Tense results from mood and aspect: temporal meanings in Capeverdean

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The main goal of this paper is to show that, in Capeverdean, a Portuguese-based Creole, there are no dedicated tense morphemes, with past, present and future situations being rather expressed by aspect and mood, combined with the linguistic context and pragmatic inferences.

In the variety spoken in the island of Santiago, the postverbal morpheme *-ba* seems indeed associated with a tense value: past. This is so because it occurs in root clauses in the (1) past perfect, (2) past progressive or (3) past habitual/conditional, as opposed to its absence from the same situations as called 'present': (4), (5) and (6). One could then conjecture that the function of this morpheme is to trigger this tense shift, from present to past (as I have proposed earlier).

However, the picture gets more complicated than that when we look at complex sentences where this morpheme marks what seem infinitival verbs within the scope of modal expressions: under 'have to' and 'in order to' (7), 'can' (8) or 'wish' (9). These wider contexts clearly point to this morpheme as a temporal agreement marker, and this is the proposal to be defended here.

If this analysis for Santiago *-ba* is on the right track, it is even more adequate to the case of the (much younger) variety spoken in São Vicente: it has no postverbal *-ba*, but rather slightly different preverbal forms for present and past progressives and habituals, as well as, for past perfect, a suppletive form of the Portuguese auxiliary *tinha* 'had' + suppletive participle forms. **The contexts** mentioned above are here illustrated in the same order, with utterances produced by native speakers of Santiago, where the verbal suffix *-ba* (which shifts the word stress to the right) combines with preverbal null perfect (Pratas 2010), progressive and habitual morphemes. Most of these data, as well as the ones from São Vicente that will also be presented in the current paper (not included here for reasons of space only), have been recently gathered during semi-informal interviews and elicitation sessions in Cabo Verde[1], and are part of a digital corpus of oral data, tagged at several levels, documenting the intricate variation in the language.

(1) *Nha prima ku se maridu ki kriaba mi di seti anu…*[2]
my cousin with her husband that Ø raise:**BA** 1SG from seven year
'My cousin with her husband, who had raised me from the age of seven…'

(2) *Na prinsipiu N ka sata konsigiba.*
at beginning 1SG NEG **PROG** be.able.to:**BA**
'In the beginning I wasn't being able to [do it].'

(3) *N ta trabadjaba na kaza di un omi…*
1SG **TA** work:**BA** in house of one man
'I used to work at the house of a man…' / 'I would work in the house of a man…'

(4) *N trabadja ti 97.*
1SG Ø work until 1997
'I've worked until 1997.'

(5) *N sata odja nha so kara.*
1SG **SATA** see 2SG only face
'I'm seeing only your face.'

(6) *N ta djuda na kel ki N podi.*
1SG **TA** help in that REL 1SG can
'I help in what I can.' / 'I will help in what I can.'

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[1] The archipelago, now the Republic of Cabo Verde, off the coast of Senegal, was a Portuguese colony until 1975, and its only official language is Portuguese, despite the efforts to make Capeverdean also official and the country a true bilingual space. The complex morphosyntactic variation of Capeverdean is only now starting to be studied formally.

[2] Abbreviations: 1SG/1PL: first person singular/plural, etc.; BA: postverbal morpheme in Santiago; COMP: complementizer; NEG: negation; SATA: progressive in Santiago; TA: preverbal morpheme in both varieties.

The analysis so far. Using both (i) Klein's (1994) model, in that tense consists of the temporal ordering between Topic Time (TT) and the Time of Utterance (TU) and aspect consists of the temporal ordering between TT and the Time of Situation (T-Sit), and (ii) Comrie's (1985) definition of realis and irrealis mood, we get the following relations for all dynamic predicates in root clauses. <u>Aspect</u>: (a) the bare verb form means that T-Sit precedes TT – we get a perfect reading; (b) a progressive morpheme means that T-Sit includes/coincides with TT. <u>Mood</u>: these aspectual values belong to realis ("situations that have actually taken place or are actually taking place"); the habitual/future belongs to irrealis ("hypothetical situations, including situations that represent inductive generalisations"). <u>Tense</u>: the coincidence between TU and TT is assumed through a pragmatic inference, thus corresponding to (a) present perfect, (b) present progressive and (c) present habitual/prospective. Note: the past meanings of these constructions never occur out of the blue, rather requiring a context, linguistic or non-linguistic, that orders TU after TT. **The proposal**, therefore, is that, in root clauses, *-ba* functions as an indicator of this change, thus behaving as a temporal agreement/concord morpheme which is licensed by the context, rather than being independently responsible for the past value. This is summarized in table 1:

	realis		irrealis
	perfect	**progressive**	**habitual or prospective**
TU coincides with TT	V (perfect in the present)	*sata* V (progressive in the present)	*ta* V (habitual or prospective in the present)
TU is after TT	V-*ba* (perfect in the past, with agreement/concord)	*sata* V-*ba* (progressive in the past, with agreement/concord)	*ta* V-*ba* (habitual or prospective in the past, with agreement)

Table 1. Santiago mood and aspect morphemes, plus as a temporal agreement marker

Even though this treatment of *-ba* as a temporal agreement morpheme does not seem so decisive regarding the examples in (1)-(3), it is crucially the only way to account for the following cases:

(7) *Nu   ten   ki   dizinfetaba   pa   nu   trabadjaba   na   midikamentu.*
1PL   have   that   disinfect:**BA**   for   1PL   work:**BA**   at   medicine
'We've had to disinfect [get disinfected] to work with medicine.'

(8) *E   purgunta-l   si   e   podeba   daba   el   dos   minutu.*
3SG   ask-3SG   if   3SG   can:**BA**   give:**BA**   3SG   two   minute
'He asked him if he could give him two minutes.'

(9) *N   kreba   serba   veterinario,   mas   N   bai   pa   pursor.*
1SG   want:**BA**   be:**BA**   vet,   but   1SG   go   for   professor
'I wanted to have been a veterinarian, but I've gone to [ended up a] teacher.'

If the verbs embedded by the modals are non-finite, as they seem for syntactic reasons (the lack of finiteness morphology in the language leads the search for infinitival forms to some syntactic diagnostics, such as the non-permission of aspect and mood markers, of negation and of subjects with certain properties), there are absolutely no grounds to defend that *-ba* is a tense marker. Then, since these embedded predicates with *-ba* have an irrealis meaning (in (7) and (8), nothing is said about whether, or when, these situations truly occurred; in (9) we have a counterfactual interpretation – the situation *did not* happen), this *-ba* could be argued to be, in these cases, a mood agreement morpheme. It does not, however, occur in modal contexts whose embedding verbs are not in the past, and thus the strict mood agreement hypothesis is not correct either. Therefore, my current proposal is that *-ba* is a temporal agreement morpheme associated with some past environments. It appears: (i) in root clauses where a past interpretation is provided by the context; (ii) doubled in modal constructions whose embedding verb has a past value and the lower verb has varying temporal meanings. The same reasoning holds for the preverbal *tava* in the São Vicente variety, with some specificities that will be addressed and resolved.

Comrie, Bernard (1985): *Tense*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Klein, Wolfgang (1994): *Time in language*. London: Routledge. Pratas, Fernanda. States and temporal interpretation in Capeverdean. In Bok-Bennema, Reineke, Brigitte Kampers-Manhe & Bart Hollebrandse (eds) Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2008. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 215-231. DOI: 10.1075/rllt.2.12pra