

INTENSIFIER ADJECTIVES IN BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE: PROPERTIES, DISTRIBUTION AND MORPHOLOGICAL REFLEXES

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- **ABSTRACT:** In this article we analyze the morphosyntactic, syntactic, and semantic properties of intensifier adjectives in Brazilian Portuguese. To map their distribution, we have applied tests of word order, definiteness, and types of phrases and sentences in which they occur. As a result, we found the following main patterns: (i) they are used exclusively preposed to the modified element, (ii) they appear in definite and indefinite noun phrases, (iii) they can be used in exclamative sentences, and (iv) they can occur in noun phrases with multiple instantiation of indefinite determiners. Regarding the lexical categories they modify, we observed two major groups: those which modify only nouns (viz., *baita* ‘≈ great’, *bruta* ‘brute’, *senhor(a)* ‘sir, lady’, *puta* ‘whore’), and those which modify nouns and items of other lexical categories (viz., *mega* ‘mega’, *hiper* ‘hyper’, *super* ‘super’). The aforementioned properties shed light on the controversial morphological status of *mega*, *hiper*, and *super*. Although these modifiers are assumed to be prefixes, we claim they are independent adjectives. This assumption allows us to readily explain data such as *supermercado* ‘supermarket’, *mega-feirão* ‘big sale’, and *hipercorreção* ‘hypercorrection’, analyzing them as A-N compounds, oppositely to what the literature has been claiming.
- **KEYWORDS:** Noun Phrase. Modification. Intensifier Adjectives.

Introduction

Intensification is associated with any device capable of grading a particular quality, for maximum, minimum, and average degrees, and natural languages express this mechanism in different ways. It is possible to intensify by means of idioms (1a, 1b), exclamative expressions (1c), lexical items (1d, 1e), degree words (1f), degree morphemes (1g), among other lexical and syntactic strategies.

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- (1) a. *Estou morto de fome.*
 be.1.SG.PRES dead of hunger
 ‘I’m starving.’
- b. *Ele é um idiota com “i” maiúsculo.*
 he is an idiot with “i” upper case
 ‘He is a capital I idiot.’
- c. *Que filme!*
 what movie
 ‘What a movie!’
- d. *Ele é um perfeito idiota.*
 he is a perfect idiot
 ‘He is such an idiot.’
- e. *Esse aluno é muito dedicado.*
 this student is very dedicated
 ‘This student is very dedicated.’
- f. *Ela é mais competente do que seu irmão.*
 she is more competent than your brother
 ‘She is more competent than your brother’
- g. *Ela é inteligente-íssima.*
 she is intelligent-INTENS
 ‘She is very intelligent.’

In this article we analyze the properties and distribution of lexical items identified as intensifier adjectives in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). In order to achieve this, we have established the following taxonomy of intensifier modifiers, which allowed us to circumscribe our domain of investigation:

- I. **Innovative adjectival intensifiers:**¹ postposed adjectives which are currently used before the modified element, projecting an evaluative scale (e.g., *tremendo(a)* ‘tremendous’, *bruto(a)* ‘great’, from the postposed adjective *bruto(a)* ‘brute, violent’).
- II. **Denominal intensifiers:** intensifiers which have a homophonous nominal counterpart (e.g., *puta* – from the noun *puta* ‘whore’, *senhor(a)* – from the treatment pronoun *senhor(a)* ‘sir/lady’, *baita* ‘great’²).
- III. **Borrowed intensifiers:** intensifiers of classical or Germanic origins (e.g., *mega* ‘mega’, *super* ‘super’, *hiper* ‘hyper’, *big* ‘great’).

¹ Innovative forms reveal latent processes in a particular language. These forms indicate that an adjective, or any lexical category, can be used in a different linear position from its canonical counterpart, triggering different semantic effects. We are aware, however, that the assumption of canonical positions is not a trivial matter.

² *Baita* cannot easily be inserted in any of our six major classes. It cannot be considered innovative, since there is no adjective *baita* occurring postposed to a modified noun, and, on the other hand, *baita* does not have classical origins. We suspect that *baita* is a denominal adjective whose nominal counterpart is no longer available.

- IV. **Prototypical intensifiers:** adverbs which no longer modify verbs, but intensify adjectives and adverbs (e.g., *muito* ‘very’, *extremamente* ‘extremely’, *extraordinariamente* ‘extraordinarily’, *completamente* ‘completely’, etc.).
- V. **Adnominal degree modifiers:** modifiers which only take degree nouns (e.g., *verdadeiro(a)* ‘true’, *total* ‘total’, *grande* ‘big’, *completo(a)* ‘complete’, *perfeito(a)* ‘perfect’; Cf. MORZYCKI, 2012).
- VI. **Prefixed intensifiers:** prefixed intensifiers, usually of classical origins (e.g., *ultra-*, *extra-*, and *tri-*).³

Intensifier or degree properties are usually linked to adverbs whose main semantic function is to intensify adjectives or other adverbs – i.e., the prototypical intensifiers in IV –, modifying them without triggering agreement, as exemplified in (2):

- (2) a. *muito inteligente/ pouco animado*
 very intelligent little excited
 ‘very intelligent’ ‘little excited’
- b. *mais calmo/ menos intenso*
 more calm less intense
 ‘calmer’ ‘less intense’

In our discussion, we will concentrate on the intensifiers in I, II, and III, despite being aware that their category status is still a point of contention, which deserves a careful investigation. For general purposes, we admit that II- and III-intensifiers are adjectives since they share distributional properties with I-intensifiers. What we consider to be intensifier adjectives in BP modify mainly nouns, as we can observe in (3).

- (3) a. *uma tremenda briga*
 a tremendous fight
 ‘a tremendous fight’
- b. *uma baita chuva*
 a great rain
 ‘a heavy rain’
- c. *um puta emprego*
 a whore job
 ‘a great job’
- d. *uma mega oferta*
 a mega offer
 ‘a big offer’

³ Gonçalves (2002) and Alves (2009) list a set of suffixed intensifiers in BP, such as *-aço*, *-érrimo*, *-íssimo*, etc. We have set them aside, since our main purpose is to analyze intensification made by adjectives, and discuss the morphological status of intensifier adjectives of classical origins, like *mega*, *hiper*, and *super*, which are argued to be prefixed intensifiers (Cf. ALVES, 1980, 2000, 2006, 2009, 2011, for all forms; and SCHWINDT, 2001, for *hiper*).

It is important to distinguish the intensifier adjectives in (3) from the so-called adnominal degree modifiers in (4).

- (4) a. *um verdadeiro desastre*
 a true disaster
 ‘a true disaster’
- b. *um total domínio*
 a total domain
 ‘a complete knowledge’
- c. *um grande idiota*
 a great idiot
 ‘a great idiot’
- d. *um completo imbecil*
 a complete jerk
 ‘a complete jerk’

For Morzycki (2012), adnominal degree modifiers are not adjectives, even though they contain adjectival homophones, which occur postposed to the modified element in BP. Unlike their adjectival homophones, adnominal degree modifiers do not display a predicative use. For instance, in (4a), *verdadeiro* ‘true’ does not have an intensifier reading when it is used postposed to a noun or in a predicative context. In these cases, (4a) would be interpreted as “a disaster that is not false.” Although adnominal degree modifiers are relevant for the study of intensification, they will be discussed peripherally in this work.

We also consider eminently important to establish a taxonomy of degree words, which implies the forfeit of the traditional distinction between adjectives and adverbs. Consequently, we would have to include an additional major class in our current taxonomy in order to cover the intensifiers in (5):

- (5) a. *Ele é verdadeiramente um idiota.*
 he is truly an idiot
 ‘He is truly a fool.’
- b. *Ele está completamente enganado.*
 he is completely mistaken
 ‘He is completely mistaken.’
- c. *Isso é incrivelmente gigantesco.*
 this is incredibly gigantic
 ‘This is incredibly huge.’
- d. *Ele é meramente um serviçal.*
 he is merely a servant
 ‘He is merely a servant.’

Thus our main goal in this article is to provide an account for the distribution of intensifier modifiers in BP, especially the adjectives in I, II, and III, based on a set of morphosyntactic, syntactic, and semantic tests. We also advance the discussion of the morphological status of borrowed intensifiers, claiming they cannot be analyzed as prefixes. The article is laid out as follows: (i) we present the morphosyntactic and syntactic properties of intensifier adjectives, defining their linear position, the lexical categories they modify, their agreement patterns, the phrases and sentences in which they appear, and noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners; (ii) we assess the prefixed nature of class III-intensifiers.

In sum, we argue that intensifier modifiers constitute an internally complex class of modifiers, which requires a typological classification capable of distinguishing true adjectives from adnominal degree modifiers, and possibly from degree nouns (BOLINGER, 1972). In addition, we claim that borrowed intensifiers are not prefixes, but compounds made up of an adjective plus a noun.

Morphosyntactic and syntactic properties of intensifier adjectives

In this section, we present the distribution of intensifier adjectives in BP regarding their morphosyntactic and syntactic properties: (a) linear order, (b) lexical categories they modify, (c) agreement relations in their minimal domain, and (d) types of phrases and sentences in which they occur. Our primary aim is to assess whether the above-mentioned intensifier modifiers can integrate a uniform class of modifiers in BP.

Linear Order

Regarding linear order, intensifier adjectives occur exclusively preposed to a modified element. It is worth pointing out that some adjectives, mainly the innovative adjectives, have a homophonous counterpart that occurs postposed to the modified element without triggering an intensification reading (e.g., *uma bruta leoa* lit. a brute lioness ‘a big lioness’ vs. *uma leoa bruta* lit. a lioness brute ‘a violent lioness’).

- | (6) Pre-nominal position | Post-nominal position |
|--|--|
| a. <i>um baita homem</i>
a great man
'a big/great man' | a'. * <i>um homem baita</i>
a man great
Intended: 'a big/great man' |
| b. <i>uma bruta chuva</i>
a brute rain
'a heavy rain' | b'. * <i>uma chuva bruta</i>
a rain brute
Intended: 'a heavy rain' |
| c. <i>um tremendo vendaval</i>
a tremendous windstorm
'a heavy windstorm' | c'. <i>um vendaval tremendo</i>
a windstorm tremendous
'a heavy windstorm' |
| d. <i>um puta livro</i>
a whore book
'a great book' | d'. * <i>um livro puta</i>
a book whore
Intended: 'a great book' |
| e. <i>uma senhora festa</i>
a lady party
'a great party' | e'. * <i>uma festa senhora</i>
a party lady
Intended: 'a great party' |
| f. <i>uma mega promoção</i>
a mega sale
'a big sale' | f'. ? <i>uma promoção mega</i>
a sale mega
Intended: 'a big sale' |
| g. <i>uma hiper declaração</i>
a hyper statement
'a great statement' | g'. * <i>uma declaração hiper</i>
a statement hyper
Intended: 'a great statement' |
| h. <i>uma super festa</i>
a super party
'a super party' | h'. * <i>uma festa super</i>
a party super
Intended: 'a super party' |

Example (6c), in particular, diverges from the others. It made us to reconsider the characterization of *tremendo* 'tremendous' as an intensifier adjective. However, its behavior in other tests favors the option to include it in the intensifier modifier class, as we shall see below.

Lexical category of the modified elements

Intensifier adjectives are not uniform with respect to the lexical categories they modify. Intensifier adjectives such as *bruto(a)* 'brute', *senhor(a)* 'sir, lady' and *big* 'great' modify only nouns (7). The rest of the intensifier adjectives can modify elements of other lexical categories, such as adjectives, as in (8). Nevertheless, when intensifier adjectives modify verbs, they denote a certainty with respect to the verbal action, rather than an intensification interpretation, as we can observe in (9).

- (7) a. *Eles tomaram um **bruto** susto.*
 they took a brute fright
 ‘They got a huge fright.’
- a’. **Ele é um menino **bruto** bonito.*
 he is a boy brute beautiful
 Intended: ‘He is a very beautiful boy.’
- b. *Ela comprou um **senhor** aspirador-de-pó.*
 she bought a sir vacuum-cleaner
 ‘She bought a great vacuum-cleaner.’
- b’. **Ela é sempre **senhora** simpática.*
 she is always lady nice
 Intended: ‘She is always very nice.’
- c. *Eles tiveram uma **big** surpresa.*
 they had a great surprise
 ‘They had a great surprise.’
- c’. **Eles foram n-uma apresentação **big** interessante.*
 they went in-a presentation great interesting
 Intended: ‘They went to a very interesting presentation.’
- (8) a. *Eu achei esses caras uns **baita** sacanas com a pobre menina.*
 I thought these guys a great bastard with the poor girl
 ‘I think these guys were a hell bastard with the poor girl.’
- b. *Ele é fofo e **tremendo** simpático.*
 he is cute and tremendous nice
 ‘He is cute and very nice.’
- c. *Ela está **mega** empolgada com a festa.*
 she is mega excited with the party
 ‘She is very excited with the party.’
- d. *Eles estão **hiper** animados para viajar na sexta.*
 they are hyper excited-PL to travel on-the Friday
 ‘They very excited to travel on Friday.’
- e. *Ela está **super** feliz com o prêmio que ganhou.*
 she is super happy with the prize that won
 ‘She is very happy with the prize she won.’
- f. *Dá pra perceber que ele é um cara **puta** nojento.*
 give to perceive that he is a guy whore disgusting
 ‘You can see that he’s a fucking disgusting guy.’

- (9) a. *Eu **super** falo isso.*
 I super speak it
 ‘I certainly speak it/this way.’
- b. *Sinceramente, eu **hiper** gostaria de saber a opinião de vocês.*
 sincerely I hyper would-like of know the opinion of you
 ‘I do want to know your opinion.’
- c. *Eu **mega** iria no show da Madonna.*
 I mega would-go in-the concert of Madonna
 ‘I would certainly go to Madonna’s concert.’
- d. *Eu **super hiper** quero esse celular.*
 I super hyper want this cellphone
 ‘I do want this cellphone.’

It is worth mentioning that intensifier adjectives which modify nouns can also intensify modified nouns, such as those in (10), a characteristic pointed out for *puta* ‘whore’, by Guimarães (2011) and Oliveira (2013). Furthermore, intensifier adjectives capable of modifying other adjectives can also intensify attributive adjectives in post-nominal position, as exemplified in (11):

- (10) a. *Um **baita** homem musculoso.*
 a great man muscular
 ‘A big muscled man’
- b. *Uma **bruta** chuva forte.*
 a brute rain strong
 ‘A huge heavy rain’
- c. *Um **tremendo** cara feio.*
 a tremendous guy ugly
 ‘A big ugly guy’
- d. *Um **puta** cara lindo.*
 a whore guy handsome
 ‘A very handsome guy’
- e. *Uma **senhora** cara feia.*
 a lady face ugly
 ‘A big ugly face’
- f. *Um **mega** carro esportivo*
 a mega car sporting
 ‘A great sporting car’
- g. *Uma **super** ideia louca.*
 a super idea crazy
 ‘A big crazy idea’

- h. *Um hiper desconto repentino.*
 a hyper discount sudden
 ‘A big sudden discount’
- i. *Uma big festa animada.*
 a big party excited
 ‘A huge cool party’
- (11) a. *Um marido baita sacana.*
 a husband great bastard
 ‘A very idiot husband’
- b. *Um cara tremendo idiota.*
 a guy tremendous idiot.
 ‘A very idiot guy’
- c. *Uma moça mega inteligente.*
 a girl mega intelligent
 ‘A very intelligent girl’
- d. *Um menino hiper animado.*
 a boy hyper excited
 ‘A very excited boy’
- e. *Um filme super interessante.*
 a movie super interesting
 ‘A very interesting movie’
- f. *Uma cerveja puta gelada.*
 a beer whore cold
 ‘A very cold beer’

In (10), the preferred interpretation is the one in which [*homem musculoso*] ‘muscled man’ is intensified as a whole, rather than separately. Once the intensification reading is preferably assigned to the primary element to the right, only adjectives can be the modified elements in (11). Additionally, intensifier modifiers do not allow double modification, i.e. contexts in which an intensifier adjective modifies a noun already modified by an intensifier adjective, without any pause between the modifiers. Double modification, whether possible (considering pauses), would induce an ascending scale of intensity (e.g., *super*; *hiper festa* ‘a hell of a party’).

- (12) a. **Eu sempre tenho uma puta mega cólica.*
 I always have a whore mega colic
 Intended: ‘I always have a very painful colic.’
- b. *?Ele tem um senhor tremendo emprego.*
 he has a sir tremendous job
 Intended: ‘He has a very good job.’

- c. **Eles compraram um mega baita* avião.
they bought a mega great airplane
Intended: ‘They bought a very big airplane.’
- d. **Ela deu uma super bruta* festa.
she gave a super brute party
Intended: ‘She threw a very big party.’

Agreement relations local to the modified element

The behavior of intensifier adjectives in agreement relations varies considerably. These adjectives are preferably used with no agreement markers, such as number and gender, as we can see in number agreement examples in (13).

- (13) a. *Ele trabalha com un-s baita/ ?baita-s* homén-s.
he works with a-PL great great-PL man-PL
‘He works with very big men.’
- b. *Ela sempre tem uma-s bruta/ ?bruta-s* dor(es) de cabeça.
she always have a-PL brute brute-PL pain-PL of head
‘She always has very painful headaches.’
- c. *Sempre acontece un-s tremendo/ tremendo-s* vendaval-(is) aqui.
always happen a-PL tremendous tremendous-PL windstorm-PL here
‘There are always very heavy windstorms here.’
- d. *Eles importaram un-s puta/ *puta-s* aviões-es.
they imported a-PL whore whore-PL airplane-PL
‘They’ve imported very big airplanes.’
- e. *Ela comprou un-s senhor/*senhor-es* tapete-s.
she bought a-PL sir sir-PL carpet-PL
‘She bought some very big carpets.’
- f. *Ele adora uma-s mega/ ?mega-s* promoções-es.
he loves a-PL mega mega-PL sale-PL
‘He loves some big sales.’
- g. *Nós compramos un-s hiper/ *hiper-(e)s* apartamento-s.
we bought a-PL hyper hyper-PL apartment-PL
‘We bought very some good apartments.’
- h. *Elas sempre vão a uma-s super/ *super(e)s* festas.
they always go to a-PL super super-PL party-PL
‘They always go to some terrific parties.’

In (13), while some adjectives do not display number marking (e.g., *puta* ‘whore’, *hiper* ‘hyper’, and *super* ‘super’), others seem to allow number agreement with the modified noun (e.g., *baita* ‘great’, *bruta* ‘brute’, *tremendo* ‘tremendous’, *senhor(a)*

‘sir, lady’, and *mega* ‘mega’). A quick search on Google, however, showed cases in which number agreement is allowed with all the adjectives (14). Our hypothesis is that, once these cases were found in a written modality, number agreement emerges as a hypercorrection strategy, since in spoken language it is optional.

- (14) a. *Boas ideias. **Baitas** negócio-s.*⁴
 good ideas great-PL business-PL
 ‘Good ideas. Great business.’
- b. *Apenas uma jogada de risco e depois **tremendo-s** susto-s que
 just a move of risk and later tremendous-PL fright-PL that
 minaram a tranquilidade brasileira.*⁵
 undermined the stability Brazilian
 ‘Just a risk play and then big frights that undermined Brazilian stability.’
- c. *Eu conheci o Petrucci, o Mustaine e o Kerry King e troquei
 I met the Petrucci the Mustaine and the Kerry King and exchange
 uma-s **puta-s** ideia-s sobre aparelhagem com os três.*⁶
 a-PL whore-PL idea-PL about equipment with the three
 ‘I’ve met Petrucci, Mustaine, and Kerry King, and I’ve talked about equipments with them.’
- d. *Eu não fiquei traumatizada, mas levei **senhor-es** susto-s!*⁷
 I not stayed traumatized but took sir-PL fright-PL
 ‘I was not traumatized, but I got huge frights!’
- e. *(...) e quer-o dar un-s **mega-s** tabefe-s no meu irmão.*⁸
 and want-1.SG give a-PL mega-PL slap-PL in-the my brother
 ‘(...) and I want to slap my brother.’
- f. *Tive alguns contratempos com o teste de matemática e un-s
 had-1.SG some setbacks with the test of math and a-PL
mega-s trabalho-s, mas resolvi tudo.*⁹
 mega-PL work-PL but solved-1.SG everything
 ‘I had some setbacks with the math test and some big troubles, but I’ve solved it all.’

⁴ Available in: <<http://www.diarinho.com.br/materias.cfm?caderno=25&materia=73671>>, collected in August 31, 2014.

⁵ Available in: <<http://migre.me/qmISM>>, collected in September 02, 2014.

⁶ Available in: <<http://www.hardmob.com.br/boteco-hardmob/55386-genios-da-guitarra-ql-vcprefere-2.html>>, collected in September 02, 2014.

⁷ Available in: <<https://br.answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20130917173328AA0enBZ>>, collected in August 31, 2014.

⁸ Available in: <<http://www.amorodoce.com/forum/t21312,2-castiel-acalme-se-o-bullying-ja-vai-acabar.htm>>, collected in August 31, 2014.

⁹ Available in: <<http://socialspirit.com.br/fanfics/naruto>>, collected in August 31, 2014.

Regarding gender, some intensifier adjectives display gender agreement, such as *senhor(a)* ‘sir/lady’, *bruto(a)* ‘brute’, and *tremendo(a)* ‘tremendous’.

- (15) a. *Fez du-a-s senhor-a-s apresentaçõ-es no Carnegie Hall.*
 did-3.SG two-FEM-PL sir-FEM-PL presentation-PL in-the Carnegie Hall
 ‘S/he made two great presentations at Carnegie Hall.’
- b. *Conseguiu doi-s senhor-es cargo-s no senado.*
 got-3.SG two.MASC-PL sir-PL position-PL in-the senate
 ‘S/he got two great positions in the senate.’
- c. *Deu um tremend-o vexame.*
 gave-3.SG a tremendous-MASC embarrassment
 ‘S/he embarrassed her/himself greatly.’
- d. *Conseguiu algum-a-s tremend-a-s vantagens.*
 got-3.SG some-FEM-PL tremendous-FEM-PL advantages
 ‘They got some great advantages.’
- e. *Eles fizeram um brut-o investment-o.*
 they made a brute-MASC investment-MASC
 ‘They’ve made a great investment’
- f. *Ele levou um-a brut-a pancad-a.*
 he took a-FEM brute-FEM punch-FEM
 ‘He took a swipe.’

Bruto(a) displays a particular behavior. In (15e) and (15f), for instance, this adjective can modify a masculine noun when it is in both masculine and feminine form (e.g., *um brut-a investment-o* lit. a brute-FEM investment-MASC). Nevertheless, when the modified noun has feminine gender, the adjective only displays feminine agreement (e.g., *um-a brut-a chuv-a* lit. a-FEM brute-FEM rain-FEM vs. **um-a brut-o chuv-a* lit. a-FEM brute-MASC rain-FEM/ **um brut-o chuv-a* lit. a-MASC brute-MASC rain-FEM ‘a heavy rain’).

Such gender asymmetry suggests a direct relationship between the ending vowel *-a* – corresponding to feminine gender in adjectives – and intensification. This is evidenced by the fact that intensifier adjectives which could potentially inflect in gender display only the ending vowel *-a*, namely: *puta* ‘whore’, *baita* ‘great’, and *mega* ‘mega’. Additionally, the optionality in gender marking with masculine nouns is not categorical. Depending on the modified noun, gender marking alternation leads to a double interpretation, in which the intensification interpretation is preserved only when the adjective has a feminine gender marker:

- (16) a. *Um brut-a marido*
 a.MASC brute-FEM husband
 ‘A very good husband’
- b. *Um brut-o marido*
 a.MASC brute-MASC husband
 ‘An aggressive husband’
- c. *Um brut-a soco*
 a.MASC brute-FEM punch
 ‘A very strong punch’
- d. *Um brut-o soco*
 a.MASC brute-MASC punch
 ‘A violent punch’

In contrast, *hiper* ‘hyper’, *super* ‘super’, and *big* ‘great’ do not display any number or gender marking:

- (17) a. *hiper ofert-a*
 hyper offer-FEM
 ‘big offer’
- b. *hiper ofert-a-s*
 hyper offer-FEM-PL
 ‘big offers’
- c. *super promoção*
 super sale.FEM
 ‘big sale’
- d. *super promoçõ-es*
 super sale.FEM-SG
 ‘big sales’
- e. *big fest-a*
 big party-FEM
 ‘great party’
- f. *big fest-a-s*
 big party-FEM-PL
 ‘great parties’

We will return to agreement relations with intensifier adjectives after describing noun phrases with multiple agreement makers in the next section.

Types of phrases and sentences

We have verified the distribution of intensifier adjectives in the following syntactic environments: (a) definite vs indefinite noun phrases, (b) predicative sentences, (c)

exclamative sentences, and in (c) noun phrases with multiple instantiation of indefinite determiners (e.g., “*um x de um y*” lit. a *x* of a *y*, in which *x* stands for an intensifier adjective and *y* for a noun).

Regarding intensifier adjectives and definiteness, we noted that they can easily appear both in definite and indefinite contexts, even though its use in indefinite noun phrases seems to be the preferred option at first sight.

- (18) a. *Falta um dia para a **baita** festa d-o CTG.*
 lack.3.SG one day for the great party of-the CTG
 ‘There is one day left for the great party of CTG.’
- b. *A **bruta** força d-os sentidos.*
 the brute force of-the senses
 ‘The great force of senses.’
- c. *O **puta** salário pago a-os diretores é de dar inveja.*
 the whore salary payed to-the directors is of give jealousy
 ‘The big salary paid to the directors is to die for.’
- d. *A **senhora** apresentação que ele fez em Brasília mudou
 minha ideia.*
 the lady presentation that he made in Brasilia changed
 my idea
 ‘The great presentation he made in Brasilia changed my mind.’
- e. *O **tremendo** vexame a que fomos expostos.*
 the tremendous embarrassment to that be.1.PL exposed
 ‘The tremendous humiliation we were exposed to.’
- f. *O **mega** xodozão d-o Pará.*
 the mega hit of-the Pará
 ‘The great hit from Pará.’
- g. *O **hiper** atentado terrorista repercutiu n-o mundo todo.*
 the hyper attack terrorist reverberated in-the world entire
 ‘The great terrorist attack reverberated worldwide.’
- h. *A **super** oferta divulgada n-as redes sociais.*
 the super offer announced in-the net social
 ‘The super offer announced on social networks.’

In predicative contexts their use is more restricted, since many intensifier adjectives are blocked in predicative position. It is worth investigating whether borrowed intensifiers can indeed appear in predicative position, as signaled in (19), and whether their acceptability is governed by age factors (i.e., whether they are more acceptable among young speakers).

- (19) a. **A confusão foi **baita**.*
 the mess was great
 Intended: ‘It was a great mess.’
- b. **O cargo é **puta**.*
 the job is whore
 Intended: ‘It is a great job.’
- c. **A força é **bruta**.*
 the force is brute
 Intended: ‘It is a great force.’
- d. **A apresentação foi **senhora**.*
 the presentation was lady
 Intended: ‘It was a great presentation.’
- e. *O vexame foi **tremendo**.*
 the embarrassment was tremendous
 Intended: ‘It was a tremendous humiliation.’
- f. ?*A festa foi **mega**.*
 the party was mega
 Intended: ‘It was a great party.’
- g. ?*O mercado é **super**.*
 the market is super
 Intended: ‘It is a very good market.’
- h. ??*A oferta é **hiper**.*
 the offer is hyper
 Intended: ‘It is a great offer.’

Again, *tremendo* ‘tremendous’ diverges from other intensifier adjectives, but we still insist that it should be characterized as such. More arguments in favor of this position will be presented when we analyze noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners.

Exclamative sentences are another strategy for denoting intensification. Interestingly, all intensifier adjectives can be used in exclamative constructions, as we can see in (20).

- (20) a. *Que **baita** falta de caráter!*
 what great absence of character
 ‘What a huge lack of character!’
- b. *Que **bruta** vontade de vencer!*
 what brute wish of win
 ‘What a great will to win!’
- c. *Que **tremenda** cara-de-pau!*
 what tremendous poker face
 ‘What a tremendous poker face!’

- d. *Que puta dor-de-cabeça!*
 what whore headache
 ‘What a terrible headache!’
- e. *Que senhora apresentação!*
 what lady presentation
 ‘What a great presentation!’
- f. *Que mega surpresa!*
 what mega surprise
 ‘What a great surprise!’
- g. *Que hiper apartamento!*
 what hyper apartment
 ‘What a great apartment!’
- h. *Que super abraço!*
 what super hug
 ‘What a big hug!’
- i. *Que big festa!*
 what great party
 ‘What a terrific party!’

Noun phrases with multiple instantiation of indefinite determiners

A specific construction that employs intensifier adjectives are noun phrases with multiple instantiation of indefinite determiners (viz., “*um x de um y*” lit. a *x* of a *y*), in which *x* stands for an intensifier adjective. Multiple determiners in noun phrases are a common phenomenon in the realm of intensification and, in general, it is found in modification contexts. This phenomenon is attested in a handful of languages (ALEXIADOU, 2014)¹⁰, differing on the grammatical nature of *x*, whether it is a degree word (e.g., adverbs or quantifiers) (21), or an adjective (22), as in BP:

- (21) a. *a no a grißa Bua* (Bavarian German)
 a such a big boy
 (KALLULLI; ROTHMAYR, 2008)
- b. *en ganz en guete Wi* (Swiss German)
 a totally a good wine
 (LINDAUER, 1991 apud ALEXIADOU, 2014)

¹⁰ We thank Janayna Carvalho for indicating the reference.

- (22) a. *en stor en kar* (Northern Swedish)
 a big a man
 (DELSING, 1993 apud ALEXIADOU, 2014)
- b. *en stygg en stor en fyr* (Norwegian)
 a ugly a big a guy
 (ALEXIADOU, 2014)

A second difference for BP is the presence of a preposition *de* ‘of’ between the adjective and the modified noun. All intensifier adjectives under analysis can be used in these complex noun phrases, as we can see in (23).

- (23) a. *Um baita de um animal.*
 a great of an animal
 ‘A very big animal’
- b. *Uma bruta de uma sacanagem.*
 a brute of a mean thing
 ‘A hell of a mean thing’
- c. *Um puta de um carro.*
 a whore of a car
 ‘A hell of a car’
- d. *Um senhor de um cargo.*
 a sir of a job
 ‘A great job’
- e. *Um tremendo de um vexame.*
 a tremendous of an embarrassment
 ‘A tremendous humiliation’
- f. *Um mega de um show.*
 a mega of a concert
 ‘A great concert’
- g. *Um hiper de um apartamento.*
 a hyper of an apartment
 ‘A great apartment’
- h. *Uma super de uma oferta.*
 a super of an offer
 ‘A super offer’
- i. *Uma big de uma festa.*
 a great of a party
 ‘A great party’

In an attempt to assess the acceptability of intensifier adjectives in noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners, we applied an online test in the platform *Online Pesquisa* (<https://www.onlinepesquisa.com/>). Both intensifier adjectives and adnominal degree modifiers were tested, as well as agreement marking distribution within these complex noun phrases. These constructions allowed us to distinguish intensifier adjectives from adnominal degree modifiers, as we shall see below. The participants had to judge the grammaticality of the sentences listed in Table 1 as (a) acceptable, (b) unacceptable, or (c) uncertain. Our preliminary results are the following:

Table 1 – Result of the grammaticality reading test for the presence of intensifier modifiers in complex noun phrases with indefinite determiners

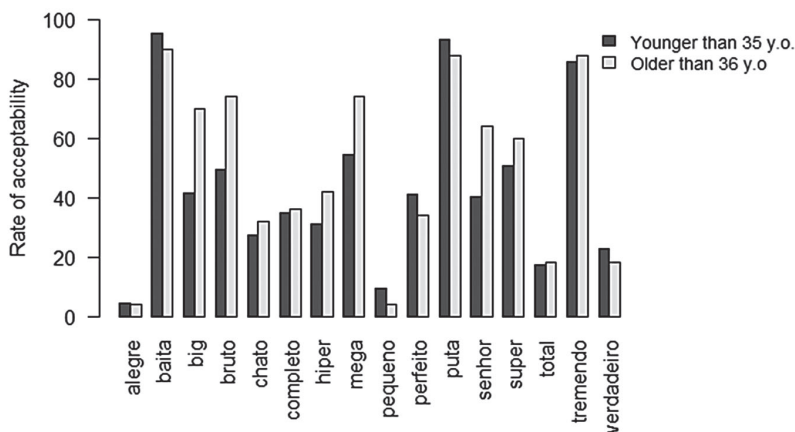
Grammaticality reading test applied online between February 10, 2015 ~ February 12, 2015 Number of participants: 144				
		Accept.	Unaccept.	Uncert.
Baita 'great'	(m) Ele me deu um <u>baita</u> de um susto he me gave a great of a fright 'He gave me a huge fright.'	97.2%	2.1%	0.7%
	(f) Estou com uma <u>baita</u> de uma dor de cabeça be.1.SG with a great of a headache 'I got a super headache'	91.5%	7.4%	1.4%
Bruto 'brute'	(m) Eles fizeram um <u>bruto</u> de um investimento they made a brute of an investment 'They've made a big investment'	56.9%	28.4%	14.5%
	(f) Foi uma <u>bruta</u> de uma confusão be.3.SG a brute of a mess 'It was a big mess.'	51.7%	32.8%	15.3%
	(m) Ele está com um <u>bruta</u> de um problema he is with a brute of a problem 'He is facing a serious problem.'	43.3%	44.0%	12.5%
Tremendo 'tremendous'	(m) Foi um <u>tremendo</u> de um vexame be.3.SG a tremendous of a embarrassment 'It was a tremendous humiliation.'	89.5%	9.0%	1.3%
	(f) Eles caíram em uma <u>tremenda</u> de uma cilada they felt in a tremendous of a trap 'They felt into a huge trap.'	83.2%	13.9%	2.8%
Putá 'whore'	(m) Ele comprou um <u>puta</u> de um carro he bought a whore of a car 'He bought such a good car.'	93.0%	5.5%	1.4%
	(f) Ele deu uma <u>puta</u> de uma festa he gave a whore of a party 'He gave a hell of a party'	91.5%	6.3%	2.1%
Senhor(a) 'sir/lady'	(f) É uma <u>senhora</u> de uma promoção be.3.SG a lady of a sale 'It is a big sale.'	57.3%	27.2%	15.3%
	(m) Ela me deu um <u>senhor</u> de um abraço she me gave a sir of a hug 'She gave me a big hug.'	30.7%	57.3%	11.8%

		Accept.	Unaccept.	Uncert.
Big 'great'	(f) Foi uma <u>big</u> de uma festa be.3.SG a great of a party 'It was a hell of a party.'	56.2%	32.6%	11.1%
	(m) Ele me deu um <u>big</u> de um presente he me gave a great of a gift 'He gave me such a good gift.'	37.3%	46.4%	16.2%
Mega 'mega'	(f) Ele deu uma <u>mega</u> de uma festa he gave a mega of a party 'He gave a hell of a party.'	59.4%	27.2%	13.2%
	(m) Ele me deu um <u>mega</u> de um beijo he me gave a mega of a kiss 'He gave me such a big kiss.'	56.2%	28.4%	15.2%
Super 'super'	(m) Eu ganhei um <u>super</u> de um desconto I won a super of a discount 'I've got a great discount.'	65.6%	22.9%	11.1%
	(f) Eles alugaram uma <u>super</u> de uma casa they rented a super of a house 'They've rented such a great house.'	39.8%	44.0%	16.0%
Hiper 'hyper'	(m) Eles compraram um <u>hiper</u> de um apartamento they bought a hyper of a apartment 'They bought such a great apartment.'	37.0%	51.0%	11.8%
	(f) Ela tem uma <u>hiper</u> de uma piscina she has a hyper of a pool 'She has a very good pool.'	28.6%	54.5%	16.7%
Total 'total'	(f) Foi uma <u>total</u> de uma falta de respeito be.3.SG a total of an lack of respect 'It was a great insolence.'	20.9%	67.8%	11.1%
	(m) Foi um <u>total</u> de um disparate be.3.SG a total of a nonsense 'It was a total nonsense.'	14.6%	68.5%	16.7%
Perfeito 'perfect'	(m) Fui um <u>perfeito</u> de um idiota be.1.SG a perfect of an idiot 'I was such an idiot.'	43.3%	46.1%	10.4%
	(f) Foi uma <u>perfeita</u> de uma emboscada be.3.SG a perfect of a trap 'It was such a perfect trap.'	36.3%	45.4%	18.1%
Verdadeiro 'true'	(f) Foi uma <u>verdadeira</u> de uma falta de respeito be.3.SG a true of a lack of respect 'It was a complete insolence.'	23.7%	68.5%	7.6%
	(m) Ele é um <u>verdadeiro</u> de um cafajeste he is a true of a jerk 'He is a complete idiot.'	20.8%	66.5%	12.5%
Completo 'complete'	(m) Fui um <u>completo</u> de um imbecil be.1.SG a complete of an idiot 'I was a complete idiot.'	39.8%	48.9%	11.1%
	(f) Ela foi uma <u>completa</u> de uma ingênua. she was a complete of a naïve 'She was such a naïve girl.'	30.9%	51.4%	17.6%

Source: Author's elaboration.

As we can see, adnominal degree modifiers such as *total* ‘total’, *perfeito* ‘perfect’, *verdadeiro* ‘true’, *completo* ‘complete’ are hardly ever acceptable in these complex noun phrases. Prototypical adjectives such as *alegre* ‘happy’, *chato* ‘boring’, and *pequeno* ‘small’ present the same restrictions. Further, gender agreement seems to play a role in the acceptability of some intensifier adjectives, as in *big* ‘great’, *bruto* ‘brute’, *senhor(a)* ‘sir, lady’, and *super* ‘super’ examples. It is also worth mentioning that the latter presents greater acceptability among older participants (i.e., above 36 years old), as depicted in Graphic 1.¹¹

Graphic 1 – Distribution of acceptability by adjective and age

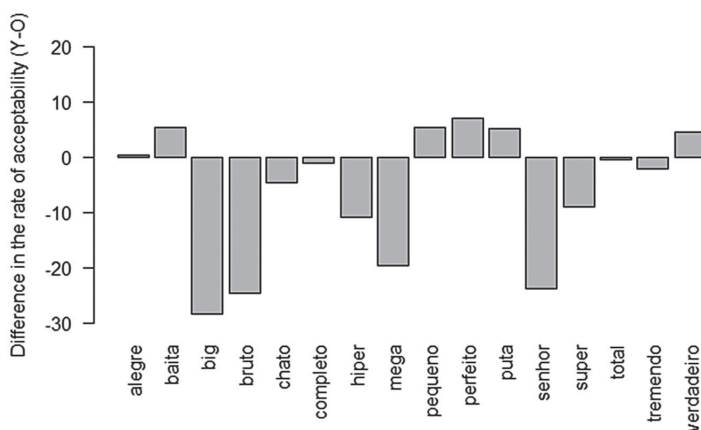


Source: Author’s elaboration.

In Graphic 2, the distribution considering acceptability vs age becomes more evident by subtracting the degree of acceptability of each adjective for older and younger participants ($%Y - %O$). Bars with negative values indicate greater acceptability among older participants ($%Y < %O$), while bars with positive values indicate greater acceptability among younger participants ($%Y > %O$). Bars close to zero indicate little difference in acceptability among ages ($%Y \approx %O$). In addition to *super*, *mega*, *hiper*, and *big* (of classical and Germanic origins), other adjectives display greater acceptability among older participants, namely: *bruto* ‘brute’, *senhor(a)* ‘sir, lady’ (and *tremendo* ‘tremendous’, *chato* ‘boring’, in a much smaller degree).

¹¹ We thank Livia Oushiro for statistical evaluation of part of this work.

Graphic 2 – Difference in the rate of acceptability between younger (35 years old or less) and older (36 years old or more) participants



Source: Author's elaboration.

Regarding the presence or absence of number marking, the grammaticality test shows some interesting facts. We observed that in complex DPs with multiple determiners, the most accepted agreement patterns are $[D_{PL} \text{ Adj } D_{PL} \text{ N}]$ and $[D_{PL} \text{ Adj}_{PL} D_{PL} \text{ N}]$. It can be inferred that although the modified noun and the intensifier adjective can remain with no agreement markers, the indefinite determiners indispensably requires number marking.

Table 2 – Result of the grammaticality reading test for the distribution of agreement makers within complex noun phrases with multiple determiners

Grammaticality reading test applied online between January 20, 2015 ~ January 30, 2015 Number of participants: 96				
		Accept.	Unaccept.	Uncert.
$D_{PL} \text{ Adj}_{PL} D_{PL} \text{ N}$	Ele comprou un-s puta-s de un-s carro he bought a-PL whore-PL of a-PL car 'He bought such great cars'	44.7%	41.6%	13.5%
	Eles eram un-s bruto-s de un-s homem they were a-PL brute-PL of a-PL men 'They were such big men.'	34.3%	51.0%	14.8%
$D_{PL} \text{ Adj}_{PL} \text{ D N}$	Ela tem un-s puta-s de um livro she has a-PL whore-PL of a book 'She has some great books.'	11.4%	83.3%	5.2%
	Ela trabalha com un-s bruto-s de um homem she works with a-PL brute-PL of a men 'She works with some big men.'	2.0%	88.5%	9.3%

		Accept.	Unaccept.	Uncert.
D _{PL} Adj D N	Eles recebem un- <u>s</u> puta de um salário they received a-PL whore of a salary 'They receive such great salaries.'	40.6%	46.8%	12.5%
	Ele comeu uma- <u>s</u> bruta de uma banana he ate a-PL brute of a banana 'He ate some huge bananas.'	8.3%	82.2%	9.3%
D _{PL} Adj _{PL} D N _{PL}	Ele comprou un- <u>s</u> puta- <u>s</u> de um iate- <u>s</u> he bought a-PL whore-PL of a yate-PL 'They've bought some huge yates.'	20.8%	71.8%	7.2%
	Eles compraram un- <u>s</u> bruto- <u>s</u> de um aviã- <u>es</u> they bought a-PL brute-PL of an airplane-PL 'They've bought some huge airplanes.'	13.5%	79.1%	7.2%
D _{PL} Adj D N _{PL}	Ela tem un- <u>s</u> puta de um livro- <u>s</u> she has a-PL whore of a book-PL 'She has some great books.'	15.6%	81.2%	3.1%
	Eles leiloaram un- <u>s</u> bruto de um touro- <u>s</u> they auctioned a-PL brute of a bull-s 'They've auctioned some big bulls.'	4.1%	89.5%	6.2%
D _{PL} Adj D _{PL} N	Eles recebem un- <u>s</u> puta de un- <u>s</u> salário they receive a-PL whore of a-PL salary 'They receive such great salaries.'	59.3%	33.3%	7.2%
	Eles importaram un- <u>s</u> bruta de un- <u>s</u> avião they imported a-PL brute of a-PL airplane 'They've imported some huge airplanes.'	64.5%	28.1%	7.2%
D Adj D _{PL} N	Ela comprou um puta de un- <u>s</u> livro she bought a whore of a-PL book 'She bought some great books.'	19.7%	65.6%	14.5%
	Eles criam um bruto de un- <u>s</u> touro they raise a brute of a-PL bull 'They raise some huge bulls.'	14.5%	69.7%	15.6%

Source: Author's elaboration.

As for the inferential interpretation of intensifier adjectives, they can be characterized as non-intersective adjectives, i.e. intensifier adjectives do not create sets capable of intersecting with the set of things denoted by their modified noun.

- (24) a. *baita* homem: x is *homem* [✓]; x is *baita* [X]
great man
'big man'
- b. *bruta* chuva: x is *chuva* [✓]; x is *bruta* [X]
brute rain
'heavy rain'
- c. *tremendo* vendaval: x is *vendaval* [✓]; (?) x is *tremendo* [X]
tremendous windstorm
'tremendous windstorm'

- d. **puta** livro: *x is livro* [✓]; *x is puta* [X]
 whore book
 ‘great book’
- e. **senhora** festa: *x is festa* [✓]; *x is senhora* [X]
 lady party
 ‘great party’
- f. **mega** promoção: *x is promoção* [✓]; (?) *x is mega* [X]
 mega sale
 ‘big sale’
- g. **hiper** declaração: *x is declaração* [✓]; (?) *x is hiper* [X]
 hyper statement
 ‘great statement’
- h. **super** festa: *x is festa* [✓]; (?) *x is super* [X]
 super party
 ‘great party’
- i. **big** surpresa: *x is surpresa* [✓]; *x is big* [X]
 great surprise
 ‘great surprise’

It is also important to distinguish the above complex noun phrases from predicate inversion within noun phrases, in which common nouns function as modifiers internally to a DP. In the latter cases, predicate inversion can be found both in indefinite and definite noun phrases (25). According to den Dikken (1998, 2006), the preposition functions as a nominal copula.

- (25) a. *Um merda de um par de meias.*
 a shit of a pair of socks
 ‘A crappy pair of socks.’
- b. *Um safado de um deputado.*
 a naughty of a deputy
 ‘A corrupt of a deputy.’
- c. *Um bosta de um soldado.*
 a shit of a soldier
 ‘A lame soldier.’
- d. *Um idiota de um publicitário.*
 an idiot of an adman
 ‘An idiot of an adman.’
- e. *A vaca da minha prima.*
 the cow of my cousin
 ‘My cousin, that bitch.’

- f. *O burro do meu cunhado.*
 the jerk of my brother-in-law
 ‘My brother-in-law, that idiot.’
- g. *O safado do meu tio.*
 the bastard of my uncle
 ‘My uncle, that bastard.’

The difference in interpretation is clear: in (25), there is an evaluation (e.g., *este par de meias é uma merda* ‘this pair of socks sucks’), oppositely to the modification made by intensifier adjectives in (23) (e.g., **este animal é um baita* ‘this animal is big’). Drawing a distinction between these two sets of noun phrases is a goal for future research, in which we also want to check: (i) the similarities between these constructions as opposed to noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners in BP, and (ii) the syntactic nature of the preposition emerging in all complex noun phrases discussed above. The sentences in (25) are, therefore, outside the scope of this article.

In sum, intensifier adjectives occur exclusively postposed to a modified element, in definite and indefinite noun phrases. They can also be found, with no exception, in exclamative sentences and in complex noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners. As for agreement relations, intensifier adjectives display a variable behavior, as well as for the lexical categories they can modify.

One question that remains to be answered is the morphological status of borrowed intensifiers. We will address this issue in the next section.

Morphological nature of borrowed intensifiers

Now we will address the issue concerning the morphological status of borrowed intensifiers, *hiper*, *mega*, and *super*, assessing whether they could be analyzed either as prefixes, as suggested by Alves (1980, 2000, 2006, 2009, 2011), for the three forms, and Schwindt (2001), for *hiper*, or as independent adjectives. To provide an answer for this question, we will contrast their morphological behavior with the behavior of other bound intensifiers characterized as prefixes, namely, *ultra-*, *extra-* and *tri-*.

Rocha (1999) and Silva and Miotto (2009) list some criteria to identify a prefix, to wit:

(26) Criteria for identifying prefixes

- a. are always to the left (as opposed to suffixes);
- b. are not a N, V or A stem (as opposed to compounds);
- c. are recurrent;
- d. have phonetic, semantic, and functional identity;
- e. are bound.

Criterion (26a) is satisfied by both groups: *mega*, *hiper* and *super*, and *ultra-*, *extra-* and *tri-*. For the former, evidence is the result of the linear order test presented earlier in example (6). The latter are ungrammatical when used postposed to a modified element: **moderno ultra* lit. modern-ultra ‘ultra-modern’, **conservador ultra* lit. conservative-ultra ‘ultra-conservative’, **grande extra* lit. big-extra ‘extra big’, **macia extra* lit. soft-extra ‘extra soft’, **legal tri* lit. cool-very ‘very cool’, **curioso tri* lit. curious-tri ‘very curious’.

Extra, however, displays more than one interpretation. Alves (1980) noticed that the intensification reading emerges only when *extra* modifies adjectives, but when it modifies nouns, *extra* means “out of”, “besides”, “beyond” (e.g., *extratexto* lit. extra-text ‘out of the text’, *extraclasse* lit. extra-class ‘after class’). Additionally, we have noticed that *extra* can appear to the right of a modified element without triggering an intensification reading, for instance: “*pedindo com jeito as atendentes liberam um queijinho extra*” ‘by asking politely the attendants can give us some extra cheese’ and “*ele vem com um sabor extra de frutas, como framboesa e pêssego*” ‘it has an additional flavor of fruits, such as raspberry and peach’. Thus it seems that there are at least three different “*extras*”, but only the first two display a prefix-like behavior.

Criterion (26b) requires a case by case analysis. None of these items can be considered a noun since they cannot be directly combined to determiners (**o/a/um hiper* lit. the.MASC/the.FEM/a hyper, **o/a/um super*, **o/a/um ultra*, **o/a/extra*, **o/a/um tri*). “*A mega*” and “*um mega*”, however, do not correspond straightforwardly to *mega*, but they are clipped forms¹² from *a mega-sena* ‘the mega-sena lottery’ and *um mega-byte* ‘a megabyte’, respectively. Likewise, none of them are used as verbs. All these items have a modification function, but this characteristic by itself is not enough to set their morphological status.

Criterion (26c), regarding productivity, is irrelevant if it is considered separately from criterion (26e), since recurrence of an item must be unvarying when related to its morphological form, whether bound or free.

Criterion (26d) is not entirely acceptable. Phonetic identity is not a good criterion, since many affixed forms can display allomorphy. On the other hand, semantic and functional identity is relevant and it is satisfied by all the above items. The former suggests that the prefix adds the same meaning to a stem (at first, compositional), and, from a functional point of view, the prefix must trigger the same functional properties when attached to a stem, maintaining or changing its lexical category.

Criterion (26e) highlights the bound nature of prefixes, which precludes the presence of any intervening element between the prefix and the stem, as we can see in (27). Nevertheless, *mega*, *hiper* and *super* allow the intervention of a preposition and of an indefinite article between them and the modified element, as we have observed in the

¹² *Clipping* occurs when the shortening of a word gives rise to a shortened unit semantically identical to its longer version. The shortening can subtract an affix, a sequence of segments, or a constituent member of a compound (Cf. ROCHA, 1999; SCHER 2013).

complex noun phrases in (23). This evidences that *mega*, *hiper* and *super* cannot be analyzed as prefixes. *Ultra-*, *extra-* and *tri-*, on the other hand, behave like the canonical prefixes in (27), which signals their prefixed status.

- (27) a. *re- *de um fazer*.
re- of a make
b. *in- *de um feliz*.
un- of a happy
c. *des *de um humano*.
de- of a human
- (28) a. *ultra *de um conservador*.
ultra- of a conservative
b. *extra *de um macio*.
extra of a soft
c. *tri- *de um legal*.
very of a cool

Thus while *ultra-*, *extra-* and *tri-* can be analyzed as prefixed intensifiers, *mega*, *hiper*¹³ and *super* are intensifier adjectives. As a result, any formation with *mega*, *hiper* and *super* which points out to a single referent, or behaves like a single morphosyntactic unit, should be analyzed as compounds in which *mega*, *hiper* and *super* are an adjectival constituent member, as in the examples in (29):

- (29) a. A-N Compounds: *supermercado* ‘supermarket’, *superstar* ‘superstar’, *hiperinflação* ‘hyperinflation’, *super-saldão* ‘big sale’, *mega-feirão* ‘big sale’, *super-herói* ‘superhero’, *hipermercado* ‘hypermarket’, *megainvestidor* ‘mega investor’.
b. A-V Compounds: *superestimar* ‘superestimate’, *superproteger* ‘overprotect’, *megafavorecer* ‘over favor’, *hiperinflacionar* ‘hyperinflationate’.

Schwindt (2001) admits that *hiper* and all other compositional prefixes (viz., *contra-*, *extra-*, *intra-*, *infra-*, *macro-*, *micro-*, etc.) are potentially separable, or in a given context they can be instantiated independently, realizing nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. However, contrary to the author, we claim that *hiper* should be exclusively viewed as an independent adjective, which can make up compounds.

¹³ *Hiper* deserves special attention. In Table 1, *hiper* do not show greater acceptance in complex noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners, neutralizing our argument that it could not be analyzed as a prefix. However, in a previous grammaticality test, *hiper* showed considerable acceptability among the participants within these constructions. In light of this fact, we think that *hiper* cannot be considered a morphological form strictly bound. We will return to this issue in a future work.

A test to differentiate a noun phrase from a compound is the impossibility of “double modification” with intensifier adjectives, as discussed in (30). The grammaticality of (31) evidences that *super*, *mega* and *hiper* make up a single syntactic unit with the word to the right.

- (30) a. **Uma puta super festa*
 a whore super party
 Intended: ‘A terrific party’
 b. **Um baita hiper apartamento*
 a great hyper apartment
 Intended: ‘A very good apartment’
 **Uma tremenda mega burrice*
 a tremendous mega stupidity
 Intended: ‘A tremendous stupidity’

- (31) a. *Um puta supermercado*
 a whore supermarket
 ‘A great supermarket’
 b. *Uma tremenda hipercorreção*
 a tremendous hypercorrection
 ‘A tremendous hypercorrection’
 c. *Um baita mega-feirão*
 a great sale
 ‘A big sale’

An additional observation is needed. Intensifier items of classical origins correspond to dissyllabic units bearing a primary stress. We could hypothesize that it is the presence of a primary stress which licenses the use of these items in complex noun phrases with multiple indefinite determiners. However, other stressed dissyllabic prefixes listed by Schwindt (2001) cannot be employed in complex noun phrases (32), suggesting this is a morphological rather than phonological restriction.

- (32) a. **Ele é um recém de um nascido.*
 he is a new of a born
 Intended: ‘He is a very new newborn’
 b. **Ele é um neo de um nazista.*
 he is a new of a nazi
 Intended: ‘He is a very new nazi’
 c. **Ele é um vice de um reitor.*
 he is a vice of a president
 Intended: ‘He is a vice-president very subordinated’

Based on the above-mentioned facts, we conclude that *mega*, *super* and *hiper* are not prefixes, but intensifier adjectives that can be used as a constituent member of a compound.

Conclusion

In this article, we sought to advance the understanding of intensification structures, concentrating on intensification triggered by adjectives. We have identified a major class of intensifier adjectives in BP composed of *baita* ‘great’, *bruta* ‘brute’, *tremendo* ‘tremendous’, *puta* ‘whore’, *senhor(a)* ‘sir, lady’, *mega* ‘mega’, *hiper* ‘hyper’, *super* ‘super’ and *big* ‘great’. Despite characterizing them as intensifier adjectives, we recognize that their category status is still a point of contention,¹⁴ since these intensifiers display a variable behavior with respect to the category nature of the elements they modify. They share, however, a handful of properties, such as their preposed linear position, and the preference for materializing with no gender and number markers.

Their presence in complex noun phrases with multiple determiners evidences that the intensifier modifier class is different from the other classes of modifiers and adjectives, especially from the adnominal degree modifiers (MORZYCKI, 2012) which are blocked in these constructions. Complex noun phrases also evidence that *super*, *mega*, and *hiper* cannot be analyzed as prefixes, since they allow a considerable amount of intervening elements between them and the modified noun.

¹⁴ Evidence that the lexical category of denominal adjectives is dubious can be seen with suffixation in *-mente*. The suffix *-mente* is one of the most productive suffixes in BP, and it attaches to any adjective to derive an adverb. However, this suffix does not attach to nominal bases, as exemplified in (i), as well as to denominal and borrowed intensifiers.

- | | | | |
|---------|---------------------|---|-----------------------|
| (i) a. | <i>caderno</i> | → | <i>*cadernamente</i> |
| | notebook | | ≈ notebookly |
| | b. <i>feliz</i> | → | <i>felizmente</i> |
| | happy | | happily |
| (ii) a. | <i>tremendo</i> | → | <i>tremendamente</i> |
| | tremendous | | tremendously |
| | b. <i>bruto</i> | → | <i>brutamente</i> |
| | violent | | violently |
| | c. <i>puta</i> | → | <i>*putamente</i> |
| | whore | | ≈ whorely |
| | d. <i>senhor(a)</i> | → | <i>*senhoramente</i> |
| | sir, lady | | ≈ sirly, ladily |
| | e. <i>baita</i> | → | <i>*baitamente</i> |
| | great | | greatly |
| | f. <i>super</i> | → | <i>*supermente</i> |
| | super | | ≈ superly |
| | g. <i>mega</i> | → | <i>*megamente</i> |
| | mega | | ≈ megaly |
| | h. <i>hiper</i> | → | <i>*hiper(a)mente</i> |
| | hyper | | ≈ hyperly |
| | i. <i>big</i> | → | <i>*bigmente</i> |
| | big | | ≈ bigly |

Although the empirical facts discussed in this article contribute to the study of intensification and modification, we are aware that much remains to be explained. Our goal is to continue this research (i) applying other tests concerning the structure of complex noun phrases, (ii) compare the structure of complex noun phrases with multiple determiners (e.g., *uma puta de uma festa* lit. a whore of a party ‘a great party’) with cases of predicate inversion in the nominal domain (e.g., *o burro do meu cunhado* lit. the donkey of my brother-in-law ‘my brother-in-law, that idiot’), and verify to what extent these constructions are similar and distinct to each other. Finally, we would like (iii) to provide a typology of intensifying words, taking a closer look at the category status of denominal intensifiers, such as *puta* ‘whore’ and *senhor(a)* ‘sir, lady’, in order to reassess their category nature, since they behave like non-head nouns in N-N compounds (e.g., *ano-luz* lit. year-light ‘light-year’, *banana-maça* lit. banana-apple ‘apple banana’, *peixe-espada* lit. fish-sword ‘sword fish’).

Acknowledgements

We thank Livia Oushiro for helpful suggestions on previous versions of this work. We also thank the audiences of the IX International Congress of ABRALIN (Belém-PA, 2015), and the II Jornadas Patagónicas de Linguística Formal (General Roca – Argentina, 2015) for their comments and feedbacks. Needless to say, all the shortcomings of this work are entirely our responsibility.

FOLTRAN, M.; NÓBREGA, V. Adjetivos intensificadores no português brasileiro: propriedades, distribuição e reflexos morfológicos. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.60, n.2, p.321-351, 2016.

- *RESUMO: Este artigo tem por meta analisar as propriedades e a distribuição dos adjetivos intensificadores no português brasileiro, tendo em vista suas propriedades morfosintáticas, sintáticas e semânticas. Submetemos os dados a testes com o propósito de verificar seu comportamento em relação à ordem, definitude, e tipo de sentenças e sintagmas em que ocorrem. A partir disso, propomos algumas generalizações com relação à sua distribuição: (i) são exclusivamente prepostos, (ii) ocorrem em sintagmas definidos e indefinidos, (iii) ocorrem em sentenças exclamativas e (iv) podem ser empregados em contextos de duplicação do determinante em sintagmas nominais indefinidos. No que concerne à categoria lexical que modificam, observamos a formação de dois subgrupos: aqueles que modificam apenas nomes (viz., *baíta, bruta, senhor(a), puta*) e aqueles que modificam nomes e palavras de outra natureza categorial (viz., *mega, hiper, super*). Essas considerações nos fornecem um conjunto de informações sobre a natureza morfológica de *mega, hiper e super*. Embora sejam tratados como prefixos, argumentamos que essa análise não é plausível. Em contrapartida, sugerimos que tais formas sejam consideradas adjetivos autônomos. Essa assunção, por sua vez, permite-nos explicar facilmente formações como *supermercado, mega-feirão e**

hipercorreção, analisando-as como compostos de combinação categorial A-N, contrariamente ao que a literatura vem assumindo.

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Sintagma Nominal. Modificação. Adjetivos Intensificadores.*

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Received in July 2015

Approved in October 2015

