

SYNTACTIC MODELS IN WESTERN GRAMMAR WRITING: FROM CASES TO FUNCTIONS

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- **ABSTRACT:** This article aims to investigate, throughout the history of syntax, the rhetorical and descriptive movements that led Western grammar writing from an analysis based on Latin cases to one based on syntactic functions. This study follows the approach suggested by Colombat et al. (2017, p. 129), who argue that logical analysis of propositions was systematically applied in the grammars of modern European languages only from the 17th century onward, with the French rationalists of Port-Royal. The disciplinary foundation of this research is the Historiography of Linguistics (Swiggers, 2009a; Koerner, 2020), with particular focus on the historiography of grammar writing (Swiggers, 2020; among others). The results indicate that the ambivalence of the category ‘case’, understood as both a flexional and a logical-semantic phenomenon since Nebrija’s *Gramática Castellana* [Castilian Grammar] (1492), was only finally resolved by French grammar writers in the mid-18th century, leading to the replacement of a syntax model based on cases with one based on functions. This study opens an important investigative path: to explore the repercussions of the shift in syntactic models from cases to functions in the continuity of Western grammaticography, especially in the grammars of Portuguese.
- **KEYWORDS:** Historiography of Linguistics; Grammaticography; Syntax; Syntactic Models.

Introduction

This article aims to investigate, throughout the history of syntax, the rhetorical and descriptive movements that led Western grammaticography from Latin cases to syntactic functions. In other words, it seeks to understand certain aspects of the transition process from syntactic models centered on formal relations of agreement

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and government between words –relations embodied in categories such as *nominative* and *accusative* – to syntactic models focused on logical relations between units linked to the domain of the proposition, such as *subject* and *object*.

The investigation focuses on the evolution of these ideas about syntax in grammars of the Portuguese, Spanish, and French languages, as this history cannot be confined to a single grammaticographical universe. Indeed, it is necessary to explore the history of syntax in grammars of different languages, aiming to trace the development of syntactic models in general and their impacts on the grammaticography of the Portuguese language in particular. In this regard, we take into account, for example, the path suggested by Colombat *et al.* (2017, p. 129), according to whom, in the history of syntax, the logical analysis of the proposition was only systematically formalized in the grammars of modern European languages from the 17th century onward, with the French rationalists of Port-Royal. Until then, syntactic models would have occupied relatively insignificant spaces in those grammars compared to the levels of sounds/letters and words.

Contextualization of the Research

The disciplinary basis of this research is the Historiography of Linguistics (HL), a field of study that investigates the history of knowledge and reflections related to language and languages (Swiggers, 2009a), while respecting the epistemological and methodological requirements necessary for writing adequate historiographical narratives (Koerner, 2020). The task of writing a history of the transition from case-based syntactic models to syntactic functions thus involves the selection, ordering, reconstruction, description, and interpretation of sources and contextually situated significant content. These principles and procedures were effectively followed during the heuristic and hermeneutic phases of the research, culminating in its executive phase¹, that is, the narrative now presented.

In particular, this investigation falls within the *historiography of grammaticography* (cf. Swiggers, 2020, 2009b; Gómez Asencio *et al.*, 2014; Silva, 2006), a research strand of HL that can be defined as the writing of the history of the technique of composing grammars, that is, the act of producing them. Grammaticography represents the domain of action of the grammarian, encompassing specific tasks, decision-making processes, and the inherent implications of this process. In turn, the historiography of

¹ Research in HL is generally organized and developed in three phases, named *heuristic*, *hermeneutic*, and *executive* (cf. Swiggers, 2012, p. 43-44). In summary, the heuristic phase encompasses the epi-historiographical movements of the researcher, such as gathering research documentation, reading primary sources, and cataloging linguistic ideas; the hermeneutic phase involves the critical interpretation of the ideas mapped during the heuristic phase, based on previously established categories of analysis; the executive phase comes after the hermeneutic one, when the results of the investigation are materialized, for example, in a scientific article, such as the present text.

grammaticography focuses on analyzing grammarians' conceptions and the solutions they have proposed for grammatical problems throughout history.

In an even more specific context, this historiographical reflection on syntactic models aligns with the results of the macro research project "Historiography of Syntax in Brazil (HSB): Theory, Norm, and Teaching", which has been in development since 2019 within the research group "HGEL – Historiography, Grammar, and Language Teaching" (UFPB/CNPq)². The main objective of the HSB macroproject is to conduct a historiography of knowledge, ideas, issues, theories, and pedagogical models related to the syntactic dimension of grammatical, philological, and linguistic studies in Brazil, covering the 19th to the 21st centuries (cf. Vieira, 2020a). Among the main contributions of the research within this scope, the following stand out:

- a) the understanding of *Traditional Grammar* (TG) as a "research tradition" (Laudan, 1978)³ that articulates the axis of standard norm with the axis of metalinguistic analysis⁴, based on a set of non-negotiable epistemological guidelines⁵ (cf. Vieira, 2020b);
- b) the proposal of three grammaticographical lineages – *latinized*, *rationalist*, and *empiricist* – for a less linear interpretation of the history of grammar in the West⁶ (cf. Faraco; Vieira, 2021);
- c) the development of two tools for analyzing syntactic models in the history of Western grammaticography: the *taxonomic network*, which graphically records and exemplifies the formal and logical relationships between the metaterms that structure a syntactic model, capturing its macro-organization and revealing terminographic details; and the *glossary of metaterms*, which allows present-day readers to gain a deeper understanding of a past syntactic

² Research group HGEL profile in the Directory of Research Groups in Brazil (Lattes Platform/CNPq): <http://dgp.cnpq.br/dgp/espelhogrupo/318104>. HGEL website: <https://hgel.com.br/>. Accessed on: October 21, 2024.

³ According to Laudan (1978), a "research tradition" is not a particular theory but a set of more general doctrines or assumptions that are harder to test. It is, at the same time, metaphysical and normative, as it is supported and limited by "guidelines" that constitute an ontology specifying the types of fundamental entities within the tradition and certain modes of proceeding that function as legitimate research methods available to intellectuals tied to that tradition.

⁴ According to Vieira (2020b, p. 88-89), the *axis of the standard norm* is equivalent to the field of "correct" writing and speaking, while the *axis of metalinguistic analysis* pertains to the domain of techniques for describing and explaining the structures of the language using a specific categorial and conceptual apparatus. These two axes are not isolated but interconnect like two gears in the composition of the grammatical tradition: the prescription of the standard norm is anchored in metalinguistic analysis gestures that involve phonetic-phonological, morphological, and syntactic relationships between the elements of the language's grammar.

⁵ Vieira (2020b, p. 94) systematizes these guidelines into five: i) Traditional Grammar (GT) seeks to establish and teach an idealized linguistic standard through the prescription of supposedly correct and legitimate forms and constructions; ii) GT promotes a view of language as invariant and immutable, forbidding or ignoring linguistic diversity and combating the supposed deterioration of the idealized standard; iii) GT prioritizes the literary writing of the past over other discursive spheres and other synchronies; iv) GT considers the sentence as the maximum unit of analysis and as the expression of a judgment, endowed with complete meaning; v) GT uses a set of categories and concepts from Greek philosophy and Greco-Latin grammar, adapting them to various modern languages.

⁶ The characterization of these lineages will be revisited and expanded in the next section of this article.

model and to track the transformations in the relationships between terms and concepts (cf. Vieira, 2024);

- d) the systematization of meta-historiographical guidelines⁷ that can conceptually and analytically support different research endeavors involving grammaticography in general and the history of syntax in particular (cf. Vieira; Mesquita, 2025);
- e) the identification and interpretation of certain events in Brazil's colonial and imperial history that, directly or indirectly, contributed to the establishment of a standard norm for Brazilian Portuguese from the 19th century onward, while also fostering the emergence and dissemination of an *error culture* in the treatment of linguistic issues in the country (cf. Vieira; Faraco, 2024);
- f) historiographical narratives on the emergence, development, and consolidation of the process of grammaticalization of pronominal placement in Brazilian Portuguese grammars published throughout the 19th century (cf. Ferreira, 2021; Ferreira; Vieira, 2024);
- g) the panoramic description and interpretation of syntactic knowledge – among other linguistic-grammatical knowledge – addressed in public service examination tests conducted at the national level between 2010 and 2019, based on the analysis of 118 study programs and 1,962 multiple-choice questions (cf. Batista, 2024);
- h) the partial findings of four ongoing doctoral dissertations, which focus on:
 - i) punctuation systems in Portuguese grammars and orthographic treatises from the 16th to the 18th century; ii) syntactic aspects of Brazilian Portuguese addressed in Brazilian school grammars over the last 40 years of the 20th century; iii) knowledge about syntax in Brazilian linguistic research from 1960 to 1989; iv) the history of subordination processes in Portuguese language grammars from the 16th to the 20th century⁸;
- i) and the publication of the *Gramática do português brasileiro escrito* [Grammar of Written Brazilian Portuguese]⁹, a linguistic tool that focuses on the formal written syntax of contemporary Brazilian Portuguese under a descriptive-normative approach, incorporating innovative pedagogical resources such as color-coded diagrams that structure the analysis of the main syntactic constituents of simple and complex sentences (cf. Vieira; Faraco, 2023).

⁷ Meta-historiography, in the terms of Swiggers (2009a), promotes a critical and systematic reflection on research practices in the Historiography of Linguistics, with an emphasis on its theoretical or methodological aspects.

⁸ Provisional title, authorship, and defense forecast of ongoing theses, under the supervision of Francisco Eduardo Vieira, in the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Linguística (PROLING) at UFPB: i) *Syntactic and prosodic aspects of the punctuation system in the first centuries of Portuguese grammar* (Marina Maris, 2025); ii) *A historiography of ideas about Brazilian Portuguese in school grammars* (Anderson Rany, 2025); iii) *Knowledge of syntax in Brazilian linguistic research* (Emily Ferreira, 2026); iv) *The subordination of clauses in Portuguese grammar from the 16th to the 19th centuries* (Fábio Mesquita, 2028).

⁹ The translations in brackets, including this one, were made by the authors of the article.

The list reveals a diverse set of outcomes and products resulting from multiple research approaches and interests involving syntax. In general, these can be situated within three interrelated dimensions: *(meta-)historiographical*, *descriptive-normative*, and *applied*. For example, the development of tools for analyzing syntactic models in the history of Western grammaticography (item c) is metatheoretical in nature, stemming from a scientifically grounded historiographical practice and shedding light on the logical and formal (descriptive-normative) relationships that structure syntactic models. The proposal for the grammaticalization of contemporary Brazilian Portuguese (item i) inevitably combines descriptive-normative and applied (pedagogical) components. Meanwhile, the present article, which examines the transition from cases to functions in the history of syntactic models, prioritizes historiographical and descriptive aspects in addressing these linguistic ideas.

In this regard, it is important to clarify what is meant by ‘linguistic ideas’ and ‘syntactic model’ within the scope of this body of research and, consequently, in this article.

It is well known that the object of HL is not language and languages themselves but rather the evolutionary course of knowledge (or understanding) about language and languages. In other words, this disciplinary field is concerned with the historical development of *linguistic ideas* in terms of acquisition, elaboration, formulation, circulation, diffusion, reception, influence, longevity, and disappearance, among other aspects. From this perspective, ‘knowledge’, ‘understanding’, and ‘linguistic ideas’ are equivalent and broadly defined expressions. For example, a theory, an argument, an assertion, an observation, a presupposition, a prescription, or a prejudice related to language or languages, each is considered a linguistic idea – that is, it belongs to the body of linguistic knowledge or understanding. These expressions also refer to “reflections, speculations, descriptions, analyses, and normative rules about language and languages that were formulated centuries before it was even possible to speak of linguistics as a field” (Batista, 2020, p. 18, our translation)¹⁰.

A *syntactic model*, therefore, can be defined as *a set of related linguistic ideas, knowledge, or understandings, encompassing the macro and micro-organization of what is understood as syntax within a linguistic instrument. This includes metalinguistic and conceptual aspects related to categories, properties, prescriptions, and relationships* (Vieira, 2024). In the history of the grammaticalization of the Portuguese language, syntactic models follow the epistemological guidelines of Traditional Grammar (TG) mentioned above (item a). However, variations, which may manifest more or less pronouncedly – in terms of conceptions of language, tongue, grammar, and syntax, the organization of exposition, structural descriptions, analysis techniques, the establishment of normative rules, classifications, terminologies, and concepts used in the works – result

¹⁰ In the original: “reflexões, especulações, descrições, análises, regras normativas sobre a linguagem e as línguas que foram elaboradas séculos antes de se poder efetivamente falar de uma linguística”.

in diversified syntactic models, even when considering linguistic instruments from the same period or the same grammaticographical lineage.

Having made these considerations, it is important to explain how this article is organized. In addition to this introductory section, there are six other sections. In the first of them, a general presentation is made, based on Faraco and Vieira (2021), of the three grammaticographical lineages – the latinized, the rationalist, and the empiricist – which guided the writing of modern European language grammars since the 15th century. Next, attention is given to syntactic models centered on formal relations of agreement and government, and the ambivalent status of the category ‘case’ in latinized grammars is discussed. The article then examines the category ‘case’ in the *Port-Royal Grammar* and introduces the syntactic analysis proposed in the French grammar by Buffier (1709), in which the first attempt to move beyond case syntax is presented. The discussion concludes with the presentation of the syntactic model centered on logical relations proposed in the French grammar by Girard (1747). The article ends with a brief section of final considerations.

Dynamics of Grammatical Lineages

In the historiography of **grammaticography**, the emergence of grammars of modern European languages, especially the grammars of Romance languages, is often associated with Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1441?-1522) and his *Gramática castellana* [*Castilian Grammar*]¹¹, published in 1492. This work, faithful to the foundations of the Greco-Latin grammatical tradition, had a lasting impact on Western grammatical studies, establishing a model for the development of grammars of other European languages and influencing how vernaculars would be analyzed and standardized from then on. In this sense, Nebrija’s Castilian grammar is often considered a turning point in what Aurox (1992) calls the “technological revolution of grammatization”, that is, the Renaissance movement of massive grammatization of European languages based on a single linguistic tradition – the Greco-Latin grammatical tradition. In the following centuries, these processes of constructing standard norms through a homogeneous metalinguistic network unfolded into three different grammatical traditions, as we have argued – as previously mentioned – in Faraco and Vieira (2021): the *latinized lineage*, the *rationalist lineage*, and the *empiricist lineage*.

In general terms, the grammars of the latinized lineage are characterized by their explicit connection to Latin grammars from rhetorical, analytical, and normative perspectives. These works thus establish a mirror-like relationship between the structures of Latin and the modern grammaticized language, as already indicated in the title of

¹¹ It is worth noting that the title of Nebrija’s grammar varies across different editions: *Arte de la lengua castellana* [Art of the Castilian Language], *Gramática sobre la lengua castellana* [Grammar on the Castilian Language], *Gramática de la lengua castellana* [Grammar of the Castilian Language], and *Gramática castellana* [Castilian Grammar]. The latter designation has been adopted in this article, as it corresponds to the title of the edition consulted.

Regras da lingua Portuguesa, espelho da lingua Latina [...] [**Rules of the Portuguese Language, Mirror of the Latin Language**] by Jeronymo Contador de Argote (1676-1749). In the introduction to this grammar, published in 1725, one reads, for example, that “[...] most of the rules of Portuguese Grammar correspond to and are the same as those used in Latin Grammar. And thus, once the former are learned, the student, when beginning to study Latin, has already mastered most of its rules [...]” (Argote, 1725, n.p., our translation)¹². As a result of this understanding and pedagogical purpose, those descriptions attempt to accommodate the facts of Portuguese grammar within the framework of Latin grammar, regardless of more or less evident differences, as illustrated by the explanation presented in the *Regras* [Rules] regarding the number of verb conjugations in both languages:

[...] truly, in the Portuguese language, there are only three conjugations, because only the verb *pôr* and its compounds (*compôr*, *dispor*, etc.) end in *-or*. Thus, they do not properly form a separate conjugation but are rather irregular verbs. However, since the verb *pôr* has many compounds and Latin has four conjugations, I stated above that Portuguese also has four, in order to maintain as much similarity as possible between Latin and Portuguese [...] (Argote, 1725, p. 144-145, our translation)¹³.

In contrast, the rationalist lineage emerges anchored in a logicist and universalizing perspective, according to which grammar should primarily concern itself with the general rational principles that, in theory, underlie the structures of all languages. The peculiarities of each language are thus seen as different manifestations of these general principles. Distancing itself – especially in rhetoric – from the latinized lineage, the grammarians of the rationalist lineage often criticize the supposed descriptive confinement of vernacular languages to Latin. One of the most frequently criticized aspects is the use of case and declension tables in the treatment of certain parts of speech, such as ‘nouns’. Figure 1, also taken from *Regras* [Rules], where it states that “the noun [...] is declined by cases” (Argote, 1725, p. 2-3, our translation)¹⁴, exemplifies this mirror-like relationship that structures most grammars within the latinized lineage:

¹² In the original: “[...] a mayor parte das regras da Grammatica Portuguesa convem, e saõ as mesmas, de que usa a Grammatica Latina. E assim sabidas as primeyras tem vencido o Estudante, quando entra a aprender o Latim, a mayor parte das suas regras [...]”.

¹³ In the original: “[...] verdadeyramente na lingua Portuguesa só ha tres conjugações, porque em *or* só acaba o Verbo *Por*, e os seus compostos *compôr*, *dispor* &c. e assim propriamente não formão conjugação diversa, mas saõ Verbos irregulares; porem, como o Verbo *Por* tem muytos compostos, e na lingua Latina ha quatro conjugaçoens, por isso disse acima haver tambem quatro na Portuguesa, para observar o mais que posso semelhança entre a lingua Latina, e Portuguesa [...]”.

¹⁴ In the original: “o nome [...] se declina por casos”.

Figure 1 – Declension of nouns preceded by the article ‘o’ [the] in Argote (1725)

Numero Singular.		Numero Plural.	
Nominativo	O Louvor.	Nominativo	Os Louvores.
Genitivo	do Louvor.	Genitivo	dos Louvores.
Dativo	ao Louvor.	Dativo	aos Louvores.
Accusativo	ao Louvor.	Accusativo	aos Louvores.
Vocativo	ò Louvor.	Vocativo	ò Louvores.
Ablativo	de Louvor.	Ablativo	dos Louvores.

Source: Argote (1725, p. 9-10)

The paragraphs below, extracted from the presentation “Ao leitor benévolo” [To the Benevolent Reader] in *Epitome da Grammatica da Lingua Portuguesa* [**Epitome of the Grammar of the Portuguese Language**] (1806) by the Brazilian author Antonio de Moraes Silva (1755-1824), and from the “Introdução” [Introduction] of *Grammatica philosophica da lingua portugueza, ou principios da grammatica geral applicados á nossa linguagem* [**Philosophical Grammar of the Portuguese Language, or Principles of General Grammar Applied to Our Language**] (1822) by the Portuguese author Jeronimo Soares Barbosa (1737-1816), clearly illustrate the rhetoric of rupture in rationalist grammars with latinized grammars, which described Portuguese based on grammatical categories more suited to Latin, such as ‘case’ and ‘declension’:

Moving on to nouns, [grammar books] create an uncertain number of declensions and assign them an unknown number of cases. However, **our nouns do not have cases or different final endings**, except for *eu, tu, ele*; the rest only change to indicate the plural, e.g., *casa, casas; templo, templos*.

To these imagined cases, they assign names such as nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, etc. If you ask them what this means, they will tell you that in Latin, these are different endings of the same noun, which serve to indicate the various relations in which the object, signified by the noun, is represented. However, **beyond the fact that it is a false idea to claim that there are genitives, datives, etc., in Portuguese**, the notions of correspondence between Latin and Portuguese would also be incorrect. (Moraes Silva, 1806, p. III-IV, our translation, emphasis added)¹⁵.

¹⁵ In the original: “Passando aos nomes, [os livros de Grammatica] fazem se não sei quantas declinações, e dão lhes não sei quantos casos: mas os nossos nomes não tem casos, ou desinencias finaes diversas, senão *eu, tu, elle*: os mais só se varião para indicar o numero plural, v. g. *casa, casas; templo, templos*.

A estes sonhados casos dão lhes nomes de Nominativos, Genitivos, Dativos, Accusativos, &c. Se lhes perguntares o que é isto, dir-te hão, que em Latin são diversas terminações do mesmo nome, que servem para indicar as varias relações, em que se representa o objecto significado pelo nome. Mas além de que são idéyas falsas dizer, que ha

Portugal had Portuguese grammars even before other civilized nations had one in their own language. [...]
 However, all those grammars, aside from many specific errors and shortcomings that I will note in due course, share the common flaw of being **purely analogical systems, all modeled after Latin grammars**. [...] (Soares Barbosa, 1822, p. XI-XII, our translation, emphasis added)¹⁶.

This disruptive stance of grammars within the rationalist tradition, exemplified above through excerpts from Portuguese language grammars, becomes even more pronounced in grammars of the empiricist tradition. These grammars focus primarily on *usus* (usage), the particularities, and the unique character of each language – although such usages generally align with the speech of prestigious groups rather than the linguistic practices of the lower social strata or those distant from the royal courts. The rhetoric of authors within this tradition tends to oppose not only the latinized model of cases and declensions but also the deductive foundations and abstract explanations of rationalist (philosophical) grammars. This perspective is evident in the “Advertencia” [Note] of *Grammatica portugueza elemental – fundada sobre o methodo historico-comparativo* [**Elementary Portuguese Grammar – Founded on the Historical-Comparative Method**] (1786) by the Portuguese author Theophilo Braga (1843-1924):

Our grammar, founded in the 16th century by Fernão de Oliveira and João de Barros **under the guidance of Classical Latin**, only began to be studied as an independent entity after the efforts of Amaro de Roboredo, who lamented that, even in the 17th century, there were still no schools dedicated to the national language. Under the dominance and scholastic discipline of the Jesuits, Portuguese grammar **was once again subjected to Latin schemes** and rhetorical distortions. Father Bento Pereira (1672) identified a *vocative* case in the pronoun *eu*, a *neuter* gender in the pronouns *isto* and *isso*, as well as *gerunds* and *supine* complements in verbs, reducing syntax to mere rules of agreement. Following the reform attempted by Pombal, Lobato’s grammar did nothing to advance the grammatical study of Portuguese. Under the abstract influence of Condillac’s ideas on general grammar, Jerônimo Soares Barbosa wrote his *Grammatica philosophica*, which became the source for all the abbreviated and practical grammars written in Portugal. **All of these grammars suffer from a classification of linguistic facts**

genitivos, dativos, &c. em Portuguez, tambem seriam falsas noções as que se dessem de correspondencias entre o Latim, e Portuguez.”.

¹⁶ In the original: “Portugal conheceo Grammaticas Portuguezas ainda antes que outras nações civilizadas tivessem huma na sua Lingua. [...] Mas todas estas Grammaticas, além de muitos erros e defetios particulares, que nos seus lugares notarei, tem o commum de serem huns **systemas meramente analogicos, e fundidos todos pela mesma fôrma das Grammaticas Latinas** [...]”

without a rational basis, while simultaneously presenting abstract and authoritarian explanations that rendered grammar a mechanical exercise. (Braga, 1876, pp. VII–VIII, our translation, emphasis added)¹⁷.

From a chronological perspective, these three grammaticographical lineages – latinized, rationalist, and empiricist – tend to emerge at different and successive moments. In the domain of Romance languages, latinized grammars begin with Nebrija’s Castilian grammar at the end of the 15th century; rationalist grammars take shape with the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée* [**General and Rational Grammar**] of Port-Royal in the second half of the 17th century; and empiricist grammars start to appear with early 18th-century French grammaticography (cf. Faraco; Vieira, 2021). However, this temporal succession does not necessarily imply the replacement of one model by another. Instead, this framework of traditions allows us to observe distinct scenarios: (i) the co-occurrence of lineages; (ii) the evaluation and selection of lineages; (iii) conflicting critiques among lineages; and (iv) the intertwining of lineages.

In the first scenario, different traditions coexist within distinct grammaticographical projects during the same period. An example of this can be found in the history of Portuguese grammaticography in the 18th and 19th centuries. Published in 1770 by Antonio José dos Reis Lobato (1721-1804), *Arte da grammatica da lingua portuguesa* [...] [**Art of the Grammar of the Portuguese Language**], a work classified within the latinized lineage and explicitly criticized by Soares Barbosa (1822), as discussed above, underwent successive editions until 1870, a century after its first publication. These reissues of Lobato’s *Arte* [Art] took place alongside multiple reprints of Soares Barbosa’s (1822) work, a grammar within the rationalist tradition, whose final edition appeared in 1881 – at a time when the influence of historical-comparative grammar was already gaining traction in Portugal with the publication of *A lingua portugueza: phonologia, etymologia, morphologia e syntaxe* [**The Portuguese Language: Phonology, Etymology, Morphology, and Syntax**] (1868) by Adolfo Coelho (1847-1919). Thus, the critiques leveled by Soares Barbosa and other Portuguese grammarians against the latinized tradition did not lead to the outright abandonment of Lobato’s latinized *Arte* [Art], which coexisted throughout nearly the entire 19th century with Soares Barbosa’s *Grammatica philosophica* [**Philosophical Grammar**]. In turn, Soares Barbosa’s rationalist ideas continued to coexist for almost two more decades

¹⁷ In the original: “A nossa Grammatica, fundada no século XVI por Fernão de Oliveira e João de Barros sob a direcção do latim classico, só começou a ser estudada como um producto independente depois dos esforços de Amaro de Robredo, que se lamentava de não haver ainda no seculo XVII escolas para a lingua nacional. Sob o dominio e disciplina escolar dos jesuitas, a Grammatica portugueza tornou a ser submettida aos promptuarios latinos e ás violencias de rhetorica; o padre Bento Pereira (1672) achou *vocativo* no pronome *eu*, genero *neutro* no pronome *isto* e *isso*; *gerundios* e supplementos de *supinos* nos verbos, e reduziu a syntaxe ás regras de concordancia. Depois da reforma tentada por Pombal, a Grammatica de Lobato em nada levantou o estudo grammatical do portuguez, e sob a influencia abstracta das idéas de Condillac sobre a grammatica geral é que Jeronymo Soares Barbosa escreveu a sua *Grammatica philosophica*. Esta obra é a fonte de todas as grammaticas abreviadas das práticas que se tem escripto em Portugal. Todas elas peccam pela sua classificacão dos factos linguisticos sem base racional, e ao mesmo tempo pelas explicações abstractas e auctoritarias, que tornaram a grammatica uma cousa mechanica”.

with the historical-comparative approach of late 19th-century grammars belonging to the empiricist tradition, which generally opposed rationalist/philosophical grammars.

In the second scenario (the evaluation and selection of lineages), grammatical lineages are analyzed by grammarians as viable analytical alternatives suited to the objectives of the linguistic instrument. An illustrative case of this situation can be found in the process of developing the *Gramática de la Lengua Castellana compuesta por la Real Academia Espanõla* [*Grammar of the Castilian Language Composed by the Royal Spanish Academy*], published in 1771. During preliminary debates, its authors considered two competing models: a rationalist approach, which sought to ground grammatical rules in universal and abstract principles, and an empiricist model, which advocated for the description of actual language use as the foundation for the Real Academia Espanõla [*Royal Spanish Academy*] (RAE). They ultimately opted for the latter, not due to intrinsic criticisms of the rationalist model, but because they deemed empiricism more suitable for the pedagogical character they intended for the work (cf. Sarmiento, 1978). In reality, this dispute reflected a broader intellectual debate on the nature of knowledge and the most effective way to study language. The RAE's decision thus marked a significant moment in the history of Western grammaticography, consolidating the influence of empiricism and paving the way for the development of descriptive approaches based on actual language usage.

Examples of the third situation (the conflicting critique of other lineages), in which criticisms are directed at other grammatical traditions to justify their replacement, have already been presented above, specifically in the rhetorical elements found in the pre-textual sections of the Portuguese-language grammars written by Moraes Silva (1806), Soares Barbosa (1822), and Theophilo Braga (1876). The origins of this rupture between traditions in modern European grammar writing can possibly be traced back to French grammaticography, particularly to *Grammaire Françoise sur un plan nouveau pour en rendre les principes plus clairs & la pratique plus aisée* [**French Grammar on a New Plan to Make Its Principles Clearer and Its Practice Easier**], written by Father Claude Buffier (1661-1737) and published in 1709. In this work, Buffier formulates a critique of latinized grammars and argues for their replacement with an empiricist grammar that describes the language as it is¹⁸:

[...] every language, to be properly learned, must have its own specific grammar. What has led to so many inadequate grammars is the attempt to apply the grammar of one language to another entirely different language. This is particularly a fundamental flaw in French grammars that have been modeled on the structure of Latin grammars, under the pretext that French derives from Latin. While it is true that a significant number of French words originate from Latin, the arrangement of sentences and

¹⁸ In section 6 of this article, this breakaway movement by Buffier (1709) from syntactic models based on cases will be revisited for analysis.

the phrasing that constitute the distinctive character of a language make French as different from Latin as it is from any other (Buffier, 1709, p. 8-9, our translation)¹⁹.

This critical stance, however, did not immediately lead to the abandonment of the latinized model. It continued to be used in French grammaticography, as evidenced by the grammar of Pierre Restaut (1696-1764), published in 1730, nearly three decades after Buffier's *Grammaire Française* [**French Grammar**] – another example of the co-occurrence of lineages. Despite its title – *Principes généraux et raisonnés de la langue Française par demandes & par réponses* [**General and Rational Principles of the French Language in Questions and Answers**] – Restaut (1730) employs numerous declension tables for articles, nouns, and pronouns, in a manner similar to that of Argote (1725), a Portuguese grammar known for its adherence to the latinized model:

Figure 2 – Declension of a masculine noun in Restaut (1730)

SINGULIER.			PLURIER.		
<i>R.</i>			<i>Nom.</i>		
<i>Nom.</i>	.	le Prince.	<i>Nom.</i>	.	les Princes.
<i>Gen.</i>	.	du Prince.	<i>Gen.</i>	.	des Princes.
<i>Dat.</i>	.	au Prince.	<i>Dat.</i>	.	aux Princes.
<i>Acc.</i>	.	le Prince.	<i>Acc.</i>	.	les Princes.
<i>Voc.</i>	.	ô Prince.	<i>Voc.</i>	.	ô Princes.
<i>Abl.</i>	.	du Prince.	<i>Abl.</i>	.	des Princes.

Source: Restaut (1730, p. 22)

Finally, in the fourth and last situation (the intertwining of lineages), there is the eventual merging of traditions into eclectic grammaticographic proposals. This can be observed in the “Introducçam” [**Introduction**] of Argote (1725). While eclecticism is not entirely evident in the analytical practice itself, it becomes visible in the rhetorical gestures of this author when he refers to the *Grammaire* [**Grammar**] of Port-Royal, even though he does not write a rationalist or philosophical grammar:

I also note that some may find the explanations I provide for certain aspects of Portuguese grammar unusual. However, those familiar with the **new method of the Fathers of the Port-Royal Congregation** and

¹⁹ In the original: “chaque langue pour être bien aprise doit avoir sa Grammaire particuliere, & ce qui a fait tant de mauvaises Grammaires, c’est d’avoir voulu apliquer celle qui étoit propre d’une langue à une autre langue toute differente. C’est en particulier uu défaut essentiel dans les Grammaires Françaises qu’on a voulu faire sur le plan des Grammaires Latines : sous pretexte que le François venoit du Latin. Il est vrai qu’un grand nombre de ses mots en dérivent : mais pour l’arangement des phrases & le tour des expressions qui font le propre caractere d’une langue, le François est aussi différent du Latin que de quelque autre langue que ce soit”.

the discursive Grammar of Father Lamy²⁰ will see that, in explaining Portuguese grammar, I follow the same doctrine they applied to Latin (Argote, 1725, n.p., our translation, emphasis added)²¹.

A similar rhetoric of rupture can be observed in the latinized grammar of Reis Lobato (1770). In the section also titled “Introducçam” [**Introduction**] of his *Arte* [Art], the author presents a critical overview of Portuguese-language grammaticography up to that point. In summary, he asserts that Fernão de Oliveira’s (1507-1581) *Grammatica da linguaem Portuguesa* [**Grammar of the Portuguese Language**] (1536) is not even a grammar, due to the limitation of its scope; that João de Barros’s (1496-1570) *Grammatica da lingua Portuguesa* [**Grammar of the Portuguese Language**] (1540) is too brief and contains serious errors; and that Amaro de Roboredo’s (1580/85-1653) *Methodo grammatical para todas as lingvas* [**Grammatical Method for All Languages**] (1619) has many shortcomings, particularly in its treatment of syntax. However, although he identifies issues in Argote’s *Regras da lingua Portuguesa, espelho da lingua Latina* [**Rules of the Portuguese Language, Mirror of the Latin Language**], Lobato argues that such issues are not numerous, as Argote followed the doctrine of Port-Royal:

In the Grammar by D. Jeronymo Contador de Argote, there are indeed not as many imperfections as are found in the aforementioned grammarians; his definitions are better, as he followed, as the author himself admits, Lamy in his discursive Grammar and the **doctrines of the Method of the Fathers of the Port-Royal Congregation** (Reis Lobato, 1770, p. XXXVI-XXXVII, our translation, emphasis added)²².

As we move into the 19th century, another example of the intertwining of lineages in Portuguese grammaticography can be found in *Grammatica Portuguesa* [**Portuguese**

²⁰ The work of Father Bernard Lamy (1640-1715), cited by Argote and Lobato, is titled *Rhetorique ou L'Art de Parler* [Rhetoric or the Art of Speaking]. A rationalist-based work, it achieved great success, reaching 29 editions. It is divided into five books: the first is a dissertation on language and grammar; the second, a study of figures of speech; the third, a study of sounds and versification; the fourth deals with style; and the fifth is properly a work on rhetoric. Its interpreters often consider it a work that complements Port-Royal. In this sense, it would be the Rhetoric of Port-Royal, alongside the Logic (Arnauld; Nicole, 1662) and the Grammar (Arnauld; Lancelot, 1660). The text does not include direct references to Port-Royal, but its discourse intersects with what is found in their Logic and Grammar.

²¹ In the original: “Tambem advirto que alguns poderaõ estranhar a explicação, que dou a alguns pontos da Grammatica Portugueza, porẽm os que forem versados na lição do novo methodo dos Padres da Congregação de Portroial, e da Grammatica discursada do Padre Lami, veraõ que na explicação da Grammatica Portugueza observo a mesma doutrina, que elles observãrão a respeyto da Latina”.

²² In the original: “Na Grammatica de D. Jeronymo Contador de Argote se não achão na verdade tantas imperfeições, como se encontrão nos sobreditos Gramaticos; porque são melhores as suas definições, por ter seguido, como o mesmo Autor confessa, a Lami na sua Grammatica discursada, e as doutrinas do Methodo dos Padres da Congregação do Port-Royal”.

Grammar] (1881) by Júlio Ribeiro (1845-1890)²³, as evidenced by the two excerpts below. The book begins with a statement that is clearly empiricist and pedagogical: grammar must present the facts of the language in a way that facilitates learning. However, when analyzing Portuguese syntax, it follows a rationalist perspective, adopting, for instance, the concept of *judgment* and the idea that structures can be broken down into *subject*, *copula*, and *attribute*:

Grammar does not create laws and rules for language; it exposes its facts, organized in such a way that they can be easily learned. The study of grammar does not have as its primary objective the correction of language. By listening to good orators, conversing with educated individuals, and reading well-written articles and books, many people can speak and write correctly without having undertaken a specialized study of a grammar course (Ribeiro, 1881, p. 1, our translation)²⁴.

In this example, '*Roses are flowers*', '*Roses*' is the subject; '*are*' is the copula; and '*flowers*' is the predicate. In this other example, '*Peter loves*', '*loves*' can be broken down into '*is a lover*', and the entire example is analyzed as above. The act of the mind by which the predicate is linked to the notion expressed by the subject is called *judgment*. The result of a judgment is a *thought*. The expression of thought is the *sentence* (Ribeiro, 1881, p. 194-195, our translation)²⁵.

Thus, amidst these multiple dynamics among grammaticographical lineages, we have dedicated ourselves, among other topics in the historiography of grammaticography, to the transition from case-based syntactic models to function-based syntactic models. This is, as can be observed, a long-term process. There was no moment of radical rupture, but rather instances of advances and setbacks, continuities and discontinuities between syntactic models, until the complete disappearance of latinized case-centered models. Next, we will recount a small fragment of this long history.

²³ Prete (2020), in addition to providing a critical review of the evaluations of Júlio Ribeiro's grammar found in historiographic studies of Brazilian grammaticography, aptly demonstrates the eclecticism that characterizes it.

²⁴ In the original: "A grammatica não faz leis e regras para a linguagem; expõe os factos della, ordenados de modo que possam ser aprendidos com facilidade. O estudo da grammatica não tem por principal objecto a correcção da linguagem. Ouvindo bons oradores, conversando com pessoas instruidas, lendo artigos e livros bem escriptos, muita gente consegue fallar e escrever correctamente sem ter feito estudo especial de um curso de grammatica".

²⁵ In the original: "Neste exemplo « *Rosas são flores* » « *Rosas* » é o sujeito ; « *são* » a copula ; « *flores* », o predicado. Neste outro « *Pedro ama* » « *ama* » decompõe-se em « é amante », e todo o exemplo analysa-se como acima. O acto da mente pelo qual o predicado se liga á noção expressa pelo sujeito chama-se *juizo*. O resultado de um juizo é um *pensamento*. A expressão do pensamento é a *sentença*".

Syntactic Models Centered on Formal Relations of Agreement and Government

Introduced in the writing of grammars of modern European languages by Nebrija (1492), syntactic models centered on the formal relations of agreement and government between words are structured around the category of ‘case’ and its types (nominative, genitive, accusative, dative, ablative, and vocative), as they typically appear in Latin grammars. For this reason, they can also be called *Latin case-based syntactic models*. In a way, everything favored this theoretical approach by the Castilian grammarian. The intellectual context in which Nebrija lived was that of 15th-century Humanism, a movement that promoted a revival of Greco-Latin culture and, consequently, advocated for the study of so-called classical Latin.

It should not be forgotten, in this regard, that Nebrija himself was a Latin professor at the University of Salamanca and, before publishing *Gramática Castellana* [**Castilian Grammar**] (1492), had already authored a Latin grammar, *Introductiones Latinae* [Introductions to Latin], in 1481. This work saw multiple successive editions shortly after its publication, achieving, from this perspective, greater editorial success than the author’s Castilian grammar, which would only be reissued in the mid-18th century, nearly 300 years after its first edition (cf. Miranda, 2002). In one of the various editions of *Introductiones Latinae* [Introductions to Latin] – the fifth, possibly published in 1486 –, Nebrija even included a contrastive presentation of Latin and Castilian structures. Although he later rejected this edition (cf. Fernandes, 2006), it had already introduced an approach that, in some way, foreshadowed the syntactic model present in Nebrija (1492). It is also worth noting that Nebrija identified among the potential users of his Castilian grammar those interested in learning Latin. In other words, the study of the vernacular language, Castilian, would serve as a gateway to the study of the classical language, Latin. The adoption of a model based on the six Latin cases, therefore, also had a clear practical and pedagogical purpose.

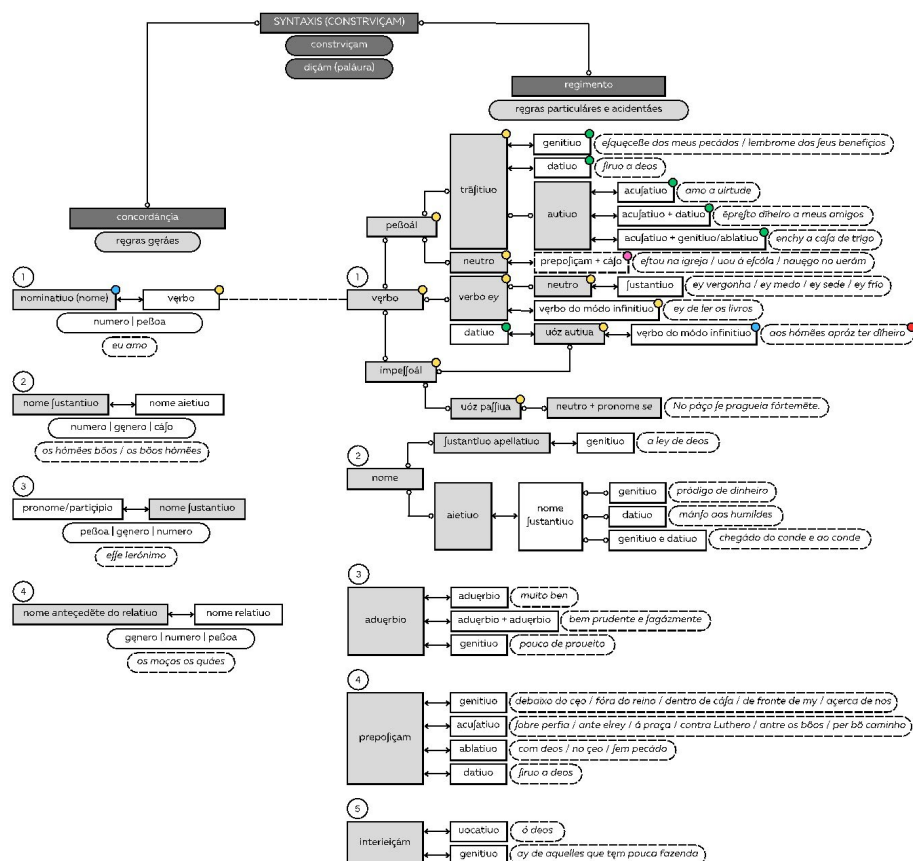
These contextual factors, therefore, fully justify the adoption of cases as structuring categories in the first grammar of Castilian and, subsequently, in the first grammars of other modern European languages (as illustrated in the previous section), even though the nominal elements of most of these languages did not feature morphological case inflection.

In the Lusitanian context, João de Barros, in his already mentioned *Grammatica da lingua Portuguesa* [**Grammar of the Portuguese Language**] (1540), the first descriptive-normative systematization of the Portuguese vernacular²⁶, was a pioneer

²⁶ The pioneering work of Fernão d’Oliveira (1507-1581) in his *Grammatica da linguaagem portuguesa* [Grammar of the Portuguese Language] (1536) does not offer even a hint of an inferable syntactic model. Although he mentions the idea of ‘côstrução’ [construction], understood as the “composition or arrangement that the parts or words of our language have among themselves, as in any other language” [In the original: “côposição ou concerto que as partes ou dições da nossa lingua tẽ entre si como em qualq̃r outra lingua”] (d’Oliveira, 1871 [1536], p. 117, our translation), there is practically no developed or systematized syntactic knowledge in the work. The subject is only addressed in Chapter XLIX – the penultimate chapter of the grammar, slightly longer than a page. In this chapter, it is stated that syntax

in developing a syntactic model centered on agreement and government relations, grammatically structured based on Latin cases:

Figure 3 – Taxonomic network (partial) of the syntactic model by Barros (1540)²⁷



Source: Vieira (2024, p. 782)

The syntactic model of Barros (1540), partially represented in Figure 3, reflects the relationships and rules of agreement and government presented in Chapters I to IV of Book IV – “Que es de syntaxis y orden de las diez partes de la oración” [On Syntax and the Order of the Ten Parts of Speech] – of Nebrija’s grammar (1492). However, it

should be treated in greater depth in a subsequent work, which, for some reason, was never written (or perhaps has been lost).

²⁷ A complete version of this taxonomic network – with the 34 figures/construction errors (solecisms) listed in Barros (1540) – and a glossary of the 75 metaterms in the network are presented in Vieira (2024). In the aforementioned article, a legend is also provided to aid in reading the symbols that help organize the taxonomic network, such as, for example, the blue, yellow, green, pink, and red circles, which represent, respectively, the concepts (in today’s terminology) of subject, verb, verbal complement, adverbial adjunct, and substantive subordinate clause.

should not be overlooked that this similarity also stems from a shared heritage of Latin-based grammatization, what Auroux (1992, p. 44) calls “extended Latin grammar”. In Barros (1540), generic references to “the Latins”²⁸, as well as to specific Latin authors such as Quintilian (35-96 CE)²⁹, suggest that the Portuguese grammarian consulted Latin sources directly, not just Nebrija’s Castilian grammar.

Figure 3 also shows that the syntax of Barros (1540) is divided into general rules of agreement (four types) and particular and accidental rules of government (five types), primarily addressed in the chapter “Da contruicão das pártes” [**On the Construction of the Parts**] (Barros, 1540, p. 30-33 verso). The nominative case structures the first rule of agreement, while the other cases (genitive, dative, accusative, ablative, and vocative) structure the five rules of government. The category of ‘case’ also integrates the Barrosian syntactic model as one of the accidents of the second rule of agreement, in which the adjective agrees in case – in addition to gender and number – with the substantive noun. This apparatus of syntactic description/prescription endured in most subsequent Portuguese grammatical works, at least until the end of the 18th century, as seen in the previously mentioned grammars of Argote (1725) and Reis Lobato (1770), as well as in the linguistic instruments of Roboredo (1619), Álvares (1786), Figueiredo (1799), among others, demonstrating the persistence of the core characteristics of Barros’s syntactic model in Lusitanian grammaticography of latinized lineage.

The Ambivalent Status of the Category “Case” in Latinized Grammars

When we introduce latinized grammars of Portuguese to beginners in the historiography of grammaticography, a common question arises: wasn’t it obvious to these authors that Portuguese does not have cases, and therefore, wouldn’t it be inappropriate to use them as categories in the syntactic description of the language?

Grammarians such as João de Barros did recognize the absence of declensions and morphological cases in nouns (both substantives and adjectives) in most modern European languages. Nebrija (1492) himself acknowledged this when he stated that “noun is one of the ten parts of speech, which declines by cases without tenses and signifies body or thing” (p. 28, our translation), asserts that “the Castilian language does not have noun declension” (p. 34, our translation) and that “the meaning of the cases is

²⁸ For example: “We will take from our construction what is most necessary, always imitating the order of the Latins” [In the original: “Nós tomaremos da nossa contruicão o mais necessário, imitando sempre a ordem dos latinos”] (Barros, 1540, p. 30, our translation); “These personal verbs either transfer their action to another thing or do not. Those that transfer are called transitive by the Latins” [In the original: “Estes uerbos peboaes, ou pába a sua auçam em outra cousa, ou nam. Os que pássam chamálhe os latinos trāsitiuos”] (Barros, 1540, p. 31 verso, our translation); “The Latins have many other figures, which we do not exemplify in our language” [In the original: “Muitas outras figuras tem os latinos as quães nam exemplificamos em nossa linguagem”] (Barros, 1540, p. 39 verso, our translation).

²⁹ For example: “Figure (according to Quintilian’s definition) is a form of speaking through some new art” [In the original: “Figura (segũdo difinçã de Quintiliano) ẽ hũa fôrma de dizer per algũa arte nõua”] (Barros, 1540, p. 34, our translation).

distinguished by prepositions” (p. 34, our translation)³⁰. Shortly after, he enumerates the five cases of Castilian (nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, and vocative), adding the following remark: “our language does not have a sixth and seventh case, but they are reduced to the other cases” (p. 34 verso, our translation)³¹. Further on, in his exposition, he divides Castilian nouns into three declensions and lists their respective paradigms.

A quick reading might identify, in Nebrija’s (1492) exposition, a somewhat incongruent discourse. After all, does the Castilian language have declensions and cases or not? This apparent inconsistency, however, disappears when we recognize that the category of ‘case’, both in this Castilian grammar and in the latinized grammars of Portuguese, does not refer solely or exclusively to a morphological phenomenon but ultimately also to a logical-semantic one. Thus, when Nebrija (1492) states that Castilian lacks declension, he is referring to the inflectional paradigm common to Latin cases. However, when he asserts that Castilian distinguishes the meaning of cases through prepositions, he is clearly extending the category of ‘case’ beyond its inflectional sense, which allows him to organize declension and case paradigms for Castilian – even though he had claimed that Castilian has no declension. In this sense, what appears to be an inconsistency actually reflects an understanding that the category of ‘case’ exists in both Latin and Castilian but is expressed in different ways: in Latin, through inflection; in Castilian, through prepositions.

This understanding of the category of ‘case’ would later reappear in the grammars of other modern European languages, as seen, for instance, in Barros (1540). In this and other latinized works of Portuguese grammaticography, the metalinguistic terms related to the category of ‘case’ (and its types) acquire broader, often imprecise meanings, associated with semantic or ontological aspects and detached from the morphological markers resulting from Latin declensions – which do not exist in Portuguese:

³⁰ In the original: “nombre es una de las diez partes de la oración: que se declina por casos sin tiempos: & significa cuerpo o cosa”; “la declinación del nombre no tiene la lengua castellana”; “la significación de los casos se distingue por preposiciones”.

³¹ In the original: “Sexto & séptimo caso no tiene nuestra lengua pero redúcense a los otros casos”. The sixth case would be the ablative, and the seventh, which occurred in archaic Latin, would be the locative, whose use was almost nonexistent in later stages of the Latin language (Cardoso, 2011, p. 32).

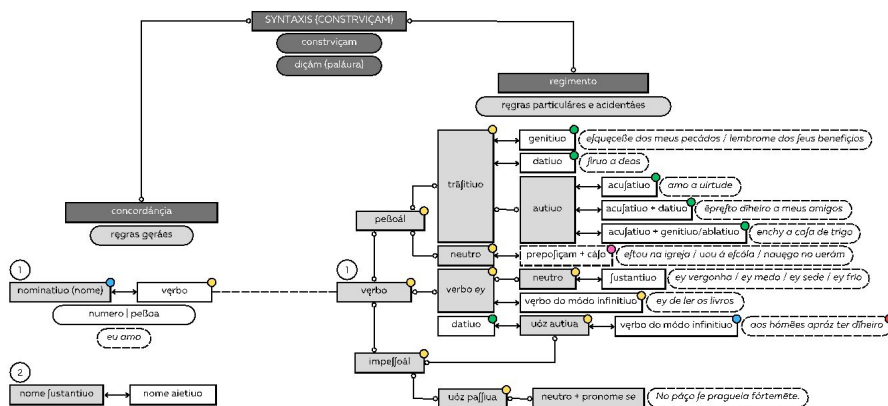
Table 1 – Cases that structure the rules of agreement and government in Barros (1540)

Case	Meaning (p. 11-11 verso)
Nominative	“names the thing: and in it is the thing that is or the person who acts”
Genitive	“in it is the owner of the thing”
Dative	“we place the person for whose benefit or harm the thing is given or done”
Accusative	“the thing done or loved is placed”
Vocative	“the person we call is present”
Ablative	“is used to remove or separate the thing from a place” ³²

Source: Authors’ elaboration

Observe more closely the role of these cases in Barros’ (1540) syntactic model. Figure 4 below presents a section of the taxonomic network of this model, this time focusing exclusively on type 1 rules of agreement and government:

Figure 4 – Rules of type 1 of agreement and government in the syntactic model of Barros (1540)



Source: Vieira (2024, p. 782, adapted)

Through Figure 4, it can be stated that the ‘sentence’ does not play an explicit role in the syntactic model of Barros (1540). Furthermore, the work does not conceptualize this metaterm – although it mentions it, for example, when referring to “pártes da oraçám” [parts of the speech/sentence] (Barros, 1540, p. 12). Given that the model

³² In the original: “nomea a cousa : e nelle está a cousa que ẽ ou a pesoa que faz” [nominativo]; “nelle estar o senhor da cousa” [genitivo]; “poemos a peioa em cuio proueito ou dano ẽ dáda ou feita a cousa” [dativo]; “se põe a cou[sa] feita ou amada” [acusativo]; “está a pessoa que chamamos” [vocativo]; “se usa tirádo ou apartando a cousa dalgu lugar” [ablativo].

is structured based on rules of agreement and government, the analytical emphasis falls on the formal relationships between the noun in the nominative case and the verb (agreement relationship); or between the verb and the noun in other cases (government relationship). The sentence, therefore, is not configured as a unit of analysis. As previously mentioned, this type of syntactic model persisted with some stability at least until the end of the 18th century. Thus, during these three centuries, the structure of the sentence in Portuguese was not effectively described in its full logical-semantic completeness as a propositional unit.

On the other hand, while it is true that, in the domain of the type 1 rule of agreement, the relationships established are of morphological identity between the ‘number’ and ‘person’ accidents of the verb and the nominative, in the domain of the type 1 rule of government, the relationships are of semantic determination between the verb and one or more cases (genitive, dative, accusative, and/or ablative). This scenario, combined with the logical-semantic aspects inherent to the conceptualization of cases in the work (cf. Table 1), allows for the projection of a complete sentence structure of the Portuguese described/prescribed in Barros (1540), when the type 1 rules of agreement and government are aligned. The dashed horizontal line in Figure 4 represents this projection. It is also worth noting that the yellow circles indicate the verbs of the sentence, while the blue, green, and pink circles represent, respectively, the latent notions of ‘subject’, ‘verbal complement’, and ‘adverbial adjunct’ – embryonic in the syntactic models from the 16th to the 18th centuries, but fundamental to contemporary syntactic knowledge within grammaticography (traditional or otherwise), linguistic studies, and approaches to grammar teaching in basic education.

In summary, the types of case in syntactic models centered on the formal relationships of agreement and government thus designate two distinct realities in Western grammaticography: one inflectional/morphological and the other propositional/logical-semantic. In this way, a Castilian or Portuguese construction with the preposition *a* preceding a noun, classified by Nebrija (1492) or Barros (1540) as belonging to the ‘propositional’ dative case, expresses the same relationship that, in the corresponding Latin construction, is expressed by the noun in the ‘inflectional’ dative case. In other words, unlike Latin cases, the Castilian and Portuguese cases presented in the early grammaticography of these two languages are not distinguished by noun endings but by the prepositions and/or articles that accompany them.³³

In the 20th century, Louis Hjelmslev (1899-1965), in his study on cases and drawing on his model of linguistic analysis, glossematics, which distinguishes the level of expression from the level of form (in the Saussurean sense), would argue that the difference between a synthetic (inflectional) perspective and an analytical (prepositional construction) perspective lies in the level of expression and not in the level of form (Hjelmslev, 1935). For this reason, the Danish linguist states that modern French has cases just as much as Latin does. In other words, on the level of form, the systemic level,

³³ This argument aligns with what Cardoso (2004, p. 85) and Borges Neto (2022, p. 165) say on the subject.

both languages have a category whose value is to signify different logical-semantic relationships between terms. However, on the level of expression, they differ: one expresses relationships synthetically (Latin) and the other analytically (French).

It is worth noting that, approximately four centuries before Hjelmslev, the grammarians Nebrija (1492) and Barros (1540) held a similar understanding when they stated that Castilian and Portuguese distinguish the meaning of cases through prepositions or articles that accompany them. Thus, these Renaissance grammarians already identified, in the matter of cases, two levels: the inflectional and the logical-semantic. However, their descriptive framework originated from grammars of languages with morphological cases (Greek and Latin) and came to be used to analyze languages without such cases. Moreover, the terminology was unified: ‘dative’, for example, referred both to the morphological inflection and to the logical-semantic/propositional relationship between a verb and a noun. As a result, there was an ambivalence in the understanding of the category ‘case’ that permeated the discourse of grammarians for a long time. This ambivalence contained, in germ, a model of logical-semantic relationships and syntactic functions that would later take shape as syntactic models structured around Latin cases were subjected to critique.

The Category “Case” in the *Port-Royal Grammar* (1660)

The ambivalence of the category ‘case’ is also present in the main reference of rationalist lineage grammars, the *Grammaire générale et raisonnée de Port-Royal* [General and Rational Grammar: the Port-Royal Grammar], published in 1660 by the Frenchmen Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) and Claude Lancelot (1615-1695). In this sense, the distinction between formal (inflectional) and logical (propositional) relationships is clear in the work. In Chapter VI of the Second Part, titled “Of cases, and of prepositions inasmuch as it is necessary to discuss them in order to understand some of the cases”, it is stated that, as “they [the nouns] are often considered in terms of the different relationships which they have with one another, one of the inventions which was made in order to mark these relationships was to give different endings to nouns, called *cases*” (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 79). For the authors, therefore, case inflection marks, in some languages, the various relationships that words maintain with each other; in other languages, these relationships are marked by prepositions or, alternatively, by word order. Thus, in the understanding of Arnauld and Lancelot, there are relationships between words that are expressed differently in each language.

Thus, to express the genitive in French, that is, the “relationship of belonging in any matter at all between a thing and another thing” (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 81), the particle ‘de’ [of] is used. To express the dative in this language, meaning “the relationship which is the connection of profit or loss between a thing and the things which are related to it” (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 83), the particle ‘à’ [to] is employed. The accusative, understood as the relationship between “verbs which signify actions

which are transmitted beyond the agent” (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 83) and the people or things receiving those actions, has no specific marker in French. In other words, the accusative is not expressed by a distinct preposition and, therefore, is not distinguished from the nominative. “But since we almost always put words in their natural order, one can distinguish the nominative from the accusative, in that ordinarily the nominative is before the verb, and the accusative is after it”, state Arnauld *et al.* (1975, p. 84).

In summary, the Port-Royal Grammar, although not a latinized grammar, still operates with case types and understands them both as logical relationships between terms and as the markers or expressions of these relationships. This analysis reappears in Chapter XI, “Of prepositions” (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 115-120), and in Chapter XXIV of the Second Part, dedicated to syntax (Arnauld *et al.*, 1975, p. 170-175). Interestingly, the Brazilian translators of the work into Portuguese added a note at the end of the chapter on prepositions, stating that there is “a clear mistake” in it, because, according to them:

[...] the form and function of cases are conflated. A case, strictly speaking, is a declension to which a given syntactic function is assigned, independent of any preposition; with the loss of cases, the analyticity of so-called vernacular languages replaced most case functions with the use of prepositions (Arnauld *et al.*, 2001, p. 79, translation note, our translation)³⁴.

It seems to us, rather, that there is an anachronism in the translators’ observation. Clearly, in the Port-Royal Grammar, form and function of cases are not conflated, precisely because the category of ‘case’ is not understood in the work solely in its inflectional sense but also in its propositional sense. What may confuse the reader is the terminology: the same metalinguistic terms are used for both inflections and logical-semantic relations.

Attempt to Overcome Case Syntax: Buffier (1709)

The overcoming of this ambivalence surrounding the category ‘case’ in the early centuries of the grammatization of European vernaculars occurred as grammatical thought began to criticize the syntactic models of latinized grammars and, in parallel, gradually built models based on syntactic functions resulting from logical-semantic relationships between terms, while also developing (or refining) the syntactic concept of ‘complementation’ (Chevalier, 1968).

³⁴ In the original: “[...] confundem-se forma e função dos casos. Caso propriamente é flexão à qual se atribui determinada função sintática independente de preposição; com a perda dos casos, o analitismo das chamadas línguas usuais substituiu a maioria das funções casuais pelo uso de preposições”.

This transition between syntactic models originated in the French grammaticography of the 18th century. We can say that, since Port-Royal, it was the French who were at the forefront of grammatical thought in Europe. It is enough to recall, among others, the remarkable systematic work of consolidation and deepening of Western grammatical knowledge done by César Du Marsais (1676-1756) and Nicolas Beauzée (1717-1789), when they wrote the entries on grammar topics for the *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* [Encyclopedia, or Rational Dictionary of Sciences, Arts, and Crafts] (1751-1772), edited by Denis Diderot (1713-1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717-1783); or still, *Grammaire Générale, ou exposition raisonnée des éléments nécessaires du langage pour servir de fondement à l'étude de toutes les langues* [General Grammar, or Reasoned Exposition of the Necessary Elements of Language to Serve as a Foundation for the Study of All Languages], by Beauzée, published in 1767, a dense compendium of grammatical metaphysics, illustrated with examples from various languages.

It can be said that the grammatical thought of 18th-century France begins with the already mentioned grammar by Claude Buffier (1661-1737), published in 1709. As we stated earlier, it is likely that he was the first to criticize the latinized grammars. Buffier (1709), right from the first pages, considered it an essential flaw to write French grammars based on Latin grammar, because, according to him, it would not be appropriate to apply the characteristics of one language to another completely different one. As a consequence, he advocated for studying a language as it is, thus paving the way for the empiricist lineage.

In the field of syntax, Buffier (1709) assumed the notion of a 'complete sentence', understood as one that has a noun (which expresses the subject about which something is said) and a verb (which expresses what is affirmed about the subject). The grammarian then proposed an analysis of the complete sentence in three parts: two essential ones – the *subject*, expressed by the 'noun', and *what is affirmed about the subject*, expressed by the 'verb' – and a third, designated as the *modifier*, which adds various circumstances or modifications to the noun or the verb. His examples are the sentences 'Le zèle agit' [Zeal acts] and 'Le zèle sans prudence agit témérairement' [Zeal without prudence acts rashly] (Buffier, 1709, p. 49). In the first sentence, there is a noun/subject – 'Le zèle' – and a verb – 'agit' – without any modifier; in the second, there are both a noun/subject and a verb accompanied by modifiers – respectively, 'sans prudence' and 'témérairement'. For Buffier (1709), the modifiers can be expressed either by 'adverbs' (independently) or by 'prepositions' (in combination with other terms) and 'conjunctions' (which connect words and sentences).

This syntactic model of Buffier (1709) rounds off an idea similar to the modern notion of 'object' or 'complement', which appears later in his exposition. In this regard, the author notes that, within the sentence, the noun can also function as the *regime* of the verb. He exemplifies this with the sentence 'Le Pasteur connaît ses brebis' [The Shepherd knows his sheep] (Buffier, 1709, p. 61), in which 'Le Pasteur' is nominative or the subject of the verb, and 'ses brebis' is the regime of the verb, as it is the object

that specifies its meaning. It is worth mentioning that Buffier extended this notion of the verb's regime to the verb *to be*, as can be seen in the following excerpt:

[...] *his sheep* is the regime of the verb, because it is the object that specifies the meaning of the verb *knows*, particularly marking what the Shepherd knows; similarly, if I say, *you are learned*; *you* will be the nominative, and *learned* will be the regime: because *learned* specifies here the verb *are*, particularly marking what *you are* (Buffier, 1709, p. 61, our translation)³⁵.

These ideas show that, although the term 'nominative' competes with the term 'subject', Buffier (1709) already presented the modern syntactic model SVCA – Subject | Verb | Verb Complement | Adverbial Adjunct – which is highly productive not only in the subsequent grammatical tradition but also in various contemporary linguistic theories and pedagogical proposals³⁶. However, despite this analytical innovation and the criticism of latinized grammars, Buffier (1709) was unable to completely detach himself from syntactic models based on Latin cases, which demonstrates how challenging it was to create alternative models. This grammarian continued to work with different types of cases, adopting ingenious solutions, perhaps because he did not yet have enough resources to create a new terminology that would distinguish the syntactic functions in French. In other words, Buffier (1709), in analyzing sentence structure, continued to account for the logical-semantic relationships between terms through cases, even though these did not receive inflectional marks or were presented in declension paradigms for nouns.

On the other hand, Buffier (1709) included paradigms for the declension of personal pronouns. This theme would become recurrent in the grammars of Romance languages, which, to this day, often identify remnants of Latin case morphology in the different direct and oblique forms of personal pronouns. This French grammar also includes paradigms for the declension of articles. It is the solution Buffier (1709) found to mark what he called “les divers emplois où l'on met les nom” [the various uses where nouns are placed] (Buffier, 1709, p. 61). Thus, he stated that if the noun is used to express the subject, it will be called the 'noun' or 'nominative of the verb'; if it is used to express the object that specifies the meaning of the verb, it receives the designation of the 'verb's regime'. He further explained: “When nouns are employed as regimes and not as nominatives, they are said to be in *oblique cases*. These oblique cases of nouns are

³⁵ In the original: “[...] *ses brebis* est le régime du verbe, parce que c'est l'objet qui particularise la signification du verbe *connoît*, marquant en particulier ce que le Pasteur connoît; de même si je dis, *vous êtes savant*; *vous* sera le nominatif, & *savant* sera le régime: parce que *savant* particularise ici le verbe *êtes*, marquant en particulier ce que *vous êtes*”.

³⁶ It illustrates the use of the SVCA model in the current pedagogy of syntax in simple and complex sentences in Chapter 3 – among other chapters – of Vieira and Faraco (2023, p. 69-87).

distinguished by the various articles” (Buffier, 1709, p. 62, our translation)³⁷. This means that French nouns do not receive case inflection, but their different uses are marked by the various forms of definite, indefinite, and partitive articles, distributed in a paradigm with three classes (one without a preposition and two with prepositions), exemplified below with the singular masculine and feminine definite articles, respectively: “1. Le Prince. La Princesse. 2. Du Prince. De la Princesse. 3. Au Prince; A la Princesse” [1. The Prince. The Princess. 2. Of the Prince. Of the Princess. 3. To the Prince; To the Princess.] (Buffier, 1709, p. 146). In concluding his analysis, he stated: “Generally, the first of these ranks corresponds to the Latin cases called *nominative* and *accusative*: the second to the *genitive* and *ablative*: the third to the *dative*” (Buffier, 1709, p. 148, our translation)³⁸. It is through this paradigm of articles, therefore, that Buffier, when addressing the syntax of nouns, described their uses by precisely appealing to cases.

Syntactic Models Centered on Logical Relationships (Syntactic Functions)

The great leap in this journey from cases to syntactic functions was made in French grammaticography by Abbé Gabriel Girard (1677-1748) in his two-volume grammar, published in 1747, titled *Les Vrais Principes de la Langue Française ou la parole réduite en méthode conformément aux loix de l’usage* [The True Principles of the French Language or Speech Reduced to Method According to the Laws of Usage].

Girard was also critical of latinized grammars of French and advocated for a grammatical model that would treat “each language according to its usages and its own genius” (Girard, 1747, p. 38, our translation)³⁹. According to the author, it was necessary to “‘above all, avoid the common pitfall of applying to analogous languages what is only suitable for transpositive languages” (Girard, 1747, p. 35-36, our translation)⁴⁰. He referred to languages with case inflection, such as Latin, as transpositive, and to languages without such inflection, such as French, as analogous.

In Chapter Three of Volume I, dedicated to syntax, Girard (1747) finally shaped an analysis of sentence structure based on the logical-semantic relationships established between terms, without resorting to the terminology of Latin cases. The grammarian designated the set of these relationships as ‘regime’: “The regime is nothing other than the combination of words for the expression of a meaning or a thought” (Girard, 1747, p. 87, our translation)⁴¹. He then stated that although all words in the sentence contribute

³⁷ In the original: “Quand les noms sont employez comme régimes & non pas comme nominatifs, ils sont dits être en des *cas obliques*. Ces cas obliques des noms se distinguent par les divers articles”.

³⁸ In the original: “Communément, le premier de ces rangs répond aux cas du Latin qu’on appelle *nominatif* & *accusatif*: le second au *génitif* & l’*ablatif*: le troisième au *datif*”.

³⁹ In the In the original: “chaque Langue suivant ses usages & son propre genie”.

⁴⁰ In the original: “surtout éviter l’écueil ordinaire, qui est d’adapter aux Langues analogues ce qui ne convient qu’aux transpositives”.

⁴¹ In the original: “Le Régime n’est autre chose que le concours des mots pour l’expression d’un sens ou d’une pensée”.

to the expression of its meaning, they do not do so in the same way, “some being in a dominant regime, others in a subordinate regime, and still others in a free regime, according to the function they perform” (Girard, 1747, p. 88, our translation)⁴².

Subsequently, Girard (1747, p. 89, our translation) identified “seven different functions that words must fulfill in the harmony of the sentence”⁴³ and elaborated on the description of each, using terminology – it is worth noting – that entirely dispenses with the names of cases. The grammarian designated these functions by the following terms: ‘subjective’, ‘attributive’, ‘objective’, ‘terminative’, ‘circumstantial’, ‘conjunctive’, and ‘adjunctive’. Regarding the words that make up each of these seven constructive parts or seven different functions, he stated:

It is necessary that some express the subject; that others express the attribution made to the subject; that some mark its object; that others, when needed, represent its term; that there be, when the occasion arises, those for the modifying circumstance, as well as for the connection whenever one wishes to bring things together. Finally, it is necessary to express the accessory accompaniments whenever the speaker chooses to add them to the thought (Girard, 1747, p. 89-90, our translation)⁴⁴.

The grammarian concluded this presentation with the analysis of the following sentence: ‘Monsieur, quoique le mérite ait ordinairement un avantage solide sur la fortune; cependant, chose étrange! nous donnons toujours la préférence à celleci’ [Sir, although merit ordinarily has a solid advantage over fortune, however – strangely enough! – we always give preference to the latter] (Girard, 1747, p. 93). It is a compound sentence consisting of two sentences. In each, the grammarian identified the functions and the terms that express them: subjective, in ‘le mérite’ [merit] and ‘nous’ [we]; attributive, in ‘ait’ [has] and ‘donnons’ [give]; objective, in ‘un avantage solide’ [a solid advantage] and ‘la préférence’ [preference]; terminative, in ‘sur la fortune’ [over fortune] and ‘à celleci’ [to the latter]; circumstantial, in ‘ordinairement’ [ordinarily] and ‘toujours’ [always]; conjunctive, in ‘quoique’ [although] and ‘cependant’ [however]; and adjunctive, in ‘Monsieur’ [Sir] and ‘chose étrange’ [strangely enough].

Next, the French abbot developed a lengthy argument to justify abandoning the case models. In summary, he stated that he did not abandon them “out of affectation nor out of a spirit of singularity” (Girard, 1747, p. 97, our translation)⁴⁵, but rather due to the

⁴² In the original: “les uns étant en régime dominant, les autres en régime assujetti, & des troisiemes en régime libre, selon la fonction qu’ils y font”.

⁴³ In the original: “sept différentes fonctions que les mots doivent remplir dans l’harmonie de la frase”.

⁴⁴ In the original: “Il faut que les uns énoncent le sujet : que les autres expriment l’attribution faite au sujet : que quelquesuns en marquent l’objet ; que d’autres dans le besoin en représentent le terme : qu’il y en ait, quand le cas échoit, pour la circonstance modificative, ainsi que pour la liaison toutes & quantes sois qu’on voudra rapprocher les choses : il faut enfin énoncer les accompagnemens accessoires lorsqu’il plaira à l’orateur d’en ajouter à la pensée”.

⁴⁵ In the original: “par affectation ni par esprit de singularité”.

quantitative and qualitative insufficiencies of these models in accounting for French syntax. “The respect due to ancient usages can never justify a prescription against the truth” (Girard, 1747, p. 97, our translation)⁴⁶, the author asserts.

A model of logical-semantic relations and syntactic functions has finally been established as a replacement for case models. It is now necessary to investigate the repercussions of this proposal in the continuity of grammatical studies, especially in relation to the grammars of Portuguese language – a topic that has already been explored in HGEL research.

Final Considerations

In this article, we have traced the long historical process that, in the grammaticography of European vernacular languages, led from a case-based syntactic model to a function-based syntactic model. The ambivalence of the category of ‘case’ as both a flexional/morphological phenomenon and a propositional/logical-semantic phenomenon – already present in Nebrija’s *Gramática Castellana* [Castilian Grammar] (1492) – was only finally resolved by mid-18th-century French grammaticography. This resolution emerged from its critiques of latinized grammar traditions, ultimately leading to the replacement of a case-based syntactic model with a function-based one.

We consider that the study presented here demonstrates the heuristic power of the theoretical assumptions and methodological guidelines of HL, the disciplinary framework we have adopted. At the same time, it opens a relevant investigative path: exploring the repercussions of the shift from syntactic models – from cases to functions – in the continuity of Western grammaticography, especially in the grammars of Portuguese language.

VIEIRA, Francisco Eduardo; FARACO, Carlos Alberto. Modelos sintáticos na gramaticografia ocidental: dos casos às funções. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v. 69, 2025.

- *RESUMO: Este artigo tem como objetivo investigar, ao longo da história da sintaxe, movimentos retóricos e descritivos que levaram a gramaticografia ocidental da análise baseada nos casos latinos à análise baseada em funções sintáticas. Segue-se a linha sugerida por Colombat et al. (2017, p. 129), segundo os quais, a análise lógica da proposição foi de fato sistematizada nas gramáticas das línguas modernas europeias somente a partir do século 17, com os racionalistas franceses de Port-Royal. A base disciplinar da pesquisa é a Historiografia da Linguística (Swiggers, 2009a; Koerner, 2020) e, de modo particular, a historiografia da gramaticografia (Swiggers, 2020, entre outros). Os resultados indicam que a ambivalência da categoria “caso”, compreendida como fenômeno tanto flexional quanto*

⁴⁶ In the original: “Le respect dû aux anciens usages ne peu jamais fonder une prescription contre la vérité”.

lógico-semântico desde a Gramática castellana de Nebrija (1492), só foi finalmente resolvida pela gramaticografia francesa de meados do século 18, o que levou à substituição de um modelo sintático baseado em casos por um modelo baseado em funções. O estudo abre um percurso investigativo relevante: explorar as repercussões da mudança de modelos sintáticos dos casos às funções na continuidade da gramaticografia ocidental, sobretudo de língua portuguesa.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Historiografia da Linguística; Gramaticografia; Sintaxe; Modelos sintáticos.*

Authors' Contribution (according to the CRediT taxonomy)

Francisco Eduardo Vieira: Conceptualization. Data curation. Data analysis. Investigation. Methodology. Project administration. Supervision. Data presentation design. Writing – original draft. Writing – review and editing.

Carlos Alberto Faraco: Conceptualization. Data curation. Data analysis. Investigation. Methodology. Writing – original draft.

Data Availability Statement

All datasets supporting the findings of this study have been published within the article itself.

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