

## Personal infinitives and the status of Capeverdean as a partial null subject language

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### 0. Introduction

In this talk, we aim at revisiting the NSL parameter in Capeverdean, taking into account data from non-finite clauses, in order to

- (i) establish criteria for (non-)finiteness, and
- (ii) capitalize on the existence of personal infinitives in Capeverdean as an additional criterion for its partial NSL status.

We argue that in Capeverdean the presence of an overt Subject cannot be taken as a criterion for identifying a finite clause, since the language allows personal infinitives (1-2), which we also find in consistent NSLs like Spanish (Mensching 2000; Sitaridou 2002, 2009) and in partial NSLs such as Brazilian Portuguese (Pires 2002).

(1) *Ka sta dretu [(bu) kume aros ku mo].*

NEG be right 2SG eat rice with hand  
'It's not right to eat rice with (your) hands.'

(2) *Kes mudjeris kunpra malta [pa (e) bebe manhan].*

the women buy(PFV) beer for 3SG drink tomorrow  
'The women bought beer to drink tomorrow.'

Therefore, a non-finite clause can be tracked down by the absence of the imperfective aspectual marker *ta* (Alexandre, Gonçalves & Pratas 2010) not giving rise to a perfective reading, independently from the presence of an overt Subject (1-2).

### 1. Criteria for (non-)finiteness in Capeverdean and the status of overt subjects in non-finite clauses

#### 1.1. Criteria for (non-)finiteness in Capeverdean

→ Morphological criterion:

Creole languages do not exhibit the finite vs. non-finite distinction, because they are morphologically poor (Mufwene & Dijkhoff 1989).

→ Syntactic criteria:

Capeverdean does not have non-finite overt morphology (Baptista 2002, Pratas 2007); however, in some contexts, although the embedded domain is clearly a clause (it allows for NEG *ka*), it is not finite, because:

- (i) The imperfective aspectual marker *ta* cannot occur, although the clausal negation can (3,4);
- (ii) Overt referential Subjects are precluded – this is what happens in obligatory Subject control contexts like the ones illustrated in (5), complement clauses of volition verbs:

(3) *Tareza disidi [(ka) (\*ta) fase un festa pa si kodés].*  
Tareza decide(PFV) NEG do a party for POSS son  
'Tareza decided not to do a party to her younger son.'

(4) *Pedru disidi [(ka) (\*ta) kume bolu].*  
Pedro decide(PFV) NEG eat cake  
'Pedro decided to eat the cake.'

(5) *Pedru disidi [( \*e) kume bolu].*  
Pedro decide(PFV) 3SG eat cake  
'Pedro decided to eat the cake.'

In other contexts, namely in complements of perceptive and causative verbs, overt non nominative Subjects are possible, as shown in (6)-(7):

(6) a. *Djon obi [Maria ku Tareza (ta) kanta].*  
Djon hear(PFV) Maria and Tareza (IPVF) sing  
'Djon heard Maria and Tareza sing(ing).'

b. *Nha mai, el, N ta kustuma obi[-I ta papia*  
POSS mother 3SG 1SG IPFV use hear-3SG PROGR talk  
*di tudu trapadjáda].*  
of every mess  
'My mother, I'm used to listening to her using foolish talking.'

(Brüser & Santos 2002: 823)

(7) a. *Djon manda Maria ku Tareza ba Sukupira.*

Djon tell(PFV) Maria and Tareza go market  
'Djon told Maria and Tareza go to the market.'

b. *Nhu pádri abisolve-l, manda[-l reza 3 Pai Nós*  
sir priest absolve(PFV)-3SG tell(PFV)-3SG pray 3 Lord's prayer  
*ku 3 Avé Maria].*  
and 3 Hail Mary

'The priest absolved him and he told him to say Lord's prayer and Hail Mary three times each'  
(Brüser & Santos 2002: 3)

Pratas (2007) argued that these are ECM contexts where only lower marker *ta* (≠ imperfective marker *ta*) may occur.

Crucially, as the examples in (6b)-(7b) show, when the Subject of the embedded clause is a pronoun, it is a non-nominative form. Thus, the unavailability of nominative in the embedded domain is evidence for its non-finiteness.

→ Conclusion:

Impossibility of the imperfective aspectual marker *ta*, combined with the unavailability of overt nominative Subjects, is a (syntactic) criterion for non-finiteness in Capeverdean.

### 1.2. Revising the criteria for non-finiteness: the case of personal infinitives

→ **However**, in some clauses in which the imperfective aspectual marker *ta* is disallowed, entailing that they are not finite, overt nominative referential Subjects are licensed, contrary to what is expected according to the preceding generalization - see (8) and (9).

(8) a. *Bo bu kre [pa nu (\*ta) fase trabadju].*

2SG 2SG want(IPFV) for 1PL do work  
'You want us to do the work.'

(Alexandre 2009: 83)

b. *Bu fla-m [pa N (\*ta) ntrega trabadju].*

2SG say(PFV)-1SG for 1SG deliver work  
'You told me to hand out the work.'

(9) a. *Bu leba un libru pa kasa [pa (bu) (\*ta) studa].*

2SG take(PFV) a book to house for 2SG study  
'You took a book home to study.'

(9) b. *Bu ta fase djanta, [dipos di bu (\*ta) panha águ na rubera].*  
 2SG IPFV do dinner after of 2SG fetch water in river  
 ‘You do the dinner after you fetch water.’

c. *Água ropa [ántis di bu (\*ta) liza].*  
 water clothe before of 2SG smooth  
 ‘Sprinkle the clothes before you iron it.’

(Brüser & Santos 2002: 10)

(8) illustrates non-finite contexts of non-obligatory control (NOC) where the imperfective aspectual marker *ta* is disallowed; in (9) we present purpose and temporal adjunct clauses, which, again, do not allow imperfective *ta*. However, in both contexts, an overt nominative Subject is licensed.

→ Interim conclusion:

(i) The impossibility of imperfective *ta* is a self-sufficient criterion for non-finiteness in Capeverdean – the combined criterion of absence of a nominative Subject cannot be maintained;

(ii) Assuming (i), the examples in (8) and (9) are cases of non-finite clauses with overt nominative Subjects - this is not expected in a language that has been argued *not* to be a consistent NSL (Costa & Pratas 2008, 2012; Nicolis 2005, 2008; Alexandre 2009; a.o.).



How do we explain overt nominative Subjects in infinitival clauses in CVC? How are they licensed? In what type of languages are personal infinitives found?

## 2. Personal infinitives

### 2.1 Personal infinitives in Spanish

Contexts like the ones in (8) and (9) are cases of **personal infinitives**. They have been first described in Modern Spanish, a consistent NSL, by Fernández Lagunilla (1987) and Fernández Lagunilla & Anula (1994) – see (10):

(10) a. *Al telefonar [yo/tú/él/nosotros/vosotros/ellos] dieron las doce.*  
 ‘When I/you/he/we/they called, it was noon.’

b. *Con enfadarse [él/ella/ellos/ellas] no se resuelve nada.*  
 ‘Getting upset doesn’t solve anything.’

c. *El interrogar [yo/tú/él/ nosotros/vosotros/ellos] a la defensa es inapropiado.*  
 ‘It’s not adequate to cross-examine the defense.’

(adapted from Fernández Lagunilla & Anula 1994: (26 a-c), 12)

### Relevant facts:

Modern Spanish is a consistent NSL without inflected infinitives. This would lead us to expect that infinitival clauses with overt nominative Subjects would be ruled out.

Personal infinitives in this language have a more restricted distribution than “regular” infinitives: they are restricted to non obligatory control (NOC) contexts, that is, adjunct and subject clauses (see Landau (2000), Duarte, Gonçalves & Santos (2012)).

### **2.2. Personal infinitives in Brazilian Portuguese (BP)**

As referred to in Pires’ (2002), Colloquial BP also allows personal infinitives in exactly the same contexts of Modern Spanish. Whereas speakers of standard BP only produce and accept the (a.) sentences of (11) and (12), speakers of Colloquial BP instead produce and accept the (b.) sentences.

(11) a. *Maria ligou [antes de nós sairmos].* (Standard BP)

Maria phoned [before-of 1PL to-leave-1PLU

b. *Maria ligou [antes de nós sair].* (Colloquial BP)

Maria phoned [before-of 1SG to-leave

Both: ‘Maria phoned before we left.’

(12) a. [[*Carlos e Pedro*] *chegarem cedo*] *não surpreendeu ninguém.* (SBP)

[Carlos and Pedro] to-arrive-3PLU early not surprised nobody

b. [[*Carlos e Pedro*] *chegar cedo*] *não surpreendeu ninguém.* (CBP)

[Carlos and Pedro] to-arrive early] not surprised nobody

Both: ‘The fact that Carlos and Pedro arrived early did not surprise anybody.’

(adapted from Pires 2002: (21)-(22), 156)

Pires’ (2002) account of the data from Colloquial BP relies on the idea that for the speakers of this variety, there are abstract phi-features in infinitival T. We develop the idea and suggest that these data should be accounted for along the lines sketched below for Modern Spanish.

### **2.3. How is the nominative subject licensed in the infinitival domain?**

One way of accounting for the restricted distribution of personal infinitives in Modern Spanish is the idea that personal infinitives only survive in contexts where *Agree* between the higher T and the embedded C (i.e. Control, see Landau 2000, Duarte, Gonçalves & Santos forth.) cannot apply: exactly in adjunct and subject clauses, where the controlled interpretation is blocked. Since *Agree* can generally apply in  $\theta$ -marked infinitives internal to VP (Landau 2000: 14), the restricted distribution of personal infinitives directly follows.

This amounts to say that personal infinitives only survive in infinitival domains with independent T and phi-features.

### Hypothesis:

- (i) T in C licenses nominative Case on the Subjects (Sitaridou 2002, 2009);
- (ii) Certain overt complementizers (such as *pa*, *antis di*, *dipos di* in Capeverdean) carry specified [T] features – thus explaining the conversion of  $\theta$ -marked infinitives internal to VP into NOC contexts, such as in (8);
- (iii) The phi-features of the Subject DP value the underspecified phi-features on T.



Personal infinitives are restricted to NOC contexts, i.e. contexts in which [T] features in embedded C are valued independently of the matrix T.

### 3. Personal infinitives as a criterion for partial NSLs?

- The Null Subject Parameter in Government & Binding (Chomsky 1981, Rizzi 1982, a.o.):
- evidence from English and Romance languages.
  - rich agreement morphology carried by the verb
  - acquisition of a NSL: null Subjects in tensed clauses, absence of nominative expletives, subject-verb inversion in declarative sentences and absence of that-*t* effects.

→ Challenging Null Subject Parameter:

- Chinese (Huang 1982) – no agreement morphology, but properties of Romance NS (Jaeggli & Safir 1989, Vikner 1997, a.o.).
- BP – only some properties of Romance NSL; either considered a non-NSL or a mixed or partial NSL (Modesto 2000, Holmberg, Nayudy & Sheenan 2009, Roberts & Holmberg 2010, a.o.).

#### 3.1. Partial NSL – the case of BP

According to Holmberg, Nayudy & Sheehan (2009), and on the basis of data from Finnish, Marathi and BP, a partial NSL displays some properties of NSLs, namely expletive null Subjects and subject-verb inversion in (a subset of) declarative clauses, but disallows referential null Subjects. Holmberg (2010) also suggests that consistent NSLs do not allow 3SG generic null Subjects, whereas partial NSLs do. This is shown for BP, a partial in (13) to (16).

(13) [S<sub>bj</sub> --] *Está chovendo.*  
          be rain-PROGR  
          ‘It’s raining.’

(14) [S<sub>bj</sub> --] *Chegou seu livro.*  
          arrive(PFV) POSS book  
          ‘Your book arrived.’

(15) \*<sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *Comi sorvete.*  
 eat(PFV) icecream  
 ‘\*Ate icecream.’

(16) *Aqui* <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *vende casquinha de siri.*  
 here sell(IPFV) shell of crab  
 ‘Here, someone sells crab shell.’

Given the “scale of ‘liberality’” of pro-drop proposed in Roberts & Holmberg (2010) and presented in (17), one expects that partial NSLs always present expletive null Subjects but should one expect that they all share the same subset of other *pro* drop properties?

(17) expletive null subjects  $\supset$  partial null subjects  $\supset$  consistent null subjects  $\supset$  discourse pro-drop

(Roberts & Holmberg 2010: (16), 12)

### 3.2. The case of Capeverdean: an expletive or a partial NSL?

Looking in particular at the data from Capeverdean, this language licenses expletive null Subjects, and subject-verb inversion in a subset of declarative clauses:

(18) <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *Sa ta txobi.*  
 PROGR rain  
 ‘It’s raining.’

(19) a. <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *Ta parse ma Maria e bunita.*  
 IPFV seem that Maria be pretty  
 ‘It seems that Maria is pretty.’

b. *Djon atxa [ma es anu* <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *txobe txeu pa tudu kau].*  
 Djon think(IPFV) that DEM year rain very for every place  
 ‘Djon thinks that this year it rains a lot everywhere.’

(20) a. <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *Sa ta txiga uns omis.*  
 PROGR arrive a men  
 ‘Some men are arriving.’

b. *Na Portugal* <sub>[Sbj --]</sub> *sta nha fidju-femia.*  
 in Portugal be POSS son-female  
 ‘My daughter is in Portugal.’

Nicolis (2005, 2008): Capeverdean is an expletive NSL, together with other Creole languages (e.g. Berbice Dutch, Haitian, Kriyol, Mauritian, Papiamentu and Saramaccan). In fact, in (18)

to (20), the empty category in Subject position is an expletive; thus, these data are accommodated if one places the language in the lowest place of Roberts & Holmberg's 2010 scale.

According to Holmberg (2005, 2010), generic null Subjects are an identifying property of partial NSLs. Indeed, Capeverdean does not license 3SG null generic Subjects (see (21)-(22c)), resorting to a nominative pronoun, in the same contexts where a consistent NSL (e.g. European Portuguese) uses a clitic pronoun (22b).

(21) *Ora ki bu kanta, \*(es/algen) ta kritika-u.*  
 hour that 2SG sing 3PL/someone IPFV criticize-2SG  
 'When you sing, someone criticizes you.'

(22) a. *É assim que faz o doce.* (BP, Holmberg 2010: 92)  
 is like that makes the sweet.  
 'This is how one makes the dessert.'

b. *É assim que se faz o doce.* (EP, Holmberg 2010: 92)  
 Is like that SE makes the sweet.  
 'This is how one makes the dessert.'

c. *E si ki algen ta fase doxi.*  
 be like that someone IPFV do sweet  
 'This is how one makes the sweet.'

Besides, in the case of inclusive generic readings, a case in which Holmberg (2010) suggests that consistent NSLs never resort to 3SG null pronouns, Capeverdean shows an obligatory overt Subject (see 23).

(23) *Algun algen ta pode xinta dretu nes kadera.*  
 some someone IPFV can sit right in.DEM chair  
 'A person/Someone can sit right in this chair.'

However, Capeverdean also shares relevant properties with partial or consistent NSLs.

a) Embedded Subjects of finite complement clauses bound by a quantified Subject of the higher clause must be null when the co-referent reading is intended, exactly as expected in a NSL, according to the Overt Pronoun Constraint (Montalbetti, 1984) (for other contexts where embedded null Subjects are licensed see Costa & Pratas 2012). The same happens in EP and in BP.

(24) a. [Tudu genti]<sub>i</sub> ta fla ma [sbj --]<sub>i/\*j</sub> gosta di brinka karnaval.  
every people IPFV say that like of play Carnival  
'Everyone says that he likes to play the Carnival.'

b. [Tudu genti]<sub>i</sub> ta fla ma [sbj e]<sub>j/\*i</sub> gosta di brinka karnaval.  
every people IPFV say that like of play Carnival  
'Everyone says that he likes to play the Carnival.'

However, a referential embedded Subject co-referent with the matrix Subject cannot be covert, contrary to what happens in standard BP (see Modesto 2000, 2008):

(25) *Djon<sub>i</sub> fla ma \*(e)<sub>i</sub> gosta di brinka karnaval.*  
'Djon said that he likes to play the Carnival.'

b) Capeverdean licenses personal infinitives, as some partial and consistent NSL do (see discussion above).



- Capeverdean should probably not be defined as an expletive NSL but instead as a partial NSL;
- Null generic Subjects are probably not an obligatory property of partial NSLs.

#### 4 Final remarks

##### *On non-finiteness in Capeverdean*

The impossibility of imperfective *ta* is a self-sufficient criterion for non-finiteness in Capeverdean.

##### *On the status of Capeverdean as a NSL*

(i) Capeverdean cannot be considered an expletive NSL (like German) since (a) it has quasi-argumental null Subjects and (b) it obeys the OPC whenever pro can be A' bound.

(ii) If it can be maintained that personal infinitives are restricted to NLSs (partial or consistent ones), the availability of such infinitives in Capeverdean is an additional argument for its partial NSL status.

##### *On a possible scale of liberality for pro drop*

Partial NSLs are possibly not defined by a fixed set of properties (see differences between Capeverdean, BP and Finnish). At this stage, we can only define partial NSLs as those licensing more pro drop than expletive NSLs and less pro drop than consistent NSLs.

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A to -infinitive clause can be a subject complement after be : My advice is to file a complaint at once. What is essential is to maintain a healthy diet. The decision was to extend the deadline by three months. —, The TO-infinitive as subject — The use of the infinitive The TO-infinitive to replace a relative clause —. It is the native language of virtually all Cape Verdeans and is used as a second language by the Cape Verdean diaspora. The language has particular importance for creolistics studies since it is the oldest (still-spoken) creole. [3] It is the most widely spoken Portuguese-based creole language. Contents.Â Cape Verdean Creole's phonological system comes mainly from 15th-through-17th-century Portuguese. In terms of conservative features, Creole has kept the affricate consonants /dʃ/ and /tʃ/ (written âœjâœ (in the beginning of words) and âœchâœ, in old Portuguese) which are not in use in todayâ€™s Portuguese, and the pre-tonic vowels were not reduced as in todayâ€™s European Portuguese.Â The form for the past is formed from the infinitive to which is joined the particle for the past ~ba.