

Competitions of synonyms  
through time:  
conceptual and social salience  
factors and their interrelations

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# Purpose

- argue that the diachronic development of synonymous forms reveals essential aspects about synonymy
- examine the role of conceptual factors, social factors and their correlations in the emergence of synonymy in general and across lectal varieties
- show that prototype-based features can differentiate synonyms and can originate synonyms across lectal varieties

# Hypotheses

1. the diachronic development of synonyms reveals essential aspects about synonymy
2. the emergence of synonyms result either from conceptual salience factors, or from social salience factors, or even from interaction of both factors  
⇒ **prototype-based** features can
  - differentiate synonyms (cf. Geeraerts 1988)
  - originate synonyms across varieties Geeraerts/Speelman 2010
3. competitions of synonyms shed light about language **variation and change** – convergence/divergence between lectal varieties, standardization  
(cf. Geeraerts et al. 1999, Soares da Silva 2010)

# Illustrations

## 2 corpus-based case studies

- the diachronic development of *deixar* ‘to leave, to let’ and its synonyms *abandonar* ‘to abandon’ and *permitir* ‘to allow’
  - from Soares da Silva (1999) on the semantics of *deixar*
- the diachronic development of **football and clothing** denotational synonyms in European and Brazilian Portuguese
  - from Soares da Silva (2010) on lexical convergence and divergence between European and Brazilian Portuguese

# Background

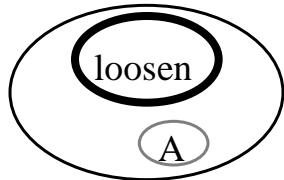
- **Cognitive Linguistics:**  
prototype theory (Geeraerts 1985, 1997; Taylor 1995)  
and cognitive lexical semantics (e.g. Cuyckens,  
Dirven & Taylor 2003)
- **Cognitive Sociolinguistics:**  
Kristiansen & Dirven 2008; Geeraerts, Kristiansen  
& Peirsman 2010
- advanced corpus-based techniques

# Case study 1

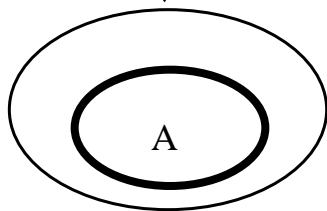
## *deixar vs. abandonar, permitir*

- (1) a. *O João **deixou** a família e o emprego.*  
b. *O João **abandonou** a família e o emprego.*  
'John left his family and his job.'
- (2) a. *O João não **deixou** que ela saísse do país.*  
'John didn't let her leave the country.'  
b. *O João não **permitiu** que ela saísse do país.*  
'John didn't allow her to leave the country.'

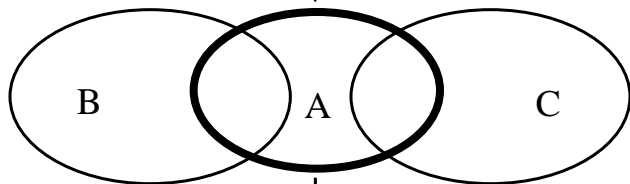
Classical Latin  
*laxare*



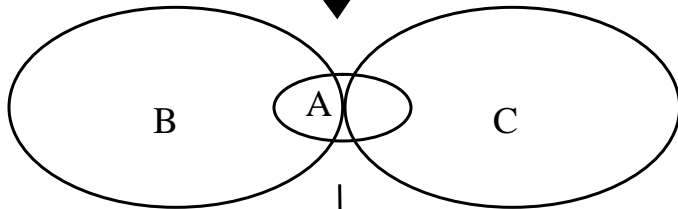
II



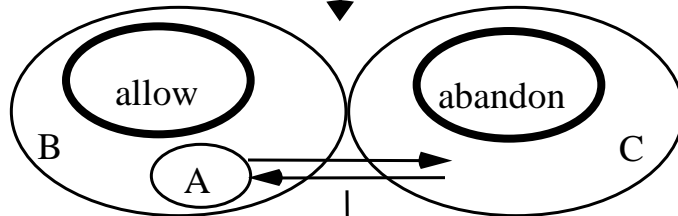
III-IV  
VI



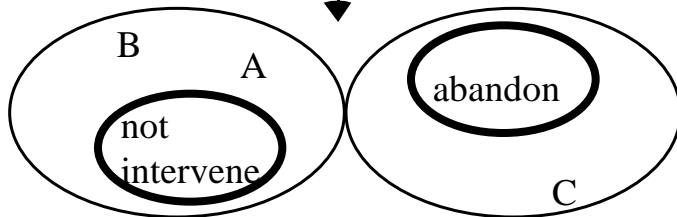
VIII-IX



Old  
Portuguese



Modern  
Portuguese



A: **let go**

B: **LET**

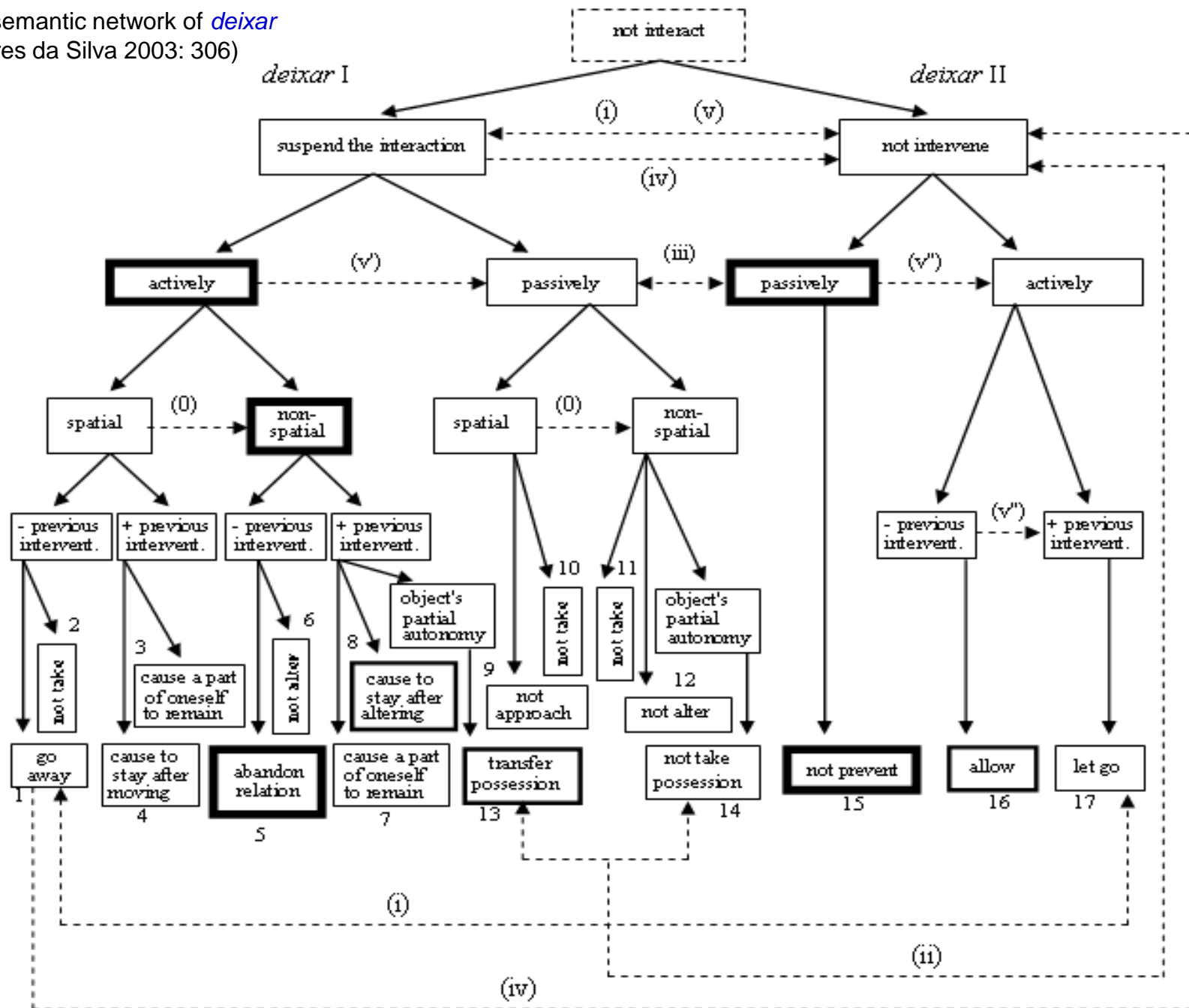
allow, permit, authorize, not oppose,  
not prevent; grant (peace, right),  
forgive [non-existent in Portuguese], etc.

C: **LEAVE**

go away, abandon, leave somewhere or in  
a state, not approach, transfer possession  
(bequeath, donate), etc.

The semantic development of *deixar*  
(Soares da Silva 2003: 308)

The semantic network of *deixar*  
 (Soares da Silva 2003: 306)





# Nondenotational differences

- *deixar vs. abandonar* (difference in emotional meaning)
  - *deixar* expresses abandonment with lesser emotional density, hence *deixar* can be used as a euphemism
- *deixar vs. permitir* (differences in stylistic and pragmatic meaning)
  - *deixar* belongs to a non-formal register and presupposes a more familiar (*subjective*) authority

# What about synonymy?

- **prototypicality** is a differentiating factor for synonyms, both synchronically and diachronically
  - synchronically: different prototypical structures (see also Geeraerts 1988 on Dutch *vernielen* and *vernietigen* 'to destroy')
  - diachronically: reorganizations of prototypes
- the social features of the items involved **interact** with prototype-based features of the concepts involved:

stylistic, emotive and pragmatic needs motivated the emergence of *permitir* and *abandonar* and also facilitated the prototype reorganizations of *deixar*

# Case study 2

the development of denotational synonyms used to designate 43 nominal concepts from **football** and **clothing** in European Portuguese (EP) and Brazilian Portuguese (BP) in the last 60 years

# Questions

1. Is onomasiological heterogeneity greater in EP or BP?
2. What is the impact of item-related features and concept-related features in the production of denotational synonyms across EP and BP?
3. What is the impact of item-related and concept-related features of denotational synonyms on the convergent/divergent evolution of the two national varieties?

# Sociolectometry

[Geeraerts, Grondelaers & Speelman 1999]

- **onomasiological profile**: the set of alternative synonymous expressions, together with their frequencies
- **onomasiological profile-based** measures of linguistic distances between lectal varieties
- **uniformity measures**: calculating onomasiological homogeneity/heterogeneity
  - internal uniformity measure: within a lectal variety
  - external uniformity measure: between lectal varieties
- **featural measures**: measuring the proportion of terms possessing a special feature

# Material

- football terms (21 profiles) and clothing terms (23 profiles)
- period: 1950 – 1970 – 1990-2000
- material extracted from (i) sports newspapers and fashion magazines (ii) Internet chats; and (iii) labels and price from shop windows
- CONDIVport corpus: 5 million tokens plus 15 million from chats
- database: more than 100.000 observations

# Football profiles

BACK: “(full-)back”, beque, bequeira, defensor, defesa, lateral, libero, zagueiro.

BALL: balão, bola, couro(inho), esfera, esférico, pelota.

COACH: mister, professor, técnico, treinador.

CORNER: canto, chute de canto, “corner”, córner, escanteio, esquinado, pontapé de canto, tiro de canto.

DRIBBLING: corte, drible(ing), engano, “feint”, finta, firula, ginga, lesa, manobra enganadora, simulação.

FORWARD: atacante, avançado, avante, dianteiro, “forward”, ponta-de-lança.

FOUL: carga, falta, “foul”, golpe, infra(c)ção, obstru(c)ção, transgressão, violação (das regras).

FREE KICK: chute (in)direto, falta, “free(-kick)”, livre (directo, indirecto), pontapé livre, tiro dire(c)to, tiro livre (direto, indirecto)

GOAL: bola, “goal”, gol, golo, ponto, tento.

GOAL: arco, baliza, cidadela, “goal”, gol(o), malhas, marco, meta, rede, redes, vala.

GOALKEEPER: arqueiro, “goal-keeper”, goleiro, golquíper, guarda-meta, guarda-rede, guarda-redes, guarda-vala, guarda-valas, guardião, “keeper”, porteiro, quíper, vigia.

**MATCH:** batalha, choque, combate, competição, confronto, desafio, disputa, duelo, embate, encontro, jogo, justa, luta, “match”, partida, peleja, prélio, prova, pugna.

**MIDFIELDER:** alfe, central, centro-campista, centro-médio, half, interior, médio, meia, meio-campista, meio-campo, “midfield”, trinco, volante.

**OFFSIDE:** adiantamento, banheira, deslocação, fora-de-jogo, impedimento, “offside”, posição irregular.

**PENALTY:** castigo máximo, castigo-mor, falta máxima, grande penalidade, penalidade, penalidade máxima, penáti (pênalti, pénalti), “penalty”.

**REFEREE:** apitador, árbitro, director da partida, juiz, juiz de campo, “ref(eree)”, referi, refre.

**ASSISTANT REFEREE:** árbitro auxiliar, árbitro assistente, auxiliar, 2º/3º/4º árbitro, bandeirinha, fiscal de linha, juiz de linha, “liner”.

**SHOT/KICK:** chute, chuto, “kick(-off)”, panázio, pelotada, pontapé, quique, “shoot”, tiro.

**SHOT/PLAYING:** jogada, lance.

**TEAM:** conjunto, formação, eleven, equipa/e, esquadra, esquadrão, grupo, “match”, onze, onzena, plantel, quadro, “team”, time, turma.

**WINGER:** ala, extremo, ponta, ponteiro.



## Clothing profiles

**BLOUSE F:** “blouse”, blusa, blusinha, “bustier”, camisa, camisa-body, camisa, camiseiro(inho), camiseta/e, (blusa) “chémisier”, (blusa) chemisiê

**COAT F:** “blazer”, blêizer, casaco, casaquinho/a, “manteau”, mantô, paletó, “paletot”

**COAT M:** “blazer”, blêizer, casaco, paletó, “paletot”

**DRESS F:** camiseiro, “chemisier”, chemisiê, “shirt-dress”, traje/o, veste, vestido(inho), vestido-camisa, vestido-camiseiro, vestido-camiseta, vestido-chemiser(ê), (vestido) caica, (vestido) tomara-que-caia

**GREAT COAT (winter) M/F:** abafo, agasalho, balandrau, capote, casacão, casaco comprido, casaco de abafo/abafar, casaco de agasalho, casaco de/em pele, casaco-sobretudo, “duffle-coat”, gabão, “gilet”, “manteau”, mantô, manto, overcoat, paletó, “pardessus”, “pelerine”, samarra, sobrecasaca, sobretudo, sobreveste, “trench (coat)”

**JACKET (BLOUSON) M/F:** “blazer”, blêizer, blusão, “bluson”, camurça, camurcine, camisa esporte, casaco de pele, ganga, etc., colete, parka

**JACKET M/F:** casaca, casaco curto, jaleca, jaqueta, “jaquette”, jaquetinha, véstia

**JEANS M/F:** calça(s) de ganga, calça(s) em denim, calça(s) em jeans, ganga, jeans

**JUMPER M/F:** blusa, blusão, blusinha, “body”, cachemir, camisa, camisa-de-meia, camiseta, camisinha, camisola, camisolinha, “canoutier”, canoutiê, malha, malhinha, moleton, “pull”, “pullover”, pulôver, suéter, “sweat”, “sweat shirt”, “sweater”

**KNITTED JACKET M/F:** cardigã, “cardigan”, casaco/casaquinho de malha (de lã, de tricô), “gilet”, japona, malha, “twin-set”

**KNITTED JACKET M/F:** cardigã, “cardigan”, casaco/casaquinho de malha (de lã, de tricô), “gilet”, japona, malha, “twin-set”

LEGGINGS F: “fuseau(x)”, fusô, “legging(s)”

RAINCOAT M/F: “ciré”, “ciré-maxi”, “anorak”, canadiana, capa, capa de chuva, casaco impermeável, corta-vento, casaco-gabardina, gabardine/a, impermeável, kispo, parka

SHIRT M: blusão, camisa, camisa de gravata, camisa de manga curta, camisa desportiva, camisa esporte(iva), camisa jeans, camisa social, camiseta, camisete, “camisette”

SHORT JACKET F: bolero, carmona, casa(i)b(v)equê, casaco curto, casaquilha, colete, colete camiseiro, corpete, corpinho, garibáldi, “gilet”, manguito, mini, minicasaco, roupinha, “shortie”, vasquinha

SHORT JACKET M: casaco curto, colete, espartilho, gibão, “gilet”, jaleca, jaleco, jaqueta, véstia

SHORT TROUSERS M/F: bermuda(s), calças-capri, calça(s) corsário, calça(s) curta(s), calças 3/4, calções, “cool pants”, corsários, “hot pants”, “knickers”, “pantacourt”, “pedal pusher”, “short(s)”, “short cuts”, “short shorts”, shortinho, “slack(s)”

SKIRT F: kilt, maxi (máxi), maxissaia, micro-mini, micro-saia, míni (mini), mini-saia, minissaia, pareô, saia, saia-calça, saia-calção, saião, sainha, saiote

SUIT JACKET M/F: “black-tie”, casaca, casaco cerimónia, fraque, “manteau”, mantô, paletó, “paletot”, “pelerine”, “smo(c)king”, sobrecasaca, “tuxedo”

SUIT M: beca, completo, costume, fato, terno

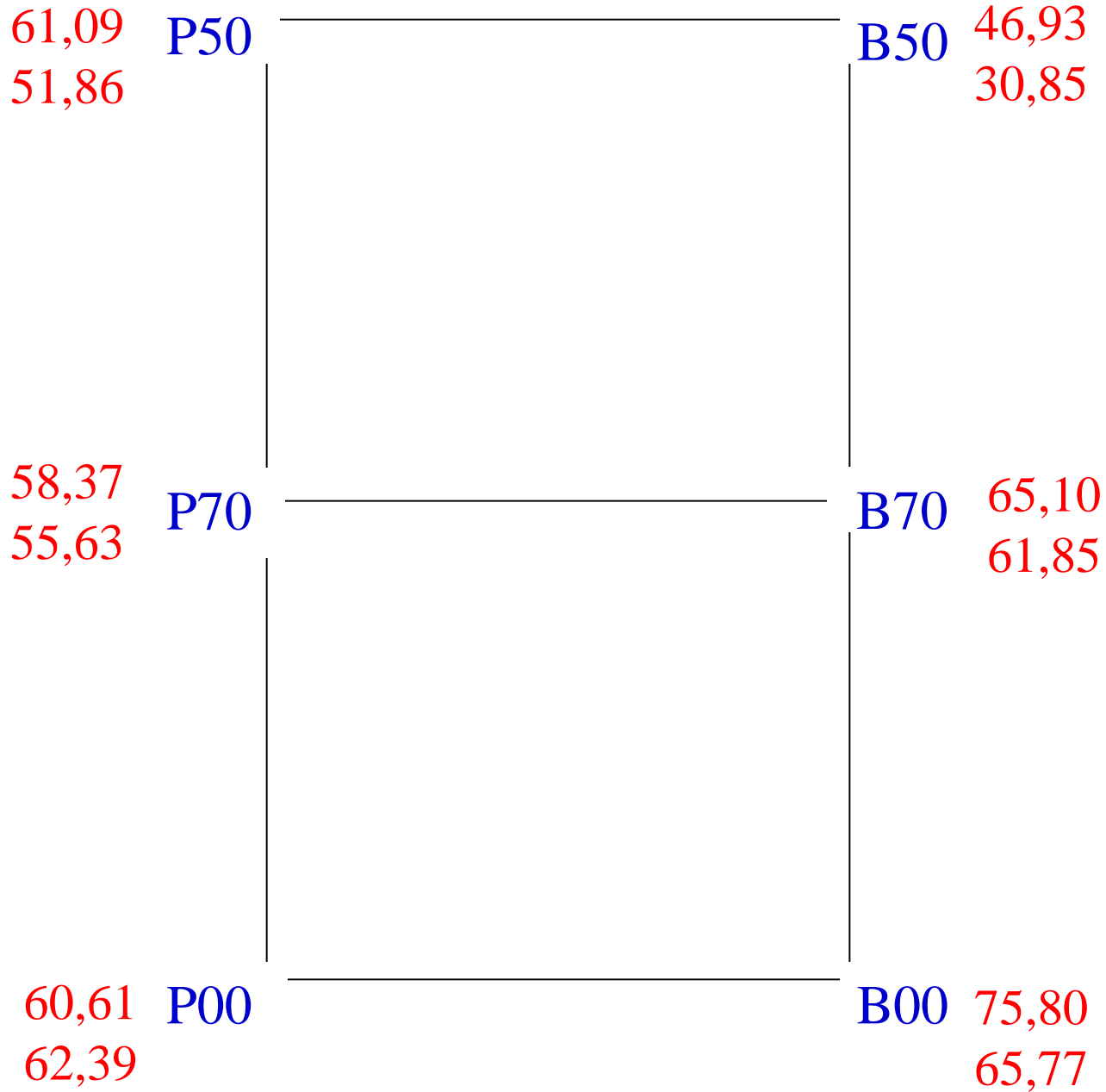
SUIT/OUTFIT F: “complet”, completo, conjunto, costume, duas-peças, “ensemble”, fatinho, fato, saia-casaco, “tailleur”, “toilette”, toilette, vestido-casaco

TROUSERS M/F: calça, calças, pantalona

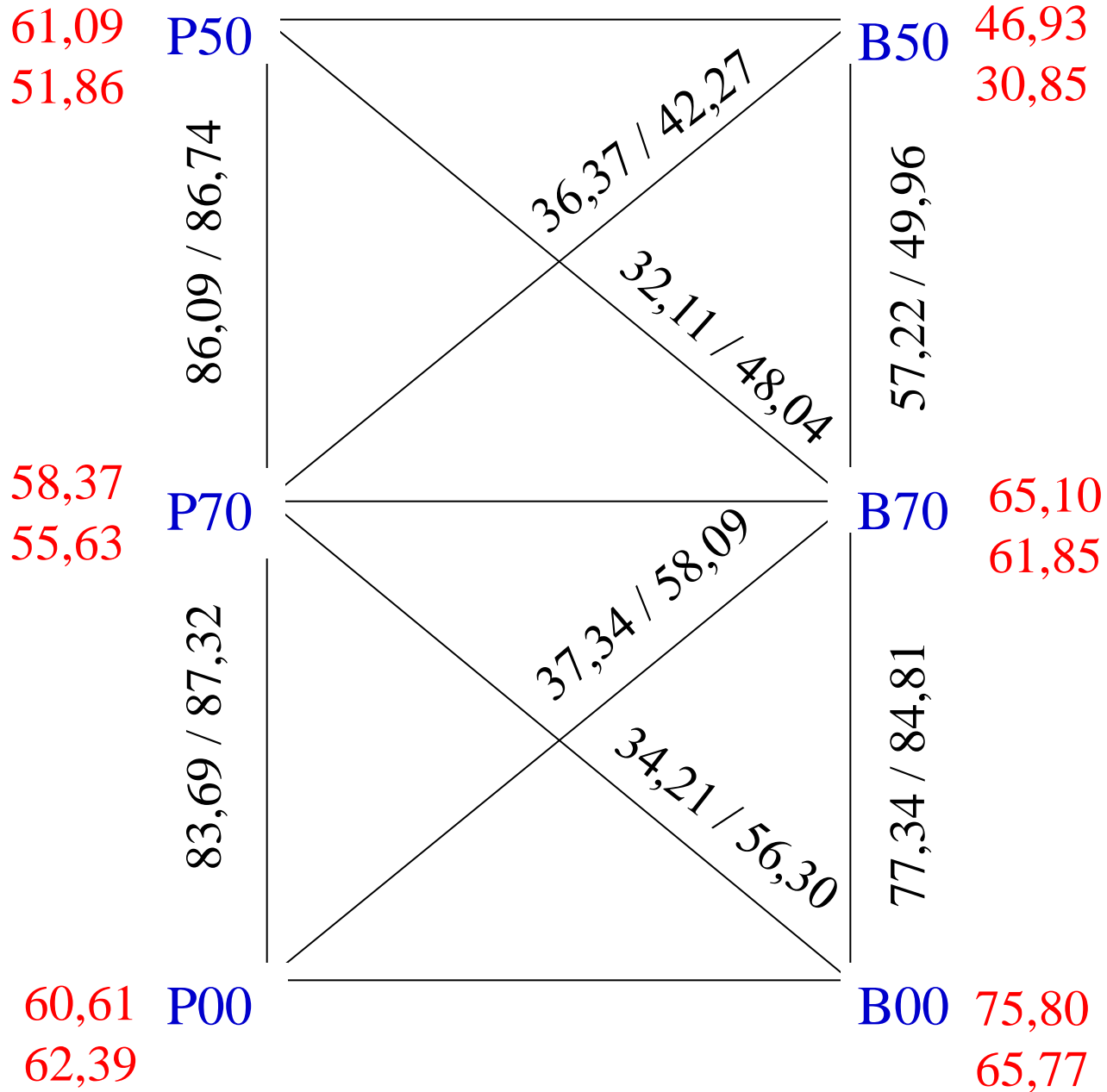
T-SHIRT M/F: camisa, camiseta/e, “camisette”, camisola, licra, “singlet”, “tee-shirt”, “t-shirt”

# Uniformity results

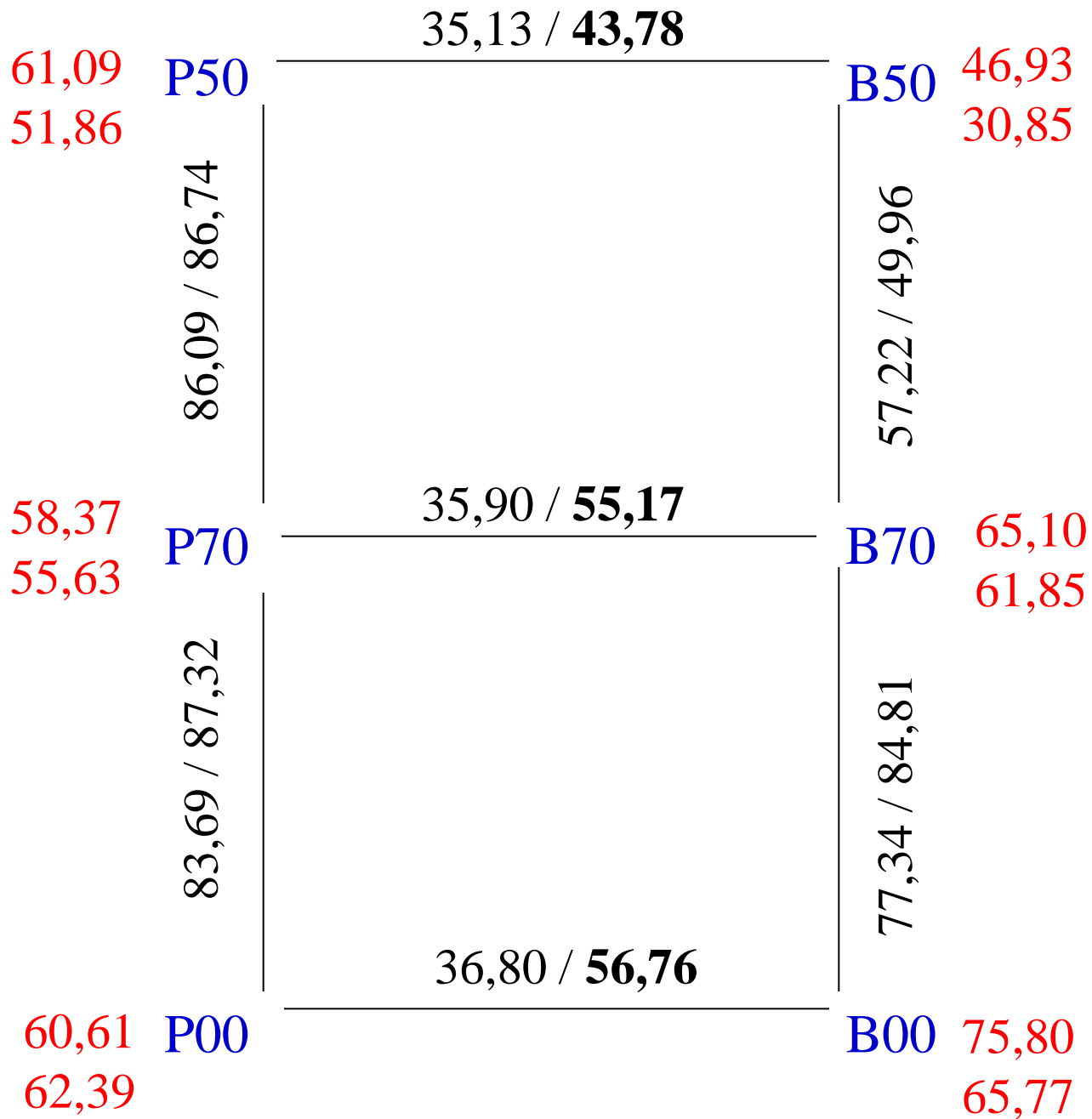
Football



Football



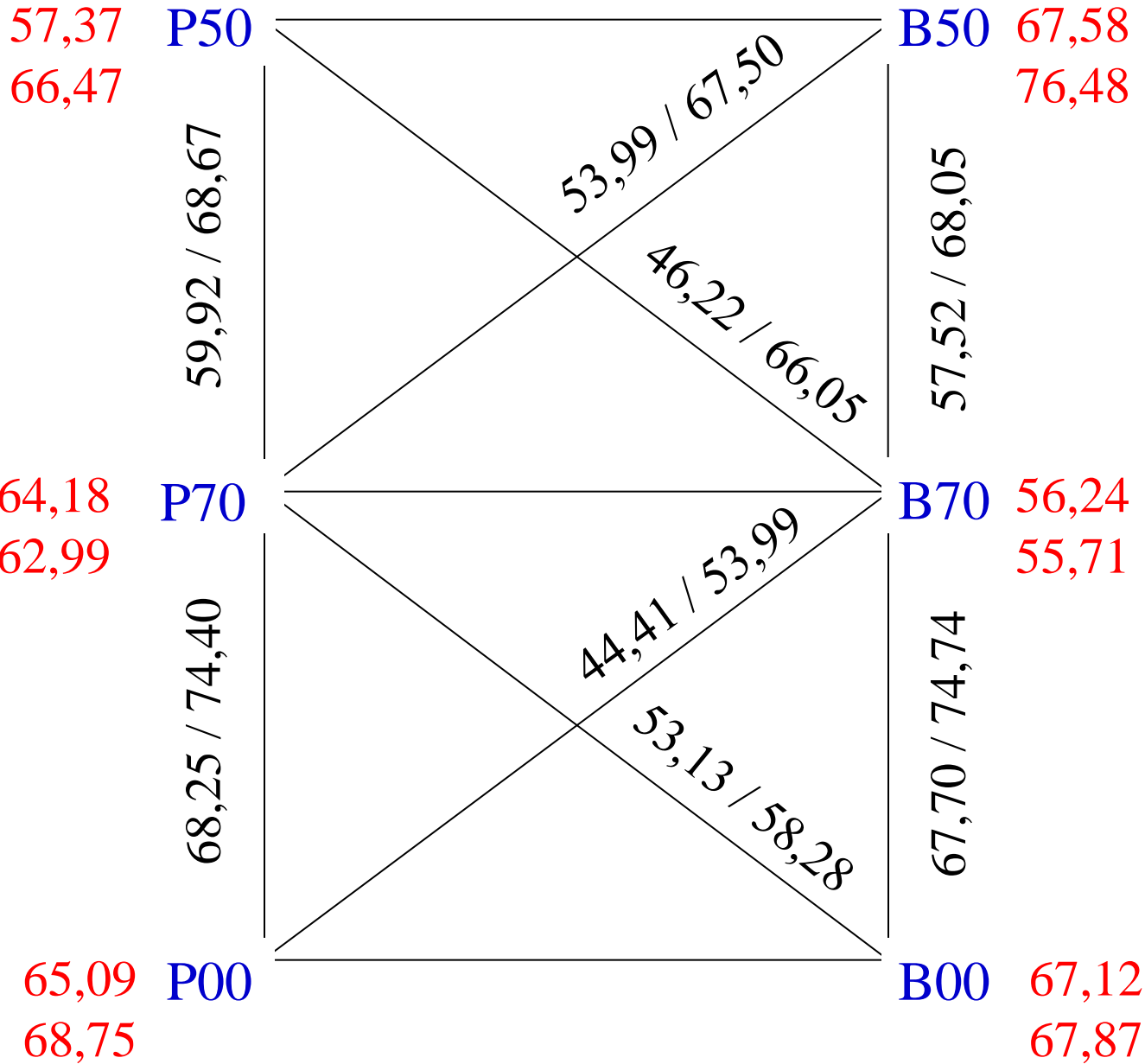
Football



# Clothing

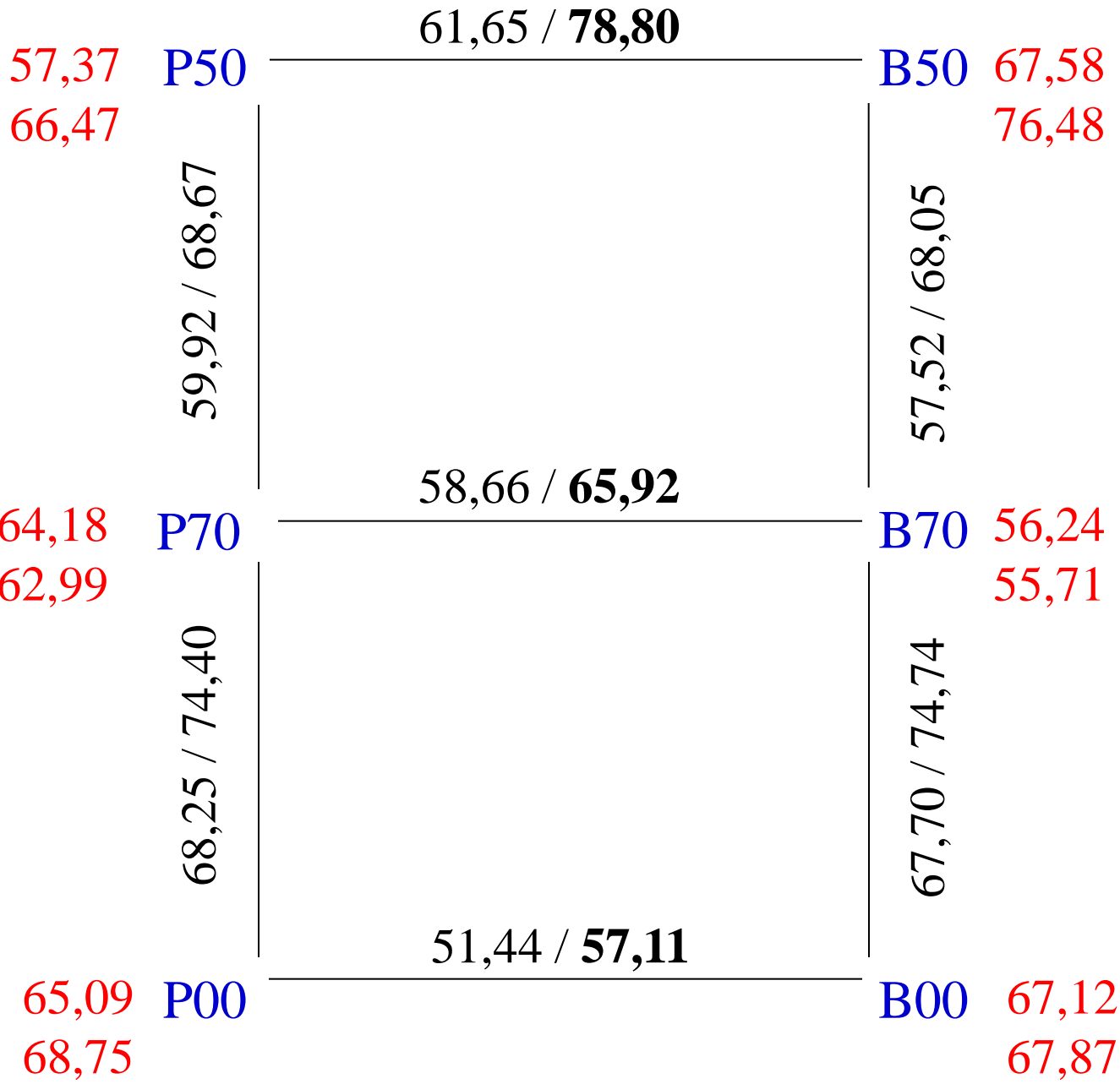
<i>57,37</i>	<b>P50</b>		<b>B50</b>	<i>67,58</i>
<i>66,47</i>				<i>76,48</i>
<i>64,18</i>	<b>P70</b>		<b>B70</b>	<i>56,24</i>
<i>62,99</i>				<i>55,71</i>
<i>65,09</i>	<b>P00</b>		<b>B00</b>	<i>67,12</i>
<i>68,75</i>				<i>67,87</i>

# Clothing





Clothing



# Main results

- the hypothesis of **divergence** is confirmed in the lexical field of clothing but not in the field of football
- onomasiological heterogeneity changes occur on a bigger scale in the **Brazilian** variety in both lexical fields
- there is no specific orientation from one of the varieties towards the other

# The impact of item-related features

## 1. endo-/exogenousness

- football: increase of binational terms and decrease of endogenous terms, stronger in BP
- clothing: increase of endogenous terms in EP as well as in BP in the 1970's and 2000

## 2. loanwords

BP imports a larger number of loanwords and adapts and integrates them more easily than EP

## 3. other item-related features

- **neologism**: new clothing terms in both varieties
- **Brazilian terms**: the anticipated growing influence of BP on EP is not clearly confirmed

# Correlations

between **item-related** features and onomasiological heterogeneity:

- positive correlation between non-U and **ENDO**, **ENGL**, **NEO** in both varieties

# Correlations

between **concept-related** features and onomasiological heterogeneity:

- negative correlation between non-U and **salient** (frequent, well-known) **concepts**
- positive correlation between non-U and **new concepts**  
but negative correlation between non-U and new concepts in the time period they appear
- positive correlation between non-U and **vague concepts**

# What about synonymy?

- **item-related** (social) features such as endogenousness, foreign influence and word creation contribute to lectal lexical heterogeneity
- **concept-related** features such as concept salience, concept vagueness and concept creation contribute to lectal lexical heterogeneity  
⇒ **salience and vagueness**: non-ortodox concept features (see also Geeraerts & Speelman 2010)
- **pluricentricity** has a notable effect on onomasiological heterogeneity and, inversely, denotational synonyms are good indicators of linguistic pluricentricity

# Conclusions

1. prototypicality is a conceptual differentiating factor for synonyms, both synchronically and diachronically
2. prototypicality is a conceptual factor that generates synonyms across lectal varieties
3. social features interact with prototype-based and other conceptual features in the emergence and competition of synonyms
4. competition of synonyms through time highlights the sufficient semantic similarity and the necessary semantic differences between synonyms, correlations of conceptual and social factors of synonymy, the role of prototypicality in lexical change and variation, and convergence/divergence between lectal varieties

**Thank you!**



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