(In)Vulnerable inflected infinitives as complements to volitionals and modals: Evidence from Portuguese and Romeyka

As is well-known there exist four contexts in which an inflected infinitive is used in European Portuguese (EP) and in which an overt subject is licensed (Raposo 1987, i.a.):

1. a. subject clauses;
   b. complement clauses subcategorized by matrix epistemic and declarative predicates;
   c. complement clauses subcategorized by matrix factive predicates;
   d. adjunct clauses introduced by a preposition/complementiser.

Less well-known is the fact that during 16-19th C. Portuguese inflected infinitives appeared as complements to certain subject control verbs such as querer ‘want’, ousar ‘dare’, desejar ‘wish’, costumar ‘use to’, and which have since become unavailable in standard contemporary EP (Fiéis & Madeira 2014):

2. (1) porque muitas vezes se aconteceu já quererem alguns (…) (Classical Portuguese) vingar-se de escandalos particulares e satisfazerem seu apetite ‘It happened many times that some wanted to avenge private scandals, and to satisfy[INF.3PL] their appetite’ (Couto (b. 1542) in Fiéis & Madeira 2014)

   Interestingly enough, this context (with long distance agreement) seems to survive in certain varieties of Brazilian Portuguese (Modesto 2014):

3. (3) Eles querem estudar, continuar em seus ofícios ou então (some varieties of BP) partirem para um negócio diferente, como vender lanches na praia. ‘They wanted to study … or then leave[INF.3PL] to a diferent business …’ (http://www.usp.br/aun/imprimir.php?id=658)

   Albeit true that the inflected infinitives as complements to volitionals became unavailable in prescriptive contemporary EP, it remains an open issue whether they have survived in some varieties of EP, as shown by Pires, Rothman & Santos’ (2011) study of high acceptance of inflected infinitives with volitionals (4). Alternatively, they became obsolete and they have since then re-emerged.

4. (4) (…) se não querem serem (…) apoiantes (some nonstandard varieties of EP) de um grupo governo corrupto (…) ‘(…) if they do not want to be[INF.3PL] (…) the supporters of a corrupt government group (…)’ (Pires, Rothman & Santos 2011)

   However, these inflected infinitives do not seem to be a typological hapax and there may be a more principled explanation for their rise and fall. Evidence comes from Romeyka varieties, belonging to the Pontic Greek branch still spoken in Turkey, some of which show inflected infinitives not only in the contexts of (1) but also identical to (4), as shown in (5):

5. (5) Ki eθeleses episinesâ (Romeyka of Sürmene) not wanted.2SG make.AOR.INF.2SG.it ‘You didn’t want to make it’
   (Dawkins Oxford notebook of Sürmene 1914b: 127 in Sitaridou 2014)

In fact, in Romeyka, inflected infinitives are even found with modals, as in (6a), whose Romance parallel comes from nonstandard Galician, as shown in (6b) (as well as some BP varieties):

6. a. Ki poreses oγraepineses (Old Romeyka of Sürmene) not could.2SG write.AOR.INF.2SG ‘You couldn’t write’ (Sitaridou 2014)
   b. poden teren forma de fouce (Galician) can.3PL have.INF.3PL shape of sickle
‘(…) they may have the shape of a sickle’ (Fiéis & Madeira 2014)

It is precisely on the diachrony of inflected infinitives as complements to volitionals and modals that we focus in this talk because: (a) diachronically, inflected infinitives as complements to volitionals and modals seem to be quite unstable in the grammar – in other words they rise and fall in relatively short periods of time; (b) theoretically, on various analyses, they have been excluded because [-T] verbs such as modals (and some types of volitionals) induce exhaustive control and therefore cannot tolerate agreement (Raposo 1987). However, in this talk, we follow Landau (forthcoming) in arguing that [+Agr] blocks control in attitude complements but not in non-attitude complements and that crosslinguistically [+Agr] is irrelevant for non-attitude complements; the latter forms the core of our diachronic prediction: non-finite forms inflected for φ-features in obligatory control will be more vulnerable to change.

The explanation proposed in Sitaridou (2014) for the emergence of inflected infinitives in Romeyka is that the agreement endings on the inflected infinitive are the generalised set of endings for the past tense resulting from the merger of the strong aorist/imperfect endings of AG during the Hellenistic period (Horrocks 2010: 144). The pathway for the Romeyka inflected infinitive is then as follows: in medieval times the construction *ixa “I had”* plus infinitive emerges as a counterfactual. The infinitive, surfacing in strict adjacency to *ixa*, analogically developed agreement endings, as shown (7), because of the perfect match of inflected infinitive endings with the aorist endings of *ixa*. Following Oikonomidis (1958: 273), the catalyst for analogical development of the inflected infinitive was phonetic similarity of the plain infinitival ending in *–e* with the 3SG aorist ending also in *–e*–. From this, endings are analogically developed for the remainder of the paradigm. This analogical development of agreement endings ‘growing’ on the infinitive was then extended to another non-attitude context, namely as the complement to a modal, as seen in (6a), and from then on to other predicates too.

(7) Na *ixa/ixes/ixe episina/episines/episine ...* (Romeyka of Sürmene)

Evidence for this pathway comes from today’s Sürmene, where we observe the emergence of a new invariant modality marker, *ixe*, from a former auxiliary, suggesting the full cycle of analogical development of agreement, including elimination of duplicate information. Although the source for the Romeyka inflected infinitive is arguably different from the EP one, namely the Latin imperfect subjunctive (Martins 2001, Pires 2002), what they both seem to have in common is (i) that analogical extension has played a role in their emergence; (ii) these inflected infinitive constructions were always in competition with plain infinitives and/or *na-*clauses and (iii) were under considerable normative pressure: on the one hand, in prescriptive EP only contexts in (1) were deemed possible, whereas inflected infinitives with volitionals/modals would be viewed as substandard; on the other, in Romeyka, these forms were also viewed as substandard in comparison to the established *na-*clauses further aided by the fact that the infinitive itself had since become obsolete. It follows that more enduring cases of inflected infinitives are only the ones in which [+Agr] may impact on control: rendering partial, NOC or no control interpretations.