CAPE VERDEAN TA IN ITS ROLE AS A PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER

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Abstract: This paper deals with the aspectual properties of the preverbal marker ta as used in Cape Verdean Creole (CV). It will be argued that, counter to what is generally held in the literature, CV ta marks not only habitual but also progressive aspect, most notably in gerundive complement clauses, but also in periphrastic progressive markers found throughout the CV dialect cluster. An added aim is to show that, as a progressive marker, CV ta behaves remarkably similar to its Papiamentu (PA) cognate ta, whose status as a general imperfective marker ([+habitual, +progressive]) is widely recognized. This way, Maurer’s (2009) claim that the aspect markers CV ta and PA ta are qualitatively different is proven to be invalid.

Keywords: Cape Verdean Creole, Papiamentu, progressive aspect.

1. Introduction

This paper reassesses the aspectual properties of the preverbal marker ta as used in Cape Verdean Creole (CV). It will be argued that, counter to

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2 CV is spoken on the Cape Verde Islands, situated off the coast of Senegal. Within the CV dialect cluster, a rough distinction must be made between the varieties of Barlavento and Sotavento. Though the standard non-rural varieties of these two branches are largely mutually intelligible, there are some important differences between them that also concern the TMA system (discussed e.g. in Pereira 2000, Bartens 2000, Veiga 2000, Quint 2000b, Holm & Swolkien 2006). In the present
what is found in the literature, CV *ta* marks not only habitual but also progressive aspect. In addition, it will be demonstrated that, as a progressive aspect marker, CV *ta* functions in ways remarkably similar to its cognate *ta* found in Papiamentu (PA)³. As such, this paper is part of an ongoing research project that is concerned with uncovering the linguistic and historical connections between PA and Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole, which, besides CV, also includes the sister creole spoken in Guinea-Bissau and Casamance (GBC) (cf. Martinus 1996; Quint 2000b; Jacobs 2008, 2009a, 2009b, forthcoming).

The need to reassess the aspectual properties of CV *ta* arises in light of the fact that, in the literature on CV, *ta* is generally categorized as [+habitual] and [–progressive] (e.g. Silva 1985:158; 1990:157; Lang 1993:150; Pereira 2000:32; Bartens 2000:51; Rougé 2004:25; Baptista et al. 2007:56-58; Veiga 2000:199). For PA, on the other hand, it is uncontroversial that *ta* can yield both habitual and progressive readings, depending on the context (e.g. Kouwenberg & Ramos-Michel 2007:310). The superficial impression is thus created that PA *ta* and CV *ta* qualitatively differ in that the first is [+progressive] while the latter is [–progressive].⁴ This assumption is reflected by Maurer (2009b:44), who, in a recent contribution to the debate on the origins of PA, affirms that “[t]he Cape Verdean marker *ta* (...) does not function as a progressive marker, in contrast to Papiamentu”.

The aim of the present paper, then, is to show that this assumption needs revision: the data presented below provide evidence that CV *ta* is in fact fully operative as a preverbal progressive aspect marker and, contrary to Maurer’s affirmation, behaves in ways remarkably similar to PA *ta*. The structure of the paper is as follows: Section 2 gives a brief overview of habitual and progressive marking in main clauses as described traditionally in the literature on CV and PA. Section 3, the central part of this paper, examines the synchronic use of CV *ta* as a progressive marker in progressive complement

paper, data from all varieties of CV will be adduced. However, data from the Santiago variety of CV (SCV, locally known as *Badiu*) will predominate, as this is by far the best described one. Up to date socio-linguistic data on CV can be found online: http://www.sorosoro.org/en/cape-verdean

³ Papiamentu is spoken on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao (jointly referred to as the ABC Islands), situated off the coast of Venezuela. Dialectal differences are largely restricted to the lexicon and phonology and play no role in this paper. General information on PA can be found online: http://www.sorosoro.org/en/papiamentu-3

⁴ In this paper, I am merely concerned with the function of *ta* as a preverbal aspect marker. Note, however, that both in PA and CV, *ta* also has copular and future tense marking functions.
clauses, at all times providing parallel examples from PA. Section 4, then, addresses the complex progressive markers found in CV and puts these forward as additional evidence in favor of a [+progressive] status of CV ta. Section 5 offers a brief digression on progressive marking in GBC, the continental sister creole of CV. Finally, Section 6 presents some final remarks and conclusions.

2. Habitual and progressive aspect marking in CV and PA\(^5\)

To express habitual, both CV and PA take recourse to the marker ta:\(^6\)

1. a. SCV Tudu algen di kesotu ilha ta papia sanpadjudu
   All person of that other island HAB speak sanpadjudu
   'All people from the other islands speak sanpadjudu' (Lang 2002:684)

   b. PA Wan ta kanta tur dia
   Wan HAB sing every day
   'Wan sings every day' (Kouwenberg & Ramos-Michel 2007:510)

For PA, as noted in the introduction, scholars agree that ta encodes not only habitual but can, depending on the context, just as easily encode progressivity. This is conveniently illustrated by the comparison of (1b) and (2). For CV, on the other hand, as pointed out in the introduction, ta is traditionally not mentioned in discussions of progressive aspect and sometimes explicitly said to be [−progressive] (e.g. Silva 1985:158; 1990:157; Pereira 2000:32). For the Sotavento varieties of CV, here exemplified by the Santiago dialect (SCV), sata, sta and sta ta\(^8\) are commonly put forward as progressive

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\(^5\) In the study of creoles (e.g. Holm & Patrick 2007:vii) as well as non-creoles (e.g. Bybee et al. 1994:151), the scope of imperfective aspect are traditionally subdivided into habitual and progressive aspect. I do so also in this paper.

\(^6\) In fact, this feature quite radically sets CV and PA apart from the Portuguese-based creoles spoken in the Gulf of Guinea, where ka marks habitual (e.g. Rougé 2004:28). This is important to note, since various scholars (most notably Maurer 2002, 2005) have speculated about possible genetic ties between PA and the Gulf of Guinea Creoles, which are clearly not supported by this piece of data.

\(^7\) Sanpadjudu is the name used by natives of Santiago to designate both the people and the speech varieties of all other Cape Verde Islands (Lang 2002:684).

\(^8\) There is no agreement on how these three variants correlate semantically and etymologically. Some see sta as a reduction of sata (e.g. Lang 2009:167), others rather take sata to be a variant of sta ta (e.g. Silva 1985:141); yet others analyze sta ta as a phonetic variant of sta (e.g. Suzuki 1994, in Baptista 2002:93). See Quint (2000a:258-260), Baptista (2002:91-93) and Pratas (2007:63-97) for
markers (3). For the varieties of Barlavento, exemplified in (4) by the São Vicente dialect (SVCV), ta ta and ti ta are generally provided.

(2) PA  Wan ṭa kanta awor-akí
    Wan: PROG sing now.here
    ‘Wan is singing right now’ (Kouwenberg & Ramos-Michel 2007:310)

(3) SCV  Gósi-li m- sata papia ku Djom
    right now I PROG speak with Djom
    ‘I am speaking with Djom right now’ (Quint 2005:44)

(4) SVCV  Bo tio e k ṭi ta falá
    your uncle be who PROG talk
    ‘It’s your uncle who’s talking’ (Octavio Fontes, p.c.)

However, speakers of CV not seldom take recourse to ta in what seem to be progressive contexts (5a-c):

(5) a. SVCV  Es ka ṭa falá ma bo!
    3pl NEG PRES.PROG speak with 2s
    ‘They are not talking to you’
    (example, gloss and translation from Swolkien 2009:2)

b. SCV  i mi li si* ṭa morrê di fome
    And I here thus PROG die of hunger
    ‘and I’m here dying of hunger / starving’ (translation of Port. eu aqui estou morendo à fome! Costa & Duarte 1967[1886]:308, 309)

c. SNCV  amin ali ṭa morrê de fôme
    I here PROG die of hunger
    ‘I’m here dying of hunger / starving’ (translation of Port. eu aqui estou morendo à fome! Costa & Duarte 1967[1886]:308, 314)


Still, however, in the absence of a proper context, examples such as (5a-c) are open to different interpretations and by themselves do not suffice to bolster the claim that CV ta is operative as a preverbal progressive aspect marker. Therefore, more robust evidence is desirable.

discussions of these markers, their dialectal distribution, and their possible etymologies.

SCV si < Port. assim ‘thus, therefore, still, anyway’ (Nicolas Quint, p.c.)
3. Progressive ta + V complement clauses in CV and PA

This evidence is available in the shape of complement clauses of the type ta + V in which ta is unambiguously [+progressive]. These complements, highly productive in CV and PA, have been referred to as ‘gerundive complements’ or ‘gerundive clauses’ by Kihm (1994:210, for GBC, cf. Section 5) and Kouwenberg & Muysken (1995:213, for PA) respectively. Accordingly, Muysken (2001:404, on PA) speaks of complements in which “preverbal ta resembles English -ing (...) or Spanish -ndo”. The feature is discussed in detail below.10

In many respects, progressive ta + V complements (henceforth ta_{prog} + V complements) behave similar to English and Iberian gerundives. For instance, in ways quite similar to English and Iberian gerundives, the ta_{prog} + V complements typically, but not exclusively, occur

- as complements of complex predicates of the type [V_{aux} + ta_{prog} + V]11:

(6) a. BCV \textit{el kumesa ta kúme}  
3sbegin PROG eat  
‘He began eating (and went on eating)’  
(example and translation from Meintel 1975:220)

b. PA \textit{Rosamalia a kumisa ta yorá}  
Rosamalia PRF begin PROG cry  
‘Rosamalia began crying’ (Lenz 1928:128)

(7) a. FCV \textit{ele bira ta papia sima papagaia}  
he return PROG talk like parrot  
‘He started talking like a parrot’ (Parsons 1925:27)

b. PA \textit{el à bira ta hari}  
he PRF turn PROG laugh  
‘he started laughing’ (Martinus 1996:172)

10 The particularities of progressive ta + V complement clauses in PA have been discussed by Kouwenberg & Muysken (1995:213-214), Andersen (1990:73-75), Muysken (2001), and (particularly) Maurer (1988:262-269). For CV, as far as I am aware, such a discussion is missing to date, although some authors have referred to the phenomenon in passing (see further below).

11 Pending further investigation, it seems that, in principle, any infinitive-governing verb can take the AUX position, though it is typical for both PA and CV to find such predicates headed by verbs with meanings close to ‘to start’ or ‘to stop’ as well as by movement verbs and verbs roughly meaning ‘to continue, keep on’.
in accusativus cum infinitivo constructions, as complements of perception verbs:

(0) SCV N xinti algen ta pintxa pórta!
I feel person PROG push door
‘I felt somebody pushing the door!’ (Lang 2002:671)

b. PA El a sinti e logá ta ssagudí
hePRF feel the place PROG shake
‘He felt the place shaking’ (Maurer 1988:268)

(10) a. SCV el obi Manel ta sibía
hehear Manel PROG whistle
‘He heard Manel whistling’ (Lang 2002:511)

b. PA el a topa Koma Baka ta kana buska kuminda
hePRF encounter Mother Cow PROG walk search food
‘He encountered Mother Cow looking for food’ (Maurer 1988:264)

• as adverbial complements:

(11) a. SCV Anton, (...) ku gentis tudu ta kume (...)
Thus with people all PROG eat
‘Thus, with everybody eating (...)’ (Lang 2002:576)

b. PA e plantashi ta yen di hende ta kórsa (...) tabaku
the plantation be full of people PROG cut tobacco
‘The plantation was full of people cutting (...) tobacco’ (Maurer 1988:264)

• as adjectival complements:

(12) a. SCV El fika la, ta skutsa-m.
hestay there PROG listen.me
‘He stayed there, listening to me.’

Note that in (8a,b), fika/keda serves as an auxiliary meaning ‘keep on’, while in (12a,b), it is a full verb meaning ‘stay, remain’. An ambiguous reading can be
b. PA  Nanzi  a  keda  atras  ta  pensa
Nanzi  PRF  stay  behind  PROG  think
‘Nanzi stayed behind thinking’ (Maurer 1988:264)

(13) a. SCV  N sta  na  kasa  ta  studa  (Bernardino Tavares, p.c.)
I  be  in  house  PROG  study
b. PA  mi  ta  na  kas  ta  studia
I  be  in  house  PROG  study
‘I am at home studying’ (Rigmar Haynes, p.c.)

(14) a. SCV  e  ten  tres  noti  di  fiu  ta  toka  unbes
he  have  three  night  in  a  row  PROG  play  music  nonstop
lit. ‘he has three nights in a row playing music nonstop’
‘Three nights in a row, he has been playing music nonstop’ (Lang 2002:776)
b. PA  Marcel  tin  basta  ratu  ta  kome  djente
Marcel  have  quite  a  while  PROG  eat  tooth
lit. ‘Marcel has quite a while eating teeth’
‘Marcel has been grinding his teeth for quite a while’ (Maurer 1988:265)

It is interesting to notice that Lang (2002) and Maurer (1988) independently described the stative possessive predicate structure exemplified in (14a) and (14b) for SCV and PA respectively:

- SCV  ten  dit[erminadu]  ténpu  (ta/na)  fase  algun  kusa  ‘have  an  X amount  of  time  doing  s.th.’ > ‘be doing something for a certain amount of time’ (Lang 2002:776);
- PA  tin  X  tempu  ta  hasi  algun  kos  lit. ‘have  an  X  amount  of  time doing  s.th.’ > ‘be  doing  s.th. for  an  X  amount  of  time’ (Maurer 1988:265; cf. Muller 1989:235).

Note, furthermore, that both in PA and CV, the \( \text{ta} \) \( \text{prog} \) + V complements can occur in series expressing simultaneity of events. In such cases, there is normally no conjunction linking the different complements (15a,b):

(15) a. FCV  el  ta  fícá  na  ratrato  ta  abri  odjo  ta  fitchá,
he  IMP  stay  in  picture  PROG  open  eye  PROG  close
\( \text{ta} \) abri  boca  ta  fitchá
PROG  open  mouth  PROG  close
‘he appears on the pictures opening and closing his eyes, opening and closing his mouth’ (Macedo 1979:205)

avoided by the insertion of locative complements, as in (12a,b); temporal complements would render a continuous (‘keep on’) reading of \( \text{fika/keda} \).
b. PA  \textit{Tur dia mita tendê-bo, ta pasa ku piská,}
\textit{All day I IMP hear.you PROG pass with fish}
\textit{ta grita riba kaya.}
\textit{PROG scream on street}
‘Everyday I hear you passing by with fish screaming on the street.’ (Lenz 1928:265; cf. examples in Maurer 1988:262, 264)

In some of the examples provided thus far, the presence of $\text{ta}_{\text{prog}}$ appears to be optional, while in others it is obligatory (for PA, Maurer 1988:265-269 provides details). For SCV (and possibly other varieties of CV), moreover, $\text{na}$ can occasionally replace $\text{ta}_{\text{prog}}$ (Lang 2000:27; 2002:e.g. 557, 580, 675, 717, 776). While these matters are interesting for further research, they need not concern us here: the examples suffice to accomplish the primary aim of this paper, which is to show that $\text{ta}$ is fully operative as a preverbal progressive marker in CV. It is relevant to add in this respect, that the markers canonically put forward as SCV’s progressive markers ($\text{sata}$, $\text{sta}$ and $\text{sta ta}$) cannot take the place of $\text{ta}$ in $\text{ta}_{\text{prog}} + V$ complements. Doing so would lead to ungrammaticality (cf. Quint 2010:141).

Despite the general tendency to label CV $\text{ta}$ as [–progressive], a number of specialists have in fact recognized the capacity of CV $\text{ta}$ to encode progressive aspect in $\text{ta}_{\text{prog}} + V$ complements. Some examples:

- Meintel (1975:220, 220fn) discusses the “the uses of $\text{ta}$ to express progression”, after having drawn attention to the occurrence of progressive $\text{ta} + V$ complements in the Brava variety of CV (cf. ex. [4a]);
- With respect to the predicate $\text{bira ta perdi}$ turn-PROG-disappear ‘to start disappearing’, Quint (2010:141) details that, where one would expect the progressive marker $\text{sta}$ or $\text{sata}$, “only the imperfective marker $\text{ta}$ can be used to express the fact that the action expressed by the verb (perdi) is taking place”\(^{13}\) (cf. Quint 2003:139; 2005:43);
- Using the phrase CV $\text{el sei ta ri}$ he-leave-PROG-laugh ‘he left laughing’ as an example, Almada (1961:123) observes that the Portuguese gerund morphology did not integrate in CV; instead, “it is the construction of the infinitive preceded by $\text{ta}$ which is used, this rule being more within the spirit of the creole’’;\(^{13}\);\(^{14}\)
- Pratas (2007:41) provides the \textit{accusativus cum infinitivo} construction $\text{N odja-u ta fuma}$ I-see-you-PROG-smoke ‘I saw you smoking’ accompanied by the following comment: “In embedded

\(^{13}\) All translations of quotes are mine.
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contexts which look like non-finite environments, ta is (...) needed, yielding some value of Progressive".  

4. On the origins of complex progressive markers in CV

With the progressive ta + V complements in mind, it is interesting to look at (the origins of) the stock of progressive markers found throughout the CV dialect cluster, such as SCV sata, sta ta, SVCV tí ta, ta ta, or the past forms SCV stabta ta, FCV stá ta, BaCV tá ta, taba ta – tava ta and tive ta – tibe ta.  

Though the variation is considerable, all these markers have in common that the second (and truly preverbal) element is, indeed, ta. The variation is caused by the first element, which (with the exception of sa in sata) corresponds to a locative copula (or past/anterior form of a copula) in the respective variety of CV. This is unsurprising, considering that locative copulas are regularly selected as auxiliaries for periphrastic progressives (e.g. Bybee et al. 1994:129-131; Heine & Kuteva 2002:276-282).

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14 Note that the type of progressive complements discussed here seems to be common across creoles, as has been pointed out by Bickerton (1981:99-104) with particular respect to complements of perception verbs. After discussing this structure in Guyanese Creole, he stated: “Similar structures are found in other English creoles, such as Belize Creole (...); in French creoles, such as Haitian Creole and Guyanais; and in Portuguese creoles like Saotomense” (Bickerton 1981:103). Recently, Maurer (2009a:85, 86), has described the feature under discussion for Principense, the big difference being that the progressive aspect marker is ta in PA and CV, but sa in Principense: É vika sa gô he-come-PROG-cry ‘He came crying’ (Maurer 2009a:86).

In the literature on CV, these complex markers are still commonly characterized or glossed as single units or as the combination of two TMA markers. However, such a characterization does not account for the fact that all the complex progressive markers (again, with the exception of *sata*) are discontinuous: e.g. SCV *El sta senpri ta kume* he-be-always-PROG-eat ‘He’s always eating’ (Baptista 2002:93) or SVCV *Um tava so ta falá* I-be.PST-only-PROG-speak ‘I was merely chatting’ (Octavio Fontes, p.c.).

For instance, an example such as SCV *El sta senpri ta kume* is glossed by Baptista (2002:93) as he-*TMA*-always-*TMA*-eat ‘He’s always eating’, which is at odds with the fact that TMA markers tend to occur before verbs rather than adverbs. Clearly, *sta* here functions as a copula/auxiliary rather than as a TMA marker, while *ta* marks progressive aspect on the complement verb.

If the analysis provided above is correct, the complex progressive aspect markers found throughout the CV dialect cluster provide additional synchronic evidence for a [+progressive] status of CV *ta* (cf. Meintel [1975:220] and particularly Pratas [2007:63-65, 87] for similar analyses).

With the discontinuity of the CV complex progressive markers in mind, the comparison of the commonly heard string PA *ta bezig ta + V* (be-busy-PROG + V) ‘be busy V-ing’ (cf. Joubert 2007:87; van Putte & van Putte-de Windt 2005:62), exemplified in (16a), with an example of discontinuous SNCV *ta ta* (16b) is compelling: in both cases, *ta* serves as copula/auxiliary, while *ta* marks the complement verb for progressive aspect:

(16) a. PA  
* e ta bezig ta traha*  
he be busy PROG work  
‘He’s busy working’ (Lang, George, 2000:93)

b. SNCV  
*Ka†for*  
*ta mitid ta ladra*  
dog be occupied PROG bark  
‘The dog is busy barking’ (Cardoso 1990:65)

4.1. On the origin of SCV *sata*

One of the particles most typically found marking progressive aspect in main clauses in SCV is *sata* (Quint 2000a:240; Rougé 2004:151; Pratas 2007:63; 16 The discontinuous character of the complex progressive markers has been remarked upon, for instance, by Cardoso (1990:65), Baptista (2002:87, 93) and Baptista, Mello & Suzuki (2007:56).

17 It is furthermore implied that progressive predicates such as *sta ta + V* ‘to be V-ing’ should be analyzed on a par with the periphrastic [V_{aux} + ta_{prog} + V] predicates described in Section 3, such as *fika ta + V* ‘to stay, keep on V-ing’.

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Lang 2002:670). As noted, unlike most of the complex progressive markers just discussed, such as BaCV ta ta, ti ta or SCV sta ta, the marker sata cannot – or, as I argue, no longer – be analyzed as \([V_{aux} + \text{taprog}]\): synchronically, the first element, sa\(^{18}\), only occurs in this very combination, i.e. prefixed to ta (e.g. Lang 2002:670), and is thus not found in SCV as a copula verb.

Diachronically, however, sata needs not be excluded from the analysis provided above: sa still functions as a locative copula in the conservative Casamance variety of GBC, e.g. \(\text{sí kása sa na metádi tera}\) his-house-be-in-middle-of-village ‘his house is in the middle of the village’ (Bal 1985:35), and appears as such in clearly progressive clauses, e.g. \(\text{e sd na kópo kása he-be-in/at-build-house}\) ‘he is building a house’ (Bal 1985:23).\(^{19}\) It is thus likely that, in an early stage, sa also served as a locative copula in SCV; we can then reconstruct a process in which a frequent use of the periphrasis \([\text{sacop} + \text{taprog} + V]\) ‘to be V-ing’ led to the cliticization of \(\text{sa}_{\text{cop}}\) to \(\text{ta}_{\text{prog}}\) and the crystallization of sata as a synthetic progressive aspect marker in SCV, while sa did not survive as an autonomous copula verb, at least not in Santiago (cf. Rougé 2004:261 for a similar point).\(^{20}\)

\(^{18}\) Scholars do not agree on the etymology of sa: though most seem to believe it is a remnant of Port. estar (e.g. Lopes Da Silva 1957:139; Bal 1985:23; Baptista 2002:94; Lang 2002:670; Hagemeijer 2007:58fn), others see it as derived from Port. ser (Rougé 2004:261); yet others affirm that sa represents a fusion of ser and estar (Lipski 1993:218). The use of sa as a locative copula in GBC (Ball 1985:23, 35; Noël Bernard Biagui, p.c.) seems to favor Port. estar as the etymon rather than Port. ser. Moreover, the fact that, cross-linguistically, locative copulas are particularly suitable for building progressives (Bybee et al. 1994:128-130) again favors Port. estar as the etymon of sa, at least in its auxiliary function in progressive SCV sata + V and GBC sa na +V. Telling in this respect is that, in GBC and SCV, the copulas known to derive from Port. ser (GBC sedu / i and SCV ser / e) are not used as an auxiliary in progressive periphrases, while GBC/SCV sta (< Port. estar) is .

\(^{19}\) To my knowledge, the synchronic use of sa as a copula in Casamance has only been documented by Bal (1985). Lipski (2002:72), for instance, in a discussion of copulas found throughout the Iberian-based creoles, explicitly speaks of “la ausencia de sa/sá en los criollos de Cabo Verde y Guinea-Bissau”. Moreover, although Rougé (2004:261) mentions the existence of sa as a copula in Casamance, he suggests that its use is restricted to fixed expressions such as I sa ‘that is to say’. The synchronic use of sa as locative copula as documented by Bal, however, has been confirmed to me by Noël Bernard Biagui (p.c.), a native speaker of the Casamance variety of GBC. Bernard Biagui (forthcoming) is currently preparing a linguistic grammar of his mother tongue.

\(^{20}\) It should be mentioned that sa is used as a portmanteau copula in all varieties of Gulf of Guinea Portuguese Creole (Lipski 2002:66). In addition, many scholars
Note, finally, that the diachronic analysis of sata provided above supports the orthographic tendency to separate sa from ta by a space, as advocated e.g. by Lang (1993:150) and others.

5. Digression: progressive aspect in GBC

It is now interesting to briefly look at the sister creole of CV, Guinea-Bissau and Casamance Creole (GBC), where ta is fully operative as a habitual marker, whereas progressive aspect is encoded with na (17). This marker is a reduction of the periphrastic marker sta na21 ‘be in/at’ (Rougé 1994:147), which is attested in older written sources and can still be heard in the speech of elderly people (Rougé 1993:325).22

(17) GBC N na bibi binyu
   1s PROG drink wine
   ‘I am drinking wine’ (Kihm 1994:93)

Peck (1988:273), however, mentions that “we have found ta to have a progressive meaning in some cases”, providing this example:

(18) GBC nho parbai ta chora sumamina
   Mr. Parbai PROG cry like child
   Mr. Parbai was crying like a child’ (Peck 1988:273)

have drawn attention to the occurrence of sa(r) as a portmanteau copula verb (i.e. with properties of both ser and estar) in several 15th-16th century Língua de Pretu texts (Lipski 1993:218; Rougé 2004:261) should not be missing in the present context. Lipski (2002) exhaustively documents the attestations of sa (and its variants) in 15th-16th century Língua de Pretu texts. Although it is tempting to speculate about a possible transfer of sa from the Língua de Pretu to the Portuguese-based creoles, such a claim is difficult to substantiate. See Lipski (2002) for an interesting discussion of this issue.

21 In addition to encoding progressivity, GBC na functions as a future marker. Analogue to the development of GBC na out of sta na, the Haitian French Creole progressive aspect and immediate future marker ap results from the erosion of the preposition après ‘after’ which in turn was used in the verbal periphrasis être après à + V ‘to be V-ing’ (DeGraff 2007:104).

22 Also in SCV, periphrastic sta na can be used to mark progressivity and is occasionally reduced to na, though without reaching the levels of grammaticalization that na has in GBC (Quint 2000a:264-65)
More interestingly, as in CV, GBC ta is a preverbal progressive aspect marker in periphrases of the type \[ V_{aux} + ta_{prog} + V \]:

(17) GBC \[ i \ kumsa \ ta \ coora \]
he begin PROG cry
‘He began to cry (and continued crying)’
(example and translation from Wilson 1962:22)

On the basis of example (17), Wilson (1962) drew the conclusion that “ta has progressive meaning when used after an auxiliary verb” (Wilson 1962:22; cf. Boretzky 1983:130), which corresponds to the situation described above for CV ta. Kihm (1940:30) confirms this progressive use of ta, providing a rather similar example (\[ mininu \ kumsa \ ta \ cora \] child-start-PROG-cry ‘The child began to cry’). It seems, however, that \[ ta_{prog} + V \] complements have gradually become rather rare in Guinea-Bissau in favor of \[ na_{prog} + V \] complements (Kihm 1994:210, 211). For Casamance, Noël Bernard Biagui (p.c.) reports that periphrases of the type \[ V_{aux} + ta_{prog} + V \] (e.g. bida/fika/ sinta ta + V ‘start/stay/sit V-ing’) can still be heard in the speech of elderly people, but that the variant structure with na is indeed more frequent nowadays.

6. Final remarks and conclusions

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate that CV ta is fully operative as a progressive aspect marker. With this purpose, Section 3 focused in detail on the use of ta in \[ ta_{prog} + V \] complement clauses. Maurer’s (2009b:44) claim that “[t]he Cape Verdean marker ta (...) does not function as a progressive marker, in contrast to Papiamentu” is inconsistent with the data presented in that section. In addition, in Section 4, the rich stock of complex progressive markers found in CV was analyzed as a collection of periphrastic markers of the type \[ V_{aux} + ta_{prog} \], thus providing additional synchronic evidence of the use of ta as progressive marker.25

The synchronic distribution of CV ta as a habitual and progressive aspect marker in each of the different CV dialects clearly points towards an early status of CV ta as a general imperfective marker, quite like the

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25 In this paper, I have not discussed two progressive markers (probably variations of one form) of unascertained etymology found in the speech of elderly speakers of SCV, áta and áita (Quint 2000a:259; forthcoming; Lang 2002:10). In his forthcoming Atlas de la langue capverdienne, Quint reports on the use of these two progressive markers in almost two thirds of the island of Santiago, though mainly in the speech of elderly people. As to the origins of these markers, it is
portmanteau nonpunctual marker once identified by Bickerton (e.g. 1975:6) as a prototypical creole feature. Interestingly, as early as in the late 19th century, Schuchardt (1882:911) had expressed similar thoughts: “Originally, CV N ta da means eu estou dando ‘I am giving’, a meaning that was blurred to eu dou ‘I give’”. In a similar vein, though with respect to GBC, Kihm (1994:92) assumes that, “in some previous stage of the language, ta covered the whole field of the imperfective”.

A scenario can thus be unfolded in which CV ta started out as a general imperfective marker (+habitual, +progressive). Gradually, alternative periphrastic progressives would then come to absorb an important part of progressive aspect in CV. If this scenario is correct, and if we note that CV ta also marks future tense (e.g. Baptista 2002:79), an interesting parallel can be drawn with the Dravidian language Kui. In Kui, one single form was once used “for habitual, progressive, and future. With the development of a periphrastic progressive, this older form came to signal just habitual and future” (Bybee et al. 1994:156). The parallel is striking, though with this difference: unlike the Kui marker, CV ta has maintained a good portion of its original [+progressive] qualities.

While we may agree upon the diachronic status of CV ta as a general imperfective aspect marker, it is merely a matter of taste whether one chooses to maintain this as a synchronic label of CV ta: on the one hand, ta has largely been ousted from progressive main clauses by other (complex) markers; on the other hand, the [+progressive] nature of ta in gerundive complement clauses is a synchronic reality that needs to be addressed in descriptions of TMA in CV.24

The development in CV of alternative, more emphatic progressive aspect markers such as sata alongside ta is by no means exceptional: it is quite common for a language to develop more than one way of encoding progressive aspect (Bybee et al. 1994:129). In fact, PA provides a case in point: although in PA, ta is the only preverbal progressive aspect marker, the Iberian gerund

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Note, furthermore, that recognizing the status of CV ta as a general imperfective “ and hence as [+progressive] “ is in harmony with this marker’s ability to mark future tense: imperfectives and progressives developing into future tenses is an unmarked phenomenon in creoles (e.g. Parkvall 2000:84; Holm & Patrick 2007:vii) and non-creoles (Dahl & Velupillai 2005; Bybee et al. 1994:276, 277).
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morphology (suffix -ndo, e.g. mi ta papiando ‘I am talking’) is becoming increasingly popular as a way of marking progressive aspect more emphatically (cf. Sanchez 2000; Kouwenberg & Ramos-Michel 2007:510).

As noted in the introduction, this paper is part of a larger project concerned with the origins of PA and the genetic ties with the branch of Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole. The correspondences revealed in this paper add to the growing body of linguistic evidence in favor of the hypothesis that PA, CV and GBC descend from a common ancestor creole (cf. Martinus 1996; Quint 2000b; Jacobs 2008, 2009a, 2009b, forthcoming). Though controversial, this hypothesis is gradually gaining support among linguists (e.g. Hagemeijer 2009:4; Baptista 2009; McWhorter 2010).

Abbreviations

BCV = Brava variety of CV
CV = Cape Verdean Creole
FCV = Fogo variety of CV
GBC = Guinea-Bissau and Casamance Creole
HAB = habitual aspect
IMP = imperfective aspect
PA = Papiamentu
PRF = perfective aspect
PROG = progressive aspect
SCV = Santiago variety of CV
SNCV = São Nicolau variety of CV
SVCV = São Vicente variety of CV

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