

## A comparative account of inflected infinitives in Portuguese and Hungarian

### 1. Introduction:

- the following account gives a description of the inflected infinitives in Portuguese and in Hungarian, discussing the unifying and distinguishing properties and contexts which allow for their use
- infinitives, usually in their noninflected form, are not marked for person or tense
- inflected infinitives carry person and number agreement but aren't marked for tense
- Portuguese and Hungarian are two of the very few languages that share this feature
- according to Scida (2004), the inflected infinitive also exists or existed in Galician, Sardinian, Old Neapolitan, Old Leonese, and Mirandese, and according to Lass (1994), in Old English
- the Portuguese infinitives are reviewed first, followed by the Hungarian infinitives, highlighting the differences and similarities between the two languages

### 2. Infinitives in Portuguese

- the uninflected infinitive in Portuguese is marked by the *-r* ending and has neither tense, nor agreement (Harris 2013)

(1) É correcto ignorar isso.  
is correct to ignore this

'It is correct to ignore [-TENSE, -AGR] this.'

(Harris 2013: 303, (1))

- the inflected infinitive does not possess temporal specifications, but it does allow for number and person agreement with the subject of the infinitival clause

(2) É correcto ignorar-mos isso.  
is correct to ignore-1PL this

'It is correct (for us) to ignore [-TENSE, +AGR] this.'

(Harris 2013:304, (2))

- a lexical subject in the infinitival phrase is permitted and it takes nominal case, e.g. *nós* 'we' in the following example; an overt subject, however, is ungrammatical with an uninflected infinitive

(3) a. É correcto nós ignorarmos isso.

'It is correct we to ignore [-TENSE, +AGR] this.'

b. \*É correcto nós ignorar isso.

'It is correct we to ignore [-TENSE, -AGR] this.'

(Harris 2013:304, (3))

- inflected infinitival clauses appear in a number of contexts (Madeira (1994))

(i) as complements to declarative/epistemic predicates

(4) Pensam /afirmam ter a polícia mentido.  
think.3PL/claim.3PL to-have.3SG the police lied

'They think/claim the police have lied.'

(ii) as complements to factive predicates

(5) Lamento eles terem perdido os documentos.  
regret.1SG they to-have.3PL lost the documents

'I regret that they have lost the documents.'

(iii) as subject clauses

(6) É possível eles terem perdido o comboio.  
is possible they to-have.3PL missed the train  
'It is possible that they have missed the train.'

(iv) as adjunct clauses introduced by a preposition

(7) Eu espero até tu acabares o livro.  
I wait until you to-finish.2SG the book.  
'I wait until you finish the book.'

(v) as complements to perception verbs

(8) A Maria viu as amigas a chorarem.  
the Maria saw the friends.FEM to to-cry.3PL  
'Maria saw her friends crying.'

(vi) as complements to causative predicates

(9) Eu fiz os alunos escreverem a carta.  
I made the pupils to-write.3PL the letter  
'I made the pupils write the letter.'

(vii) as complements to object control predicates

(10) Eu persuadei os rapazes a virem mais cedo.  
I persuaded the boys to to-come.3PL more early  
'I persuaded the boys to come earlier.'

(viii) as complements to transitive subject control predicates

(11) Prometemos à Maria comprarmos-lhe um presente.  
promised.1PL to-the Maria to-buy.1PL-her.DAT a present  
'We promised Maria to buy her a present.' (Madeira 1994:180-181, (2)-(9))

- inflected infinitives in these contexts alternate with their non-inflected counterpart; contrast (12) with (11) above

(12) Prometemos à Maria comprar-lhe um presente.  
promised.1PL to-the Maria to-buy-her.DAT a present  
'We promised Maria to buy her a present.' (Madeira 1994: 181, (10))

- there are at least three contexts in which only non-inflected infinitival clauses are allowed, namely as complements to volitional and other intransitive subject control predicates (13), as interrogative clauses (14) and as relative clauses (15)

(13) a. \*O Governo quer o relatório ser publicado.  
the government wants the report to-be.3SG published  
'The government wants the report to be published.'  
b. O Governo quer publicar o relatório.  
the government wants to-publish the report  
'The government wants to publish the report.'

(14) Não sabemos a quem dar /\*darmos o livro.  
not know.1PL to whom to-give/ to-give.1PL the book  
'We don't know whom to give the book to.'

(15) Nem têm uma caneta com que escrever/\*escreverem.  
nor have.3PL a pen with which to-write/ to-write.3PL  
'They don't even have a pen with which to write.'

(Madeira 1994: 181, (11)-(13))

### 3. Hungarian inflected infinitives:

- even though both Portuguese and Hungarian have inflected infinitives, the contexts where Portuguese allows for inflected infinitives do not generally translate into Hungarian (except for context (iii))
- the contexts are repeated below with the literal Hungarian translations of the Portuguese examples with inflected infinitives and the correct Hungarian constructions

(i) complements to declarative or epistemic predicates

- (16) a. \*Azt gondolják/állítják, a rendőrségnek hazudniuk.  
that think.3PL/claim.3PL the police to-lie.3PL  
'They think/claim the police have lied.'
- b. Azt gondolják/állítják, hogy a rendőrség hazudott.  
that think.3PL/claim.3PL that the police lied  
'They think/claim that the police have lied.'

(ii) as complements to factive verbs

- (17) a. \*Sajnálom elhagyniuk a dokumentumokat.  
deplore.1SG PRT-to-lose.3PL the documents  
'I'm sorry they lost the documents.'
- b. Sajnálom, hogy elhagyták a dokumentumokat.  
deplore.1SG that PRT-to-lose.3PL the documents  
'I'm sorry that they lost the documents.'

(iii) as subject clauses (see also (30) below)

- (18) Lehetséges lekésniük a vonatot.  
possible PRT-miss.3PL the train.ACC  
'It is possible for them to miss the train.'

(iv) as adjunct clauses introduced by a preposition (the Portuguese preposition *até* 'until' translates as the conjunction *amíg* 'while/until' in Hungarian)

- (19) a. \*Várok, amíg befejezned a könyvet.  
wait.1SG until PRT-finish.2SG the book.ACC  
'I wait until you finished the book.'
- b. Várok, amíg befejezed a könyvet.  
wait.1SG until PRT-finish.2SG the book.ACC  
'I wait until you finish the book.'

(v) as complements to perception verbs (this is a context where Hungarian allows for the uninflected infinitive but not the inflected infinitive)

- (20) a. \*Mária látta a barát nőit sírniuk.  
Mária see.3SG the friends.POSS.ACC to-cry.3PL  
'Maria saw her friends cry.'
- b. Mária látta a barát nőit sírni.  
Mária saw.3SG the friends.POSS.ACC to-cry  
'Maria saw her friends cry.'

(vi) as complements to causative predicates

- (21) a. \*Rávettem a diákokat a leveleket megírniuk.  
PRT-got.1SG the students.ACC the letters PRT-write.3PL  
'I got/made the students write the letters'  
b. Rávettem a diákokat a levelek megírására.  
PRT-got.1SG the students.ACC the letters PRT-write.NOM.SUB  
'I got/made the students write the letters.'

(vii) as complements to object control predicates

- (22) a. \*Meggyőztem a fiúkat később jönniük.  
PRT-won.1SG the boy.ACC later to-come.3PL  
'I persuaded the boys to come later.'  
b. Meggyőztem a fiúkat, hogy jöjjenek később.  
PRT-won.1SG the boys that come.SUBJ.3PL later  
'I persuaded the boys to come later.'

(viii) as complements to transitive subject control predicates

- (23) a. \*Megígértük Máriának egy ajándékot vennünk neki.  
PRT-promised.1PL Mária.DAT a present to-buy.1PL for-her  
'We promised Maria that we would buy her present.'  
b. Megígértük Máriának, hogy veszünk neki egy ajándékot.  
PRT-promised.1PL Maria that buy.1PL for-her a present  
'We promised Maria that we would buy her a present.'

- in the context of volitional predicates (24) Hungarian only allows for uninflected infinitives, just like Portuguese; in the context of interrogative clause (25), where Portuguese does not allow for inflected infinitives, only for uninflected ones, Hungarian allows for both; and in the context of relative clauses (26) Hungarian cannot have either infinitive

- (24) a. \*A kormány publikálnia akarja a riportot.  
the government to-publish.3SG want.DEF the report.ACC  
'The government wants the report to be published.'  
b. A kormány publikálni akarja a riportot.  
the government to-publish want.DEF the report.ACC  
'The government wants to publish the report.'

(25) Nem tudjuk, kinek kell adni /adnunk a könyvet.  
no know.1PL who.DAT have-to to-give.INF/to.give.1PL the book.ACC  
'We don't know whom to give the book to.'

- (26) a. \*Nincs tolluk, amivel írniük /írni  
no pen.POSS.3PL that-with to.write.3PL/to-write  
'They don't have a pen with which to write.'  
b. Nincs tolluk, amivel írnának.  
no pen.POSS.3PL that-with write.COND.3PL  
'They don't have a pen that they could write with.'

- in Hungarian, in infinitival complements of impersonal predicates, which provide no controller for a PRO subject, the infinitive can have a case-marked subject represented by a lexical noun phrase, a pronoun, or a pro (É. Kiss 2002)

- (27) a. Korábban kellett volna Jánosnak haza men-ni-e.  
 earlier needed COND John.DAT home go-INF-3SG  
 ‘John needed to have gone home earlier.’  
 b. Korábban kellett volna neked/pro haza menned.  
 earlier needed COND you.DAT home go-INF-2SG  
 ‘You needed to have gone home earlier.’

(É. Kiss 2002:210, (38))

- inflected infinitives with a case-marked subject occur in the following types of contexts in Hungarian

(i) epistemic modals: *kell* ‘must’

- (28) Ég a villany, Kovácséknak már otthon kell lenniük.  
 shines the light Kovács.PL.DAT already at.home must be.INF.3PL  
 ‘The light is on, the Kovácses must be at home already.’

(ii) non-directed deontic modals: *kell* ‘need’, *szabad* ‘may’

- (29) Rég nem esett, nem szabadna a földnek vizes-nek lennie.  
 long not rained not should the soil.DAT wet.DAT be.INF.3SG  
 ‘It hasn’t rained for long, it shouldn’t be the case that the soil be wet.’

(iii) nominal predicates: *gonoszság* ‘viciousness’, *szemtelenység* ‘impertinence’, *illetlenség* ‘impoliteness’

- (30) Szemtelenység Jánosnak illet feltételeznie.  
 impertinence John.DAT such.ACC surmise.INF.3SG  
 ‘It was impertinence for John to surmise such a thing.’

(iv) evaluative predicates: *fontos* ‘important’, *kellemes* ‘pleasant’, *kellemetlen* ‘unpleasant’, *lehetetlen* ‘impossible’, *nehéz* ‘hard’, *könnyű* ‘easy’ (see also (1) above)

- (31) Fontos volna Jánosnak megtudnia az igazat.  
 important would.be John.DAT learn.INF.3SG the truth.ACC  
 ‘It would be important for John to learn the truth.’

(v) subject-oriented deontic modals: *kell* ‘need’, *lehet* ‘may’, *illik* ‘be becoming’, *sikerül* ‘succeed’, *muszáj* ‘must’, *szabad* ‘may’

- (32) Jánosnak nem szabad haza mennie.  
 John.DAT not must home go.INF.3SG  
 ‘John must not go home.’

(vi) nominal predicates with an ablative: *gonoszság* ‘viciousness’, *szemtelenység* ‘impertinence’, *illetlenség* ‘impoliteness’, *szép dolog* ‘a nice thing’, *ügyes dolog* ‘a skillful thing’

- (33) a. Jánostól nem volt szép dolog cserben hagyni minket.  
 John.ABL not was nice thing in-lurch leave.INF us  
 ‘It wasn’t a nice thing of John to leave us in the lurch.’  
 b. Butaság volt Jánostól olyan korán haza menni.  
 stupidity was John.ABL so early home go.INF  
 ‘It was stupidity of John to go home so early.’

(vii) permissive verbs taking a dative permissée: *hagy* ‘let’, *enged* ‘allow’, *segít* ‘help’

- (34) a. Hagytam Jánosnak levágni a hajamat.  
 let.1SG John.DAT cut.INF the hair.POSS.ACC  
 ‘I let John cut my hair.’

- b. Engedtem levágnia a hajamat.  
 let.1SG cut.INF.3SG the hair.POSS.ACC  
 ‘I let him cut my hair.’
- c. Segítettem felvinniük a szekrényt a padlásra.  
 helped.1SG PRT.bring.INF.3PL the cupboard the loft-SUB  
 ‘I helped them to take the cupboard to the loft.’ (É. Kiss 2002:212-214, (43)-(49))

- all of these contexts license the use of both uninflected and inflected infinitives in Hungarian
- except for nominal predicates and evaluative predicates, e.g. in (1) and (18), contexts of modality and permissive verbs do not call for inflected infinitive in Portuguese but for finite verb forms
- as a few points of reference, examples (35) through (37) provide the correct Portuguese constructions for (28), (29) and (34)

(i) epistemic modals<sup>1</sup>

- (35) a. A luz está acesa, então eles devem estar em casa.  
 the light is turned on so they must.3PL to-be in house  
 ‘The light is on, so they must be home.’

(ii) non-directed deontic modals

- (36) Não choveu há muito tempo, o chão não deveria estar molhado.  
 no rained ago much time the ground no should.COND.3SG be wet  
 ‘It hasn’t rained for a long time, the ground shouldn’t be wet.’

[...]

(ii) permissive verbs

- (37) Eu deixei João cortar meu cabelo.  
 I let.PAST João to-cut my hair  
 ‘I let John cut my hair.’

#### 4. Conclusion

- as exemplified above, the Portuguese and Hungarian inflected infinitive differ in most of the contexts they occur in
- another crucial difference is that in Hungarian, the subject appears in dative case, while in Portuguese it remains in nominal case
- overall, this paper has illustrated a common feature of Portuguese and Hungarian that only a handful of other languages share or used to share

#### References

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<sup>1</sup> Optionally, inflected infinitives can occur in biclausal constructions of verbs such as *dever* ‘must’, *desejar* ‘desire’ (Scida 2004).