, as illustrated in the second sentence of example (20), could suggest that the omission of the article could be a more general phenomenon in the MP varieties under study. Even though the use of the definite articles in the domain of possessive pronouns exceeds the scope of this article, it should be noted that there are numerous instances of omission with kinship nouns such as 'mother' and 'father' in the data. Whether an analogical extension from the variable use of the definite article in possessive constructions with kinship nouns has influenced its use with anthroponyms has yet to be explored in future research on the variety under study. In their study on the use of the definite article in BP varieties, Callou and Silva (1997, pp. 12–13) have sought to establish parallels between these two contexts.
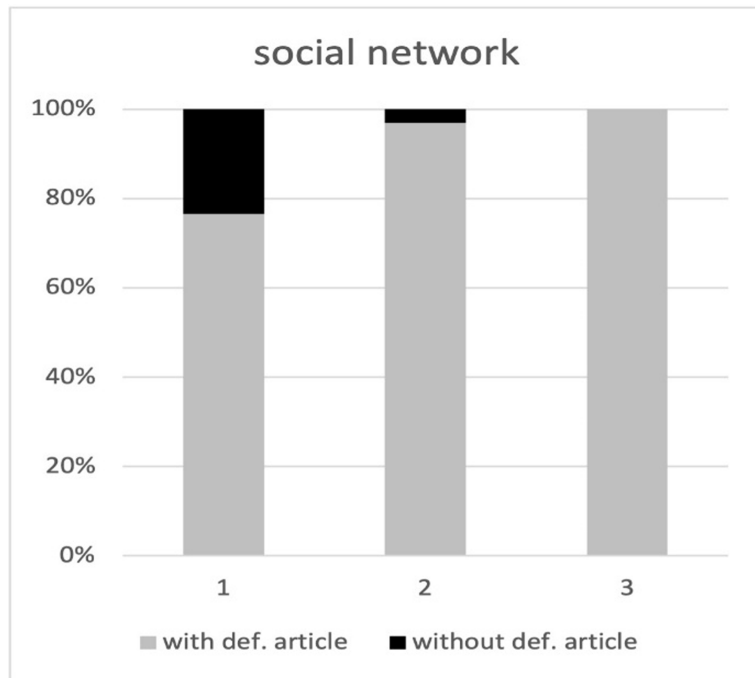
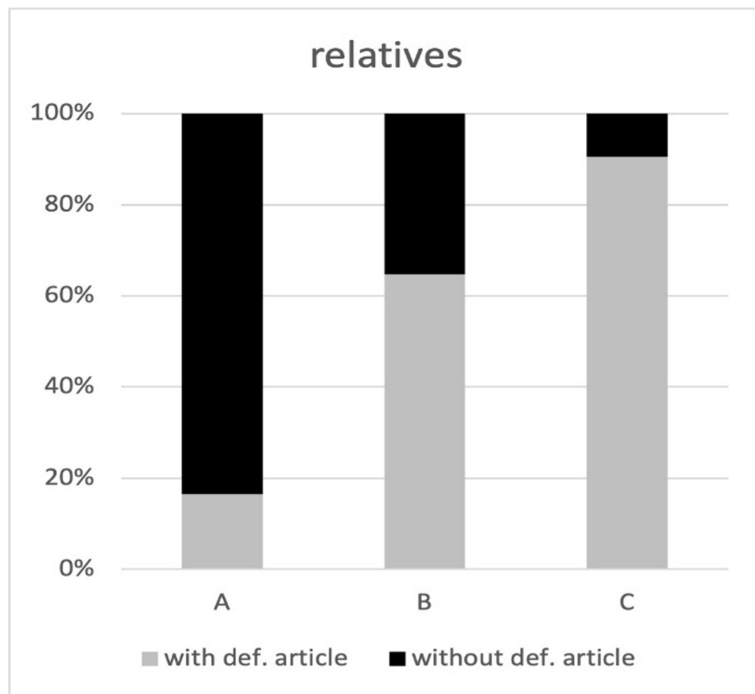**Figure 4:** Anthroponyms of individuals pertaining to the social network.

Figure 5: Relatives of the speaker.

These findings confirm the hypothesis that intersubjective proximity between speakers and referents does indeed correlate with the usage of definite articles with anthroponyms. Resuming the idea of a possible continuum, it can be said that persons with whom the speakers do not share any kind of kinship or close social relationship would comprise the far end of the continuum. These are the bearers of the anthroponyms categorized in groups 3 and C, figuring high levels of usage of the determiner. On the opposite side of the spectrum are members of the nuclear family of the speaker, whose anthroponyms most commonly appear without the definite article. **Figure 6** below illustrates the continuum of intersubjective proximity and its influence on the marking of the anthroponym.
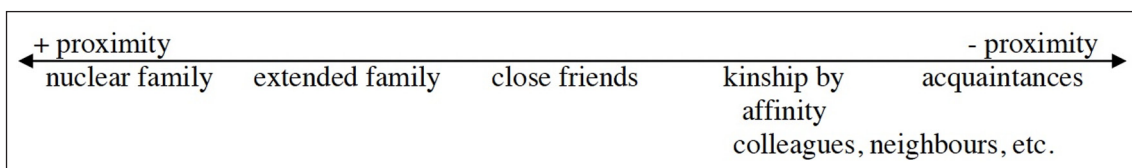

Figure 6: Continuum of intersubjective proximity.

This continuum attempts to illustrate the effects of the factor "intersubjective proximity" and the morphosyntactic variation shown in the results of the present study. However, it does not account for the 16.4% of anthroponyms with definite articles categorized in group A ("nuclear family"). To account for these cases, I will make some observations on the importance of shared knowledge between interlocutors and other factors that exceed the scope of this paper.

5.3. Shared knowledge

The contrast between the interviews and the free conversations allows us to further investigate how shared knowledge between speech act participants influences linguistic behaviour. As stated in section 5.1. two thirds of the occurrences of anthroponyms in the data stem from the sample of free conversations. Furthermore, as illustrated in **Table 1**, there is a higher rate of omitted definite articles within this sample. One possible explanation for this could be that the interlocutors of the free conversations are on familiar terms with each other and thus, have similar information about the identities of the persons mentioned.

Silva (1998), for instance, analyses the effects of common knowledge between interlocutors by proposing a differentiation between "public referents" and "individuals not known by the hearer". The author concludes that anthroponyms of individuals also known by the hearer more frequently lack the determiner (1998, p. 130).

In light of Silva's observations and taking the present study into account, it is important to address the deviances from the observed general tendencies. Among the 24 cases (16.4%) displaying definite articles with anthroponyms of individuals pertaining to group A ("nuclear

family"), 18 are occurrences extracted from the subsample of semi-directed interviews in which the informant is speaking to the unknown interviewer. This observation leads us to the conclusion that despite the high degree of intersubjective proximity, the speaker tends to use definite articles with anthroponyms unknown to their interlocutor.

(21)   E os rapazes também [es]tavam; o **J_PPN(M)** e o **M_PPN(M)**.
         'The boys were also there; J_PPN(M) and M_PPN(M).'

(22)   **J_PPN(M)** nasceu aqui.
         'J_PPN(M) was born here.'

Examples (21) and (22) are extracted from the same interview and uttered by the same speaker. The first example was directed to the interviewer, hence the presence of definite article when naming her brothers "*o J_PPN(M) e o M_PPN(M)*." However, example (22) is directed to the speaker's sister, who joins the conversation later on. Following the interviewer's question, "When did you and your parents move here?" both interviewees try to think of the year together. In this process, the speaker adds the information that J_PPN(M), their brother, had been born in that new house. Therefore, the year had to be prior to his birth. Since the speaker is addressing her sister in this utterance, the article is omitted before their brother's name.

These observations seem to be indicative of the importance of shared knowledge. Even though this factor might propose a useful explanation for seemingly divergent cases displaying unexpected uses of definite articles –i.e., with anthroponyms of members of the nuclear family– it does not solve the whole puzzle. The following example shows a case of intra-speaker variation that one would not expect due to the factors of proximity and shared knowledge.

(23)   Ela falou no **M_PPN(M)**; que **J_PPN(M)** tinha ido mais **M_PPN(M)**.
         'She mentioned M_PPN(M); [she mentioned] that J_PPN(M) went with M_PPN(M).'

Example (23) shows two mentions of the same anthroponym (M_PPN(M)) –with and without the article– uttered by the same speaker talking to her sister about her grandsons M_PPN(M) and J_PPN(M). Neither intersubjective proximity nor shared knowledge can account for this unexpected intra-speaker variation. Hence, other possibly linguistic explanations are called for. One possible explanation could lie in the use of the preposition *em* ('in'). The fact that it contracts with the definite article (*em + o = no*) could explain the presence of the determiner in these contexts. Several authors have considered the role of possible contraction between prepositions and definite articles to account for the use of definite articles (cf. Callou & Silva, 1997, among others). Silva (1998, p. 128), for instance, states that contraction between preposition and article always positively affects its usage with anthroponyms. However, Silva's observation is not in line with the majority of the studies (cf. Amaral & Seide, 2020, for a discussion).

Example (23) shows that both of the extralinguistic factors considered in the present study cannot explain the whole range of variability regarding this phenomenon. Thus, linguistic factors, such as phono-syntactic processes, other co-textual factors and syntactic functions will have to be considered in future studies to complete the picture of this phenomenon.

6. Conclusion

The present research paper has focused on the variable use of the definite article based on oral speech data from elderly speakers of rural MP varieties with low educational levels. In order to analyse whether this variation is also found within other social groups, further research is needed. Notwithstanding, the findings of this article shed light on a morphosyntactic phenomenon that has gone undetected by linguists working on dialectal varieties of EP thus far. Previous studies on this phenomenon in other Ibero-Romance varieties have shown that, among other factors, the degree of proximity between speaker and referent (intersubjective proximity) has a crucial effect on the morphosyntactic marking of anthroponyms in discourse. In those analyses, various indirect approaches were considered to deduce the intersubjective proximity between speaker and individual being mentioned (i.e., the type of anthroponym or the degree of notoriety of the referent). The present analysis, however, sought to further investigate this factor by categorizing each anthroponym according to the speakers' reported relationship to the mentioned individuals. This approach has allowed a more fine-grained description of the effects, showing divergencies in the marking of anthroponyms of individuals within the same groups (i.e., social network and relatives, see **Figures 2** and **3**). The data indicates that the names of members of the nuclear family are most frequently mentioned without definite articles (in 83.6% of the occurrences, see **Figure 5**). However, the same does not apply to the extended family of the speakers. In this group, the use rate of the definite article is more comparable to that of "close friends" (35.3% and 25.3%, respectively, see **Figures 4** and **5**).

The present study, furthermore, reflects on the biases of different methods of data collection. The fact that interlocutors –interviewer and interviewee– are not on familiar terms with each other restricts the overall occurrence of anthroponyms and might influence the use of the definite article. However, the data under analysis, comprising both semi-directed interviews and free conversation samples between family members, friends, and neighbours, successfully tackle this bias. Some primordial observations could be made on the shared knowledge between speech act participants. Apart from promoting the occurrence of anthroponyms in general, the common knowledge between speaker and interlocutor also seems to influence the variation between the presence or absence of definite articles in these contexts.

Future research on the variable use of definite articles in EP varieties will have to address the influence of linguistic factors in order to further define this variation.

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Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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