

Gerund clauses in the diachrony of Portuguese: C-T features and information structure

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It is often assumed that subject-verb inversion in gerund or participial clauses is linked to the positive specification of the Null Subject Parameter (NSP) (cf. Roberts 1994, Barbosa 1995, 2002, Santos 1999). In Null Subject Languages (NSLs), VS order in gerund clauses is expected, whereas in non-NSLs, on the contrary, SV is the observed pattern. This correlation is explained differently by different authors. Roberts 1994 argues that this is due to properties of the inflection. According to Barbosa 2002, the obligatory VS pattern in gerund clauses in NSLs is determined by the absence of person agreement features, the subject being in its base position inside VP. In her analysis, pre-verbal subjects in NSLs are left-dislocated and are doubled by referential *pro*, which is identified by the inflection. In gerund clauses, which have no agreement specification, *pro* is not identified and the subject remains in the post-verbal position.

Barbosa's analysis makes the following predictions: 1) only SV pattern should be found in gerund clauses of non-NSLs; 2) SV order should be possible in languages with inflectional marks on the gerund; 3) only VS pattern should be found in NSLs.

Data from French and English, at least apparently, seem to confirm the first prediction. In these languages, with obligatory subjects, SV order is observed in gerund clauses (cf. (1)-(2)). In non standard varieties of Contemporary European Portuguese (CEP) (cf. Cordial-sin, Dialectal Corpus for the Study of Syntax, CLUL) in which the gerund can be inflected for person, we can find both SV and VS orders in inflected gerund clauses (cf. Lobo 2008) (cf. (3)), which does not contradict the second prediction.

According to the third prediction, we would expect to find only VS order in gerund clauses of CEP and Old Portuguese (OP), since they are both NSLs in which the gerund is not inflected for person. In fact, in CEP, subject-verb inversion in gerund clauses is obligatory (cf. (4)).

This analysis, however, is problematic when we consider data from OP (5)-(6). In these varieties, which are null subject languages, there is variation between SV and VS order in gerund clauses.

Data from these varieties not only challenges the analyses mentioned above which relate obligatory VS orders to the positive value of the null subject parameter, but also raises the problem of optionality in grammar.

As to obligatory SV or VS orders, we can argue that they are the result of the absence or presence of V-to-C movement, driven by different tense feature specifications of the C head hosting the verb. Evidence for V-to-C movement in gerund clauses (following work by Rizzi 1982, Brito 1984, Ambar 1988, a.o.) is found in clauses with auxiliary-subject inversion and in clauses with adverbs placed between the post-verbal subject and a complement (cf. Santos 1999), as shown in (7a), for OP, and in (7b), for CEP.

Further support to the claim that V movement relates to Tense features comes from the fact that there are different semantic restrictions on gerund clauses and different restrictions on pronominal subjects crosslinguistically. In languages with V to C movement, contrarily to languages without it (French and English), gerund clauses may have different semantic values, including conditional ones and allow all kinds of pronominal subjects.

As for 'optional' V movement in gerund clauses, we will argue that it is driven mainly by informational structure, since preverbal subjects are mainly topics and postverbal subjects occur mainly in contexts where they correspond to new information or are heavy constituents. Following Costa (2010), optional orders can be explained by interface constraints on surface structure.

Examples:

- (1) a. Jean étant sorti, Marie est entrée.
b. *Étant Jean sorti, Marie est entrée.
- (2) a. John having left, Mary arrived.
b. *Having John left, Mary arrived.
- (3) a. **Eles tendem** as coisas em casa, fazem a toda a hora
they having-3pl the things at home, do-3pl at all the time
b. **Calandes-te tu**, também eu me calo
Shutting-2sg-yourself you, also I myself shut
- (4) a. Estando eu a dormir, tocou o telefone.
Being I to sleep, rang the phone.
b. *Eu estando a dormir, tocou o telefone.
*I being to sleep, rang the phone.
- (5) a. **elos tenendo e auendo** este Castello eu pusi meus preytos & myas cõuenẽzas
they having and possessing this castle I put my demands and my conveniences
b. **auendo elle** poder de os destruir. desffaria ssi mesmo
having he power of them destroy would-undo himself
- (6) a. E, **estando Elle** em nós, recebemos seus dões.
And, being He in us, receive-1pl their gifts
b. E, **elle estando** em sua oraçon (...), veeo subitamente sobre elle hũũ grande lume do ceo (...)
And, he being in his prayer, came suddenly upon him a great fire from-the heaven
- (7) a. (...) **auendoos elle ante rrogados** e deffendudo q(ue) o nõ ffezessem.
having-them he before begged and deffende that it not do-3pl
b. **Tendo eles ontem chegado** a acordo, assinámos o contrato.
Having them yesterday came to deal, signed-1pl the contract

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