A Cognitive Approach to Adverbial Subordination in European Portuguese
A Cognitive Approach to Adverbial Subordination in European Portuguese: The Infinitive, the Clitic Pronoun Se and Finite Verb Forms

By

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TO MY FAMILY
GRÖNBLAD AND VESTERINEN
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Since the breakthrough of the generative approach to language and language use, there is a tradition within linguistic studies to consider language as an abstract system without taking into consideration the language user and his/her cognitive faculties. Grammar—and syntax in particular—is studied in isolation on the basis of the assumption that it has no relation to semantics. The underlying idea is that semantics is to be found in lexicon and not in language structure. The present study is at odds with this view of linguistic analysis. Thus, in accordance with the perspective of Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008), I will contend that there is a strong relation between language as a system for creating meaning and human cognitive faculties. Moreover, I will argue that grammar (and syntax) is meaningful in its own right. In this sense, language structure mirrors conceptual structure. This being so, the present book aims at creating a greater understanding about finite and infinitive adverbial clauses in European Portuguese from a cognitive linguistic perspective of language and language use. In particular, I will examine the reason why the native speaker of European Portuguese uses one or another verb form in different types of adverbial clauses.

As will be shown throughout the book, the variation between finite and infinitive verb forms in adverbial clauses is highly flexible in Portuguese due to the existence of an inflected infinitive with subject agreement. That is, the Portuguese inflected infinitive shares the feature [person] with the finite verb forms. On the other hand, it lacks the feature [tense]. It is, so to speak, a verb form situated in between the plain infinitive and the finite verb forms with reference to morphological information. The inflection pattern of the inflected infinitive is illustrated in Figure 1:1 below:
The inflected infinitive appears in a wide array of grammatical contexts and, in fact, the complete distribution of this particular verb form is not yet totally covered (cf. Scida 2004: 3). However, it is commonly used as a complement to epistemic, declarative, factive, perception and causation verbs in subordinate clauses. With this being the case, the Portuguese speaker can choose between using a finite verb form introduced by the conjunction que (‘that’) or simply exclude the conjunction and use the infinitive instead of the finite verb form. This is also the case for impersonal subject clauses, e.g., it is necessary to buy, and for the theme of the present book–adverbial clauses introduced either by a preposition or a conjunction. Let us consider some typical examples displaying the variation between finite and infinitives in subordinate contexts:

1. a) Penso não dizerem a verdade
   Think-PRES: 1P.S not say-INF: 3P.P the truth
   ‘I think they are not telling the truth’ [epistemic verb: ‘to think’]

   b) Afirmo não dizerem a verdade
      Declare-PRES: 1P.S not say-INF: 3P.P the truth
      ‘I declare that they are not telling the truth’ [declarative verb: “to declare”]

   c) Lamento não dizerem a verdade
      Regret-PRES: 1P.S not say-INF: 3P.P the truth
      ‘I regret that they are not telling the truth’ [factive verb: “to lament”]

   d) Vejo os miudos brincarem
      See-PRES: 1P.S the children play-INF: 3P.P
      ‘I see the children playing [perception verb: “to see”]
The examples displayed above illustrate the astounding possibilities for using the infinitive in Portuguese. While many other languages require the use of a finite verb form in subordinate clauses with a non co-referential or a new subject, Portuguese displays an alternative structure with the inflected infinitive.

This is also a particular feature of the Portuguese language among the family of national Romance languages. For example, causal adverbial clauses can be introduced either by the preposition por (‘through’) followed by the inflected infinitive or by the conjunction porque (‘because’) followed by a finite verb form. Examples (2a-e) below show that the other national Romance languages behave differently:

2. a) O menino está triste por sairmos
The boy be-PRES: 3P.S sad through go out-INF: 1P.P
O menino está triste porque saímos
The boy be-PRES: 3P.S sad because go out-PRES: 1P.P
‘The boy is sad because we are going out’ [Portuguese]

b) Le garçon est trist parce qu’on sort
The boy be-PRES: 3P.S sad because one go out-PRES: 1P.S
‘The boy is sad because we are going out’ [French]
Thus, the other national Romance languages prefer—or require—the insertion of a finite adverbial clause in these contexts while Portuguese permits a variation between infinitive and finite verb forms. As can be seen in example (2e.), however, Spanish may permit adverbial structures like: por salir nosotros. On the other hand, examples of this kind do not reflect standard Spanish and are often considered as “regional variants” or as cases of “not standard Spanish” (cf. De Mello 1995). This is not the case with infinitive structures in Portuguese. On the contrary, the infinitive is highly productive in a wide array of subordinate contexts. The present book will focus on a particular grammatical context, namely the variation between infinitive and finite adverbial clauses. The possibility to choose between different verb forms in this grammatical context indeed raises questions about the nature of this variation and about the reasons for choosing one or another verb form. These questions will be examined in more detail in the following section.

**Research Questions**

As referred to above, the variation between infinitive and finite adverbial clauses in Portuguese is related to the existence of the inflected infinitive. However, the fact that there are two different categories of infinitives—the plain infinitive and the inflected infinitive—subsumes an even more complex situation. On the one hand, there is a feasible variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive in some grammatical contexts. On the other hand, there is a variation between the inflected infinitive and finite verb forms in other grammatical contexts. Hence, the adverbial clause may include the plain infinitive, the inflected infinitive or a finite verb form:
3. eu detesto pessoas, pá, que andem à procura de empregos e que não se movam para procurar emprego

PRES: 1P.S people, boy, that go-PRES.SUBJ: 3P.P to the search of work-PL. and that not CLITIC.PRON.

SUBJ: 3P.

‘I detest unemployed persons that do not make any effort to find work’

4. tenho um processo de dar-lhes um bocadinho

PRES: 1P.S a process of give-INF. them a little bit
de limão para eles picarem com um garfo no lemon to they prick-INF: 3P.P with a fork on the lemon

INF: 3P.

PRON.

‘I usually give them a bit of lemon so that they can prick it with a fork’

5. Inclusivamente chegava-se ao apuro de ter que pedir autorização, se fosse necessária uma operação ou qualquer coisa para que a criança fosse operada…

IMP: 3P.S CLITIC.PRON. to the difficulty of have-INF. that ask for-INF. authorization, if be-IMP.SUBJ: 3P.S necessary a operation or something to that the child be-IMP.SUBJ: 3P.S operated…

PRON.

‘We also encountered the difficulty of having to ask for permission in order to get an operation for the child, if it would be necessary’

Examples (3-5) differ regarding the verb form in the adverbial clause. Example (3) displays the plain infinitive, without any morphological markings of the feature [person]. That is, the infinitive procurar does not express an explicit subject, but shares the same subject with the main clause. This situation implies a co-referential subject relation between the main clause and the adverbial clause. Another pattern is observed in the two following examples where the subject is overtly expressed in the adverbial clause. In (4) the subject is expressed by the inflected infinitive form picarem (the third person plural inflection), and in (5) it is expressed by the

1 The examples are selected from different corpora of natural spoken and written European Portuguese: Português Falado (Pfa), Português Fundamental (Pfu) and Diaclav (name of the newspaper). The corpora will be presented more in detail in the method section.
finite verb form *fosse* in the subjunctive mood. In these latter cases (4-5), the subject in the adverbial clause is non co-referential with the subject of the main clause.

Thus, examples (3-5) demonstrate some rather obvious morphological differences between the plain infinitive, the inflected infinitive and the finite verb forms. The plain infinitive does not express explicit subject marking, while the opposite holds for the inflected infinitive. On the other hand, the inflected infinitive shares the feature [person] with finite verb forms, but does not indicate tense. It is the finite verb forms that express this feature, together with the feature [mood]. This being so, the plain infinitive, the inflected infinitive and the finite verbs represent a continuum of morphological marking:

**Figure 1:2.** The morphological marking of the plain infinitive, the inflected infinitive and finite verb forms.

- Plain infinitive: [-person], [-tense]
- Inflected infinitive: [+person], [-tense]
- Finite verb: [+person], [+tense], [+mood]

The parameter [+/-person] could contribute to an explanation in which the uses of the plain and the inflected infinitive is basically a referential issue. In other words, one could argue that the plain infinitive is appropriate in co-referential contexts and that the inflected infinitive, in contrast, is used to indicate that the subject of the adverbial clause is non co-referential with the main clause subject. The following examples (6-7) illustrate that this explanation is not entirely correct:

6. É interessante notar como pessoas ligadas
   a vários partidos souberam dar as mão
   para encontrar soluções para Leiria e a sua região
   to different parties know-PRET.3P.P give-INF. the hand
   to find-INF. solutions to Leiria and its region
   [Diário de Leiria-N2989-2]
   ‘It is interesting to observe that persons connected to different parties
   cooperated to find solutions for Leiria and the region’
Accordingly, the question of co-referentiality is not fundamental in order to understand the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive. It is true that the use of the plain infinitive is prototypical for co-referential contexts like (6), but not even this statement is entirely correct. It is, for example, possible to use the plain infinitive in cases where the indirect object of the main clause turns to be the subject of the adverbial clause, e.g., *deram-lhe dinheiro para comprar um carro* (‘they gave him/her money to buy a car’). But perhaps even more interesting is the fact that examples like (7) are highly productive. The inflected infinitive is not only used in non co-referential contexts, but do also occur in co-referential contexts. Against this background, I will try to find a plausible explanation for the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive in co-referential contexts. This will be done in Chapter 2.

Another question that will be dealt with is related to the distinction between the plain and the inflected infinitive and the use of the clitic pronoun *se*. The examples given so far (3-7) do not raise any problems regarding the distinction between the plain and the inflected infinitive given the lack of inflection on the infinitive in contexts where the main clause has plural subjects.\(^2\) But this distinction is more hazardous to make in contexts where the infinitive has a zero inflection—in the first and third person singular. The traditional solution to this problem has been to claim that the infinitive is inflected if it refers to a Nominal Phrase (NP) or if it can be preceded by a pronominal subject (cf. Maurer 1968). Let us consider some typical cases:

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\(^2\) The infinitive *procurar* in (3), for example, does not agree with the main clause subject expressed by the reflexive *se movam* in the subjunctive third person plural mood.
8. *para aprender a doutrina para ir a minha primeira comunhão,* eu sei quanto tempo andei.

[I do not know how much time it took for me to learn the doctrine and to attend my first Holy Communion']

9. *nem sei tampouco para onde caminhará isto,* apesar de eu ser um jovem e ter ideias avançadas.

[nor do I know what this will lead to, despite the fact that I am young and have advanced ideas']

The common denominator of these two cases is that the action expressed in the adverbial clause is related to a certain element. In (8), the infinitive refers to the pronominal subject *eu* (‘I’) and the verbal inflection *sei* (‘I know’) in the main clause. Moreover, it would be possible to insert the pronominal subject in the adverbial clause, e.g., *para eu aprender... para eu ir* (‘so that I learn... so that I go’). This reasoning implies that the infinitive should be regarded as an inflected one. The overtly expressed subject in the subsequent case (9), on the other hand does not leave any space for argument—the infinitive in the adverbial clause is inflected.

One problem that arises from this explanation is that it only seems to cover two different infinitive contexts: impersonal subject clauses and subordinate clauses with plural subjects. For instance, example (6), e.g. *é interessante notar* (‘it is interesting to note’) would be categorized as a plain infinitive because of the lack of inflection and of the impersonal context. Equally, (3) is considered a plain infinitive given the lack of inflection of the infinitive in a plural context.

The traditional explanation also creates a problem related to the different uses of the infinitive in adverbial clauses. Apparently, the infinitive can be preceded by personal pronouns which make the notion of the inflected infinitive more salient. The question, though is: what happens when the pronoun designates an impersonal subject? This is often the case with the clitic pronoun *se*. Let us consider two cases that differ substantially in this respect:
10. *De acordo com o vidreiro, «é preciso um mês para se conseguir fazer uma peça com perfeição, e outros cinco, para se aprender seis modelos diferentes».*

‘According to the glassmaker, it takes one month to learn how to make one perfect piece and five more to learn how to make six different models’

11. *Já demos indicação para se fazerem os estudos... para vermos em termos de projeto quanto custa, qual a melhor localização.*

‘We have already indicated that they should study the costs of the project and find the best location for it’

Although the examples displayed above (10-11) show some similarities, they differ in terms of morphological marking. This difference has some immediate consequences for the interpretation of the pronoun *se*. The plain infinitive in (10), for example, increases the inclination to consider *se* as an impersonal subject. That is, *se* designates an active initiator of the process described in the adverbial clause. In contrast, the verbal inflection in (11), referring to the NP (*os estudos*), confers the subject role to this participant, and this has the effect of decreasing the notion of an active agent. Nonetheless, it is obvious that *the studies* cannot be done without the presence of an active participant. In order to understand this dilemma, the semantic meaning of the structure PREPOSITION + *SE* + INFINITIVE needs to be further analysed. This will be the topic of Chapter 3.

The following question is related to the variation between inflected infinitive adverbial clauses and finite adverbial clauses. As has been shown, both structures include morphological marking of the feature [person]. Nonetheless, it is only the finite adverbial clause that situates the adverbial process in a specified time. In other words, it is only the finite clauses that determine this process in relation to the time of the communicative event:
12. e às onze e meia tenho de o pôr  
and to the eleven and half have-PRES: 1P.S of the put-INF.  
(…) para (…) para as raparigas, para elas ao  
(…) to (…) to the girls, to they to the  
depois terem lá comer ao meio-dia  
later have-INF: 3P.P there eat-INF. to the middle day  
[PFu: 87]  
‘At half past eleven I have to put the food on so that the girls have something for lunch.

13. quando fui para o curso de direito, fui  
when go-PRET: 1P.S to the course of law, go-PRET: 1P.S  
na convicção de que auxiliar a justiça, ou contribuir  
in the conviction of that help-INF the justice, or contribute-INF  
para que se fizesse justiça no  
to that CLITIC. PRON. make-IMP.SUBJ: 3P.S justice in the  
mundo era um ideal bastante elevado  
world be-IMP: 3P.S a ideal rather high  
[PFu: 97]  
‘when I attended law school, I went there with the conviction that I could contribute to justice in the world; this was a rather high ideal for me.’

The verbal inflection of the infinitive adverbial clause (12) gives no temporal indication of the described process, while this is done in the subsequent example (13). In this particular case, the preterite tense in the subjunctive mood has the effect of dislocating the act of making justice in the world to a time prior to the communicative event. Therefore, it would be tempting to argue that the variation between infinitive and finite adverbial clauses first and foremost depends on the parameter [+/-tense]. The use of a finite adverbial clause would then be motivated by the speaker’s need to locate the adverbial process temporally in relation to the communicative event, while the infinitive adverbial clause would be used in situations where there is no such need.

However, I believe that there may also be other factors involved in the variation between these two structures. Certainly, the temporal dimension is important to reconsider, but it seems that this dimension does not reveal the full complexity of the variation between infinitive and finite adverbial clauses. In Chapter 4, this question will be studied more thoroughly.

To summarize, the research questions can be stated as follows:

- What motivates the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive in co-referential Portuguese adverbial clauses?
• What is the meaning and function of the clitic *se* in Portuguese adverbial clauses?
• What motivates the variation between inflected infinitive adverbial clauses and finite adverbial clauses?

My impression is that these questions by tradition have received a rather formal treatment. There has been a tendency to study the variation between the Portuguese infinitive and finite verb forms by formulating abstract rules in order to explain the occurrence of the inflected infinitive. This tendency is most likely to be found within the Generative Grammar approach to linguistic analysis. Traditional grammarians, on the other hand, have often contributed with pure descriptions of the variation without aiming too hard to find an explanation (cf. Bechara 1999; Brito 1995; Caetano Silveira *et al.* 1994; Cunha and Cintra 1984; Maurer 1968; Perini 1977; Raposo 1975, 1987).

It is not my intention to challenge the studies referred to above. On the contrary, they formulate important and insightful contributions that increase our understanding about the variation between the Portuguese infinitive and finite verb forms. Nevertheless, I believe that the issue also needs to be addressed from a perspective that considers the cognitive processes that may come into play in producing one or another adverbial structure, and from a perspective that conceives of language as a tool for creating meaning—not only from a lexical standpoint but also from a syntactical one. Therefore, the perspective that I will adopt in the present study is based on theories within the cognitive linguistics paradigm, and on the model of Cognitive Grammar in particular (Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008). As an alternative to the traditional view, I will try to establish a relation between different subordinate adverbial structures and their different meanings. In the following section, though, the traditional way of looking at these questions will be reviewed.

**Some Earlier Proposals**

It is indeed impossible to provide a review that fully covers everything that has been written on the variation between different adverbial structures in Portuguese. The following review will therefore focus on the most important and representative contributions on the matter. The review will further reveal a tendency within Portuguese linguistics to study the infinitive and finite verb forms from a purely formal or descriptive perspective. First, the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive will be reviewed. This review will be followed by the use of the clitic...
pronoun *se*. Finally, focus will be put on earlier proposals regarding the variation between the inflected infinitive and finite verb forms.

**The Plain vs. the Inflected Infinitive**

Cunha and Cintra (1984) comment on the use of the plain and the inflected infinitive—the *impersonal* and the *personal* infinitive in their terminology—by saying that it is one of the most controversial questions in Portuguese syntax. They conclude that the rules created by grammarians to explain the use of one or another infinitive form have always been insufficient or unrealistic. Instead, the authors point at non-grammatical factors in order to find an explanation to the problem:

> In fact, during the different stages of the Portuguese language, writers have never looked upon this question by basing themselves on reasons of purely grammatical logic, but in the act of choosing they have always been influenced by motives related to stylistics, such as the rhythm of the phrase, the emphasis of the uttering, the clarity of the expression (Cunha and Cintra 1984: 482).

Further, the authors agree with Bechara (1999) considering that the variation between the two infinitive forms may be motivated by the propensity to empathize different aspects of the adverbial clause. Bechara (1999) explains the difference in the following way: “The plain infinitive reveals that our attention is drawn especially to the verbal action; the function of the inflection is to insist on the personal subject” (Bechara 1999: 285-286). In other words, the plain infinitive is used in order to emphasize the action, while the inflected infinitive emphasizes the agent of the action. This is illustrated by the subsequent example:

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3 “Em verdade, os escritores portugueses das diversas fases da língua portuguesa nunca se pautaram, no caso, por exclusivas razões de lógica gramatical, mas viram-se sempre, no acto da escolha, influenciados por ponderáveis motivos de ordem estilística, tais como o ritmo da frase, a ênfase do enunciado, a clareza da expressão” (Cunha and Cintra 1984: 482).

4 “O infinitivo sem flexão revela que a nossa atenção se volta com especial atenção a ação verbal; o flexionamento serve de insistir na pessoa do sujeito” (Bechara 285-286).
14. *Estudamos*  
Study-pres: 1p.p  

a) *para vencer na vida*  
to win-INF in the life  

b) *para vencermos na vida*  
to win-INF; 1p.p in the life  
‘We study in order to be successful in life’

Thus, the speaker expressing (14a) is more concerned with the verbal act of “being successful”, while the person uttering (14b) puts emphasis on the subject of the verbal act. This explanation may very well be true. The problem, however, is that it does not say anything about the underlying reasons for choosing one or another expression. The question that remains is: why would a given speaker feel a need to emphasize one or another facet of the adverbial process?

Maurer (1968) elaborates three rules to facilitate our understanding of the Portuguese infinitive. The rules are created in order to explain the obligatory use of the plain infinitive and the inflected infinitive, and to show the contexts that allow a variation between the two infinitives. The first rule refers to the use of the plain infinitive and to the premises that determine its adequate use. The second rule concerns the inflected infinitive and its obligatory use in certain contexts. Finally, the third rule explain the contextual premises that permit a variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive. The rules are listed below:

A. When the infinitive is rigorously impersonal, that is, when the action expressed by it does not refer to a determined agent either expressed by the proper infinitive, or indicated in the context, it is always invariable (impersonal).

B. When the infinitive is clearly personal, that is, when it has a proper subject –expressed or not – it is always inflected, no matter if the subject is identical or not with the main verb subject.

C. When the infinitive, despite not having a proper subject – therefore having an impersonal use in other romance languages– expresses an action that is nonetheless put forward by an agent known from the context, it may be inflected or invariable, although there is often a preference for the use of one or another form of the infinitive (cf. Maurer 1968: 135, 145, 153).

A question that arises from these rules is how to distinguish rule B from rule C. In fact, it is difficult to recognize the difference between infinitives with a proper subject that may or may not be expressed from infinitives that have no proper subject but express an action put forward by an agent known from the actual context. This makes it hard to fully comprehend the application of the rules listed above.
In his analysis of the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive in adverbial clauses, Maurer (1968) concludes that the latter is more commonly used in this grammatical context. The reason for this, he claims, is that the insertion of a linguistic unit (the preposition) between the main verb and the infinitive makes the adverbial clause more independent of the main clause. That is, the greater formal distance between the main verb and the infinitive leads to a tendency to use the inflected infinitive form:

...when the proper infinitive constitutes a type of clause...it acquires a greater autonomy in its relation to the main verb and, obviously, this is expressed by the inflected form of the infinitive in a language that, like the Portuguese, possesses this syntactic resource (Maurer 1968: 170).  

Another interpretation of the inflected infinitive is put forth by Perini (1977). From a generative perspective of language the author formulates a rule called the double inflection filter (‘o filtro de dupla desinência’). According to the author, the rule marks all surface structures with the inflected infinitive as grammatically incorrect if they are preceded by a verb with identical subject marking:

*The double inflection filter*

All surface structures containing an inflected IP (Infinitive Phrase) that is identical with another verb having identical inflection should be marked as ungrammatical, except in cases with a NP preceding the co-referent subject of the infinitive, given that there is no other verb between the NP and the infinitive (cf. Perini 1977: 107).

This being so, an example like: *os jardineiros vieram para ajudarem* (‘the gardeners came to help’) is considered ungrammatical. In the transformation from the deep structure to the surface structure, the IP loses its inflection when it passes the double inflection filter. There is, so to speak, no reason to mark a co-referential subject in the IP. This argument is fundamentally based on the assumption that both infinitives—the plain and the inflected—have a subject in the deep structure, and that the subject may be “turned off” or “removed” by different rules and syntactic processes (cf. Raposo 1975). It is interesting to note, though, that the violation of the

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5 “...no momento em que o infinitivo constitui uma oração...êle adquer uma autonomia maior em relação ao verbo de que depende, o que se exprime, naturalmente, pela forma flexionada em uma língua que, como o Português, possui esse recurso sintático” (Maurer 1968:170).
double inflection filter is more acceptable if there is a greater linear distance between the main verb and the infinitive (cf. Perini 1977: 85).

Raposo (1987) studies the distributional properties of the Portuguese infinitive from the theoretical framework of government and binding. The hypothesis put forward is that clauses containing the inflected infinitive belong to the NP category and therefore may be attributed case from an external case assigner (verb, preposition or inflection). This is made possible by two parameters: the inflection parameter and the null subject parameter. The first parameter holds that Portuguese, in contrast to many other languages, possesses the option to have subject agreement without expressing the feature [tense]. The subsequent parameter posits that the subject agreement leads to the possibility of assigning nominative case to a lexical subject if the infinitive itself is specified for case (cf. Raposo 1987: 92). These findings have in later stages of generativist theory been modified by Caetano Silveira et al. (1994). Basing themselves on the model of principles and parameters the authors claim that the functional node of the NP is the determiner. Therefore, the inflected infinitive should be regarded as a DP and not a NP.

The Clitic Pronoun Se

Traditional grammarians often consider the clitic pronoun se as not one but two different pronouns. Together with a transitive verb this pronoun is a passive marker, and with an intransitive verb (or with a transitive verb used intransitively) it is a symbol representing an impersonal subject. Cunha and Cintra (1984: 308-309) expose the following cases in order to explain the difference:

15. Transitive verbs: se as a passive marker.

   a) ouve-se ainda o toque de rebate
      hear-PRES: 3P.S CLITIC. PRON. still the signal of alarm
      ‘The alarm signal is still ringing’

   b) fez-se de novo silêncio
      make-PRET: 3P.S CLITIC. PRON. of new silence
      ‘It became silent again’
Intransitive verbs: *se* as a symbol for an undetermined subject.

\[ \text{vive-} \quad \text{se} \quad \text{ao} \quad \text{ar livre}, \quad \text{come-} \]

\[ \text{live-pres: 3p.s clitic.PRON. to the air free, eat-pres:3p.s.} \]

\[ \text{se} \quad \text{ao} \quad \text{ar livre, dorme-} \quad \text{se} \]

\[ \text{CLITIC.PRON. to the air free, sleep-pres:3p.s clitic.PRON.} \]

\[ \text{ao} \quad \text{ar livre} \]

to the air free

‘one lives in the open air, one eats in the open air, one sleeps in the open air’

The partition illustrated in (15-16) becomes more salient in contexts with a transitive verb and a plural NP. In these cases, the NP is accompanied by the plural inflection of the verb in third person, e.g. *vendem-se casas* (‘houses are sold). This reflects a situation in which a passive participant, often with the feature [animate], becomes the clausal subject. Consequently, the notion of an active participant in the described event tends to diminish. From a prescriptive perspective of language and language use, Cunha and Cintra (1984: 309) comment on the use of *se* as a passive marker by saying that the verbal agreement with plural NPs is obligatory. Hence, the use of a verb with singular inflection in plural contexts is to be avoided (Cunha and Cintra 1984: 309).

Bechara (1999) follows the analysis cited above. However, he also admits a certain evolution of the structure \( \text{V + SE + NP} \) and the use of a verb with singular inflection in plural contexts. This evolution is illustrated below:

\[ \text{17. a. Vendem-} \quad \text{se} \quad \text{casas} \]

\[ \text{Sell-pres: 3p.p clitic.PRON. houses} \]

(‘houses are sold’)

\[ \text{b. Vendem-} \quad \text{se} \quad \text{casas} \]

\[ \text{Sell-pres: 3p.p clitic.PRON. houses} \]

(‘Someone is selling houses’)

\[ \text{c. Vende-} \quad \text{se} \quad \text{casas} \]

\[ \text{Sell-pres: 1p.s clitic.PRON. houses} \]

(‘Someone is selling houses’)

Thus, an example like (17c.) is the final path in a natural evolution in which a given speaker conceptualizes the clitic pronoun *se* as a symbol that designates an undetermined subject. The author concludes that: ‘the genuine literary language requires ‘vendem-se’ (…). But both structures are
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correct, and the singular case is not, as has been demonstrated, a modification of the plural case. They only represent two different stages in the evolution (Bechara 1999: 178).

In his analysis of impersonal structures with plural inflection on the verb, e.g. *quebraram meu relógio* (‘someone broke my watch’), Perini (1998) claims that the elaboration of three semantic rules increases our understanding about these structures. Further, he connects these rules to the clitic pronoun *se* and the elaboration of a fourth rule. The rules are given in Figure 1:3:

**Figure 1:3.** Perini’s semantic rules.

Rule 1. The indirect object is the patient.

Rule 2. The attribute (with the preposition ‘with’) is the instrument.

Rule 3. The subject is agent, instrument or patient (in this order).


On the basis of these rules, Perini analyses the variation between singular and plural verbal inflection in contexts with a plural NP. In cases without verbal agreement, the author says, it is indeed possible to make an impersonal reading of the pronoun *se*. First, Rule 1 creates a correspondence between the grammatical role *indirect object* and the semantic role *patient*. Thereafter, Rule 4 introduces the representation of an undetermined agent, embodied by the clitic *se*. However, Perini recognizes the difficulty of extending the analysis to contexts with verbal agreement in plural. That is, he does not consider *se* to represent an undetermined agent in cases where Rule 4 cannot be applied (cf. Perini 1998: 272).

Ikeda (1977) applies a transformational perspective on *se* and claims that it is always generated in the base as a constituent of V(erb), having the function as a “logical reducer”. In grammatical contexts with intransitive verbs it reduces the notion of the direct object, and in contexts with transitive verbs the subject role is reduced. Accordingly, the distinction between *the passive se* and *the impersonal se* is inadequate because it does not capture the entire meaning of this pronoun and its function. Ikeda

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6 “A genuína linguagem literária requer "vendem-se" (…). Mas ambas as sintaxes são corretas, e a primeira não é absolutamente, como fica demonstrado, modificação da segunda. São apenas dois estágios diferentes da evolução” (Bechara 1999: 178).
further recognizes that the analysis raises some problems regarding the interpretation of *se* as an undetermined agent (Ikeda 1977: 62).

A similar perspective is taken by Milanez (1982). Nevertheless, a distinction is made between *indeterminateness* and *indefiniteness*. The first term is reserved for human participants that cannot be quantitatively restricted. Therefore, the use of the clitic pronoun *se* as an undetermined subject implies a participant with the feature [+H universal]. On the other hand, it is claimed that the structure NP + V (PLURAL) + SE does not include a human agent, and this claim certainly creates some confusion related to the analysis. Finally, Nunes (1990) maintains the division between the passive and the impersonal *se*. From the theoretical framework of Government and Binding, it is concluded that the pronoun *se* absorbs the internal argument role and receives accusative case in structures with plural marking on the verb. Subsequently, the plural NP receives nominative case. In structures without plural marking on the verb the situation is inverted (cf. Nunes 1990: 31-40).

**Finite and Infinitive (Adverbial) Clauses**

The variation between finite and infinitive adverbal clauses is rather unexplored by traditional grammarians. Cunha and Cintra (1984) explain that the variation is possible and provide a list of its distribution. Bechara (1999) proceeds in the same manner, but comments that the infinitive may contribute to a more precise and elegant style (Bechara 1999: 514).

On the other hand, Raposo (1975), analysing the broad-spectrum variation between finite and infinitive verb forms from a transformational perspective, analyses the infinitive as a complementizer inserted at the same syntactic level as the complementizer *que*. This process is denominated the *complementizer insertion* (‘inserção do complementador’). According to Raposo, there are two reasons to consider the infinitive to belong to the same category as the complementizer *que*. One is the inexistence of the structure *que* + infinitive. The other is based on the fact that there is a complementary distribution between the structures introduced by *que* and the structures introduced by the infinitive (cf. Raposo 1975: 22).

From the same linguistic perspective, Perini (1977) formulates the *insertion of que* rule (‘inserção de que’). Essentially, the rule applies to subordinate non co-referential contexts and it specifies that the infinitive should be replaced by a finite verb form introduced by *que* in the transformation from the deep structure to the surface structure if the main and subordinate clauses have different subjects.
Further, Perini comments on the [+/-tense] parameter. That is, while the feature [tense] is present in the deep structure, it may be omitted in the surface structure:

18. a. Ele disse que estava comendo acarajés
   He say-PRET: 3P.S that be-IMP: 3P.S eat-PROG. beans

b. Ele disse estar comendo acarajés
   He say-PRET: 3P.S be-INF. eat-PROG beans

‘He said (that) he was eating beans’

The reason why the infinitive clause is possible in cases like (18b.) is that it has the same time frame as the main clause. The rule that explains this condition is called tense suppression (‘supressão de tempo’) and it is formed in order to explain the variation between finite and infinitive clauses. Perini recognizes that the tense suppression rule is optional and therefore may not fully provide an explanation for this variation (cf. Perini 1977: 62, 63).

Raposo (1987) builds on his earlier works and is more concerned with giving a structural explanation to why inflected infinitive clauses may occur in grammatical contexts that usually are restricted to finite clauses. The idea put forth is that the inflected infinitive is raised to complement position and therefore can be assigned case by an external case assigner:

Crucially, in an important subset of inflected infinitival complements, Case is available for Agr in Infl only if Infl raises to Comp position (more accurately, to the head of CP) where a governor (and Case assigner) external to the embedded clause may successfully assign Case to it (Raposo 1987: 85).

The formal differences between finite and infinitive subordinate structures are most accurately described by the predicate lamentar (‘to regret’) and the following complement structure. These formal differences are illustrated below:

19. a. Nós lamentamos [CP que eles
   We regret-PRES: 1P.P [CP that they-MASC.
   recebam pouco dinheiro]
   receive-PRES.SUBJ: 3P.P little money]
   ‘We regret that they receive so little money’
Thus, the finite subordinate structure (19a.) is a Complement Phrase. On the other hand, Raposo claims, the projective properties of X’-theory posit that the inflection of the infinitive is the head of the IP and therefore a maximal projection of [+N]. This is shown in example (19b.).

Raposo offers a brief description of the properties of infinitive adverbial clauses, adjunct clauses in his terminology, in which he explains that nominative case is assigned to the inflected infinitive by the preposition. The assumption is that the category P(reposition) subcategorizes for maximal projections of N and therefore assigns nominative case to the inflected infinitive. The formal description given for infinitive adverbial clauses is [main clause [PP] [IP]]. Unfortunately, Raposo (1987) does not offer any formal description of finite adverbial clauses.

**Synthesis**

The studies reviewed above contribute–in one way or another– to shedding light on the distribution and variation between the plain infinitive and the inflected infinitive, over the meaning of the clitic pronoun SE and over the variation between finite and infinitive clauses. Therefore, I will not take issue with Cunha and Cintra (1984) or to Bechara (1999) and the claim that the variation between the plain and the inflected infinitive is motivated by stylistic factors. Further, I fully sympathize with Maurer (1968) and Perini (1977) regarding their claim that a greater linear distance between the main verb and the infinitive may contribute to the use of the inflected infinitive in co-referential contexts. Finally, studies within the generative framework furnish a structural description of the variation between finite and infinitive clauses.

However, I believe that the traditional way to handle these questions somehow misses the main point: what are the underlying reasons for choosing one or another subordinate structure? Likewise, should one accept the claim that se only represents an impersonal subject with singular NPs and in cases that do not show verbal agreement with the plural NP? Does the notion of an active subject of the described process totally disappear in cases with verbal plural agreement?