

Temporal interpretation in Portuguese based Capeverdean Creole
Fernanda Pratas fpratas@fesh.unl.pt
Centro de Linguística da Universidade Nova de Lisboa (CLUNL)

As opposed to Portuguese, in Capeverdean, a Portuguese based Creole language, the strategy for building a tense interpretation seems to be constrained by the property of stativity (Baptista 2002, Pratas 2007, a.o.). The distinction between some particular stative verbs like *sabe* and *konxe*, on one hand, and all dynamic verbs, on the other hand, is best illustrated with uninflected verb forms in simple sentences, as in (1). The statives *sabe* (1a) and *konxe* (1b) have a present tense interpretation, whereas the dynamic *kume* in (1c) is interpreted as past.

Nevertheless, any hypothesis considering that all dynamic verbs are 'lexically' marked as past is highly implausible for Capeverdean. First of all, if the progressive marker *sata* is applied to a 'bare' form of a dynamic verb the interpretation is present, as in (2a). As illustrated in (2b), a past progressive interpretation is only achieved by attaching the past suffix *-ba* to the main verb. And, second of all, this line of reasoning would not account for the fact that some traditional statives also behave like dynamics (see below).

The current proposal is that the difference between some stative verbs and all the others (dynamic verbs and also other statives) is indeed lexical, but rather implemented in a different way. In Borik & Pratas 2008 it is assumed that predicates of the 'sabe-type' are merged higher in the structure. At a lower level, two operations are available. One operation available at this lower level is marked by *sata* and results in a present interpretation of an ongoing event. Another operation is marked by a \emptyset morpheme and results in a perfect (past) interpretation. Both these operations are incompatible with the predicates in (1a) and (1b) (by default, these 'sabe-type' verbs have a present (atemporal) interpretation); the progressive form of the 'sabe-type' in (3) is ungrammatical, as expected.

Crucially, these considerations about the 'sabe-type' do not hold, in Capeverdean, for other verbs that are widely viewed as statives, such as the equivalents to 'think' (*pensa*) (4), 'understand' (*ntende*) (5) or 'believe' (*kridita*) (6), among others. Therefore, a further analysis of the relevant lexical properties of the 'sabe-type' verbs is needed, in order to account for this contrast. In other words, there are two possibilities: either a) the property of stativity needs a more precise description; or b) we must find/define some sub-property of stativity that is relevant for this distinction among Capeverdean verbs. Note, at this point, that some other insufficiencies with respect to the wide definition of stativity have been revealed: also in Portuguese and other languages some 'stative' predicates may appear in progressive constructions – Cunha (1998) proposes a division within the 'states' group: those which can be phased, and thus can behave like non-states, and those which cannot. Confront for instance, in English, 'he is being nice' with '*he is being tall'.

The present proposal works compositionally in the following lines. The past morpheme *-ba* yields a past interpretation to the temporal predicate it gets as an input. This temporal predicate can be either a bare 'sabe-type' verb, or any other verb that has been derived as progressive or past at the lower level (cf. 7). The semantic contribution of *-ba* is uniform, independently of the input: it shifts the interpretation of the predicate to the past. Thus, (7a) is predicted to have a past interpretation, (7b) will have a past progressive interpretation, (7c) will only have a past perfect interpretation (past applied to past). Syntactically, *-ba* heads a TP on which the 'sabe-type' verbs are merged.

There is, however, another temporal/aspectual marker, *ta*, which raises challenging questions. Besides yielding the habitual interpretation (with dynamic verbs), a morpheme *ta* has several semantic contributions. There is a modal *ta* that applies, for instance, to a perfect predicate (8a), yielding a future reading; a modal *ta* that may combine with a past predicate, yielding a conditional reading (8b); and also a *ta* that marks non-finites, such as the embedded verb in (9).

The following facts must be explained by the properties of *ta*: when it applies to a stative predicate, it cannot yield the habitual interpretation, as is visible in (10). Although these forms are grammatical, they must be interpreted as future (10a), conditional (10b) or non-finite (10c).

This paper presents an extensive range of Capeverdean data, showing different contexts with ‘*sabe*-type’ verbs, and also with dynamics and other statives. The goal is to further illuminate the different syntactic levels for distinct temporal operations and the lexical properties of predicates that dictate which levels are selected/which temporal interpretations are obtained. A tentative proposal for the *ta* puzzle is provided.

- (1) a. *N sabe risposta.*
‘I know the answer.’
b. *Ami-N konxe Lisboa dretu.*
‘I know Lisbon well.’
c. *N kume pexe.*
‘I ate fish.’
- (2) a. *N sata kume pexe.*
I PROG eat fish
‘I am eating fish.’
b. *N sata kumeba pexe.*
I PROG eat-PST fish
‘I was eating fish’
- (3) **N sata sabe risposta.*
1SG PROG know answer
- (4) a. *N pensa txeu na bo.*
‘I thought a lot about you.’
b. *N sata pensa na bo.*
1SG PROG think on you
‘I am thinking about you.’
- (5) a. *E ka papia mas e ntende tudu kuza.*
‘She didn’t talk but she understood everything.’
b. *E ka ta papia mas e sata ntende tudu kuza.*
She NEG TMA talk but she PROG understand everything.
- (6) *N sata kridita na bo.*
‘I am believing in you.’
- (7) a. *N sabeba risposta.* ‘I knew/used to know the answer.’
b. *N sata kumeba pexe.* ‘I was eating fish.’
c. *N kumeba pexe.* ‘I had eaten fish.’
- (8) *(Dia dumingu ki ta bem) N ta kume pexe.*
‘(Next Sunday) I will eat fish.’
- (9) *N odja Maria ta badja.*
‘I saw Maria dancing.’

- (10) a. *N ta sabe risposta.*
'I will know the answer' / *'I know the answer.'
b. *N ta sabeba.*
'I would know.' / * 'I used to know.'
c. *N fika ta sabe.*
'I will (become to) know.'

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