

### The nature of the inflectional system in Cape Verdean Creole

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Cape Verdean Creole (CV Creole) verbs have only one base form that doesn't display any morphological variation reflecting person, number and gender. Traditionally, CV Creole verbs, for instance (1), have been analyzed as a verbal root, lacking the infinitival inflection *-r* of the Iberian form *comer*. Germanic and Romance languages also exhibit verbal roots for declarative meanings, what has been called a root infinitive, as in (2)-(3). Here I shall propose a different approach. Consider an Iberian verbal form of the type in (4) is formed through a predicative root *com-* and an inflection *-e*, which selects Person[3], Number[sing], Mood[Indicative], Tense[Present]. Everything else equal, as derived roots from the Iberian inflected verbal forms, CV Creole verbs can be considered inflected forms as well. It has been largely observed that Creole verbal roots generally refer to Anterior tense for non-stative verbs and non-Anterior tense for stative verbs. Hence, a CV Creole non-stative root verb such as *kume* 'eat' receives a past interpretation, while stative verb such as *gosta* 'like' receives a non-past interpretation, as in (5)-(6). Therefore, there is ground to argue that CV Creole verbal root forms incorporate a tense feature. That is, whether CV Creole verbal roots select for Tense[Anterior/non-Anterior], they are clearly drawn from the lexicon as tense-inflected lexical items. On present observation, we can analyze the anterior inflectional suffix *ba*. In CV Creole when *ba* combines with stative verbs, it gives a simple past reading (7a), whereas, when it suffixes to non-stative verbs, the interpretation is past-before-past, as in (7b). It is worth noting that *ba* per se doesn't have a compound tense feature to assign, that is, a past-before-past reading as in (7b). Such a reading is due to the combination either to the anterior semantic content of a non-stative verb as *fudji* 'flee' and to the anterior marker *ba*. Consider, then, the inflectional marker *ta*. I shall argue that *ta* is a purely aspectual imperfective marker, contrary to previous assumptions. Thus, any temporal readings of the clauses are only imputable to the temporal specifications both of the roots and the anterior marker *ba*. Consider the pair of examples involving *ta* both with a non-stative verb (8a) and a stative verb (8b). Notice that the present-tense reading in (8a) is possible because of the imperfective value conveyed by the aspectual marker *ta*. Such a feature endorsed by imperfectives is quite common across languages, recall that Standard Italian imperfects encompass past readings, but they can support for present readings as well, depending on the contexts. Here, the imperfective-for-present reading is given by the aspectual marker *ta* combining with an anterior verbal root. I will then consider structures embedding the sentences reviewed in (5)-(8), so as to test whether CV Creole verbal roots encompass finite readings within embedding contexts as well. It is worth noting that in such contexts non-finite forms are selected in more familiar languages such as English or French. Conversely, as CV Creole verbal roots are tense-inflected lexical items, they distinguish finite forms only, as in (9a), in which a tense-for-non finite reading is given; again, a past imperfect-for-non finite reading is given in (9b); next, a compound tense-for-non finite reading is given in (9c). Finally, consider such a bi-clausal construction in (10), which can be analyzed as modal-aspectual matrix verbal roots. In Romance languages, the same predicates give rise to 'restructuring' phenomena. Here again, we can have a finite reading as well. Examples in (9c) and (10) clearly show that the embedded verb must be finite. Based on this, as well as all of the evidence that precedes, I shall argue that CV Creoles verbal roots are bona fide inflected forms. That is, CV Creole lacks non-finite forms altogether – even in those contexts in which English or French select only non finite forms. The crucial observation in this respect is that a similar range of finite-for-infinitive clausal constructions are documented across a large number of languages, most notably Balkan languages, including Greek, Albanian, but also Southern Italian dialects (the Salentino dialect of Apulia, Calabrian and Sicilian dialects), as we can observe in (11).

- (1) kume  
eat 'I eat, you eat, s/he eats, etc.
- (2) Io *andare* a quella festa?! Mai! (Italian)
- (3) Me *go* to the party?! I would never do such a thing!
- (4) come  
s/he eats
- (5) N *kume* lagosta  
I eat.ANT lobster  
'I ate lobster'
- (6) João *gosta* de Maria  
João like.NONANT Maria  
'João likes Maria'
- (7) a. João tene *-ba* fomi  
João have.NONANT T[ANT] hunger  
'João was hungry'
- b. Dj'e fudji *-ba* dja  
COMP+he flee.ANT T[ANT] already  
'He had already fled'
- (8) a. N *ta* kume  
I ASP eat.ANT  
'I eat' (lit. 'I ate' imperf.)
- b. N *ta* gosta de pozia  
I ASP like.NONANT poetry  
'I like poetry'
- (9) a. N oja -s [kume  
I watch.ANT them eat.ANT  
'I watched them eat'
- b. N oja -s [*ta* kume  
I watch.ANT them ASP eat.ANT  
'I watched them eating'
- c. N oja -s [*ta* kume *-ba*  
I watch.ANT them ASP eat.ANT T[ANT]  
'I watched that they have been eating'
- (10) João *ta* sta *-ba* [*ta* kume *-ba* kumida  
João ASP be.ASP T[ANT] ASP eat.ANT T[ANT] food  
'João would have been eating food'
- (11) a. I Maria prospathise na divasi (Greek)  
the Maria try.ANT.3s PRT read.NONANT.3s  
'Mary tried to read'
- b. I kërkova të recitojë një poezi (Albanian)  
Him ask.ANT.1s PRT recite.NONANT.3s a poem  
'I asked him to recite a poem'

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