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Support Verb Constructions with Predicate Noun in Subject Position: Delimitation Issues from Examples in (European) Portuguese¹

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Abstract

Support Verb Constructions (SVC), such as, *make a statement*, *take a walk*, *have a fever*, *be of some importance*, *give a cry*, etc. are verb-noun predicative combinations formed by a predicate noun and a support verb. Several syntactic properties distinguish SVC from ordinary verb-noun combinations, where the verb is a distributional (or full) verb. SVC are a major linguistic device in many languages, and serve to express a large number and a wide variety of semantic predicates. Previous studies have focused for the most part on structures where the predicate noun is a *complement* of the support verb, though there have been inklings about other relevant syntactic configurations. In this paper, we resume this trend and explore the diversity of semantic predicates found, where the predicate noun appears as the subject of support verb, while trying to extend the available syntactic criteria to determine SVC status in this particular configuration.

Keywords

Support verb construction; predicate noun; syntactic criteria; Portuguese.

1. Introduction

Support Verb Constructions (SVC), such as, *make a statement*, *take a walk*, *have a fever*, *be of some importance*, *give a cry*, etc. are verb-noun combinations where the predicative element is a **predicate noun**, which is responsible for the selection of its arguments and determines the distributional, structural and transformational properties of the corresponding elementary sentence; while the **support verb** acts as a morphosyntactic

¹ This paper was intended as part of an *homage* volume to Peter Greenfield, from whom I treasure a very fond memory of his charming joyfulness, warm humour, sharp intelligence and courteous diplomacy. It is but a modest tribute to a great man.

auxiliary element, conveying the person-tense and other grammatical values that the noun cannot morphologically express.

The concept of SVC can be traced back at least to Harris (1964), and was consistently developed by this author until Harris (1991). The problem underpins the tenets of several linguistic theories, for instance the Meaning-Text grammar of Mel'cuk *et al.* (1995) or the Lexicon-Grammar approach of M. Gross (1981, 1998) and his school. Many extensive, large-coverage, descriptions has been produced in this later framework, encompassing not only romance languages and their varieties, but also languages from other linguistic families (see Fotopoulou *et al.* 2021 for a recent overview).

SVC are *elementary sentences*, in the sense of M. Gross (1981, 1996), or sentences of the kernel or base of the grammar, in the sense of Harris (1991), as they can be construed as a minimal unit of syntactic form and meaning. They constitute a major linguistic device in many languages (Constant *et al.* 2017, Savary *et al.* 2017), and serve to express a large number and a wide variety of semantic predicates. For lack of space, we can not enter in much detail here and refer the reader to the references above.

Previous studies, ever since the 1960's (though its sources can be traced back much further), have for the most part focused on structures where the predicate noun is a *complement* of the support verb, though there have been inklings (from the mid-70's onwards, but especially since the mid 90's) of other relevant syntactic configurations. M. Gross (1998) revisits (and partially reformulates) his seminal work from 1981, introducing a large variety of syntactic structures, including those that are the focus of this paper.

In this paper, we resume this trend and explore the diversity of SVC found in (European) Portuguese, where the predicate noun appears not as a complement but as the *subject* of support verb, while trying to extend the available syntactic criteria to determine SVC status in this particular configuration. The data for the paper was drawn from an ongoing project to build a *lexicon-grammar* of predicate nouns in European Portuguese (Baptista & Mamede, 2020b) and its integration into a fully-fledged natural language processing (NLP) system for the language, STRING (Mamede *et al.*, 2012)². By *lexicon-grammar* we mean a formal representation of the elementary sentences of a language, in this case sentences determined by the predicate nouns. This can be seen as a lexical database where their syntactic

² <https://string.hlt.inesc-id.pt> (last access: 2022/10/10; all URL were checked on this date).

structure, distributional constraints on the argument slots, along with their semantic roles, selection of prepositions introducing the prepositional complements, and major transformational properties are systematically and extensively described.

2. Definitory properties of ‘standard’ SVC

We begin by sketching the major syntactic properties of ‘standard’ SVC, that is, sentence structures where the predicate noun is the *complement* of the support verb. These structures could be represented by the formula (S):

(S) $N_0 V_{sup} (Prep) N_{pred} (E + Prep_1 N_1)$

where N_0 and N_1 represent the arguments of the predicate noun (N_{pred}), its subject and complement, respectively; and V_{sup} stands for the support verb; the prepositional complement ($Prep_1 N_1$) is determined by the semantic predicate expressed by the N_{pred} , hence we can find *intransitive* SVC constructions (i.e. without complement), such as (1)³:

(1) *O Pedro deu um espirro* ‘Pedro gave a sneeze’

or *transitive* SVC constructions (i.e. selecting a complement), like (2):

(2) *O Pedro deu um beijo à Ana* ‘Pedro gave a kiss to Ana’

Most predicate nouns select only one or two arguments. There are few predicate nouns selecting 3 arguments, for example, (3):

(3) *O Pedro deu licença à Ana para sair*
‘Pedro gave Ana permission to go out’

Naturally, *dar* ‘give’ is also an ordinary, distributional, or full verb, whose meaning can be defined intensionally (*alguém dar alguma coisa a alguém* ‘someone gives something to someone else’) and whose structure can be derived from its meaning (4):

(4) *O Pedro deu um livro à Ana* ‘Pedro gave a book to Ana’

³ All examples in this paper, unless otherwise signalled, have been attested in *corpora* or in the web at the date of publication and were then adapted (mostly shortened) for clarity and brevity. The reader will not have too much difficulty in retrieving similar examples. An approximative translation is provided, sometimes preceded by a literal translation to highlight some grammatical point. For all purposes, the adequacy/normalcy of the translation is irrelevant for this paper.

On the other hand, it is the verb-noun combination, and *not* the verb alone, that determines the SVC of sentences (1)-(3).

A set of **syntactic-semantic properties** allows one to distinguish the *Vsup* status of *dar* ‘give’ in these sentences from the full verb *dar* in (4). We will resume them in the following lines.

1. **argument selection:** the predicate noun is responsible for selecting its argument(s), in the same way as a full verb selects its subject and complements (if any); the specific number and type of arguments depends on, and can be intensionally defined from, the meaning of the predicate noun in

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------------------------------|
| | that | construction: |
| (1) | <i>espirro</i> | (<i>Pedro</i>), |
| (2) | <i>beijo</i> | (<i>Pedro</i> ,
<i>Ana</i>), |
| (3) | <i>licença (Pedro, Ana, sair)</i> , etc.; | |

because of this selectional constraint, the predicate noun cannot receive a determiner that would break the subject-predicate relation, for example, a possessive or a determinative complement *de N* ‘of N’ not referring to the subject (* signals that the sentence is unacceptable):

- **O Pedro deu o meu espirro* ‘Pedro gave my sneeze’
- **O Pedro deu o vosso beijo à Ana* ‘Pedro gave your_pl kiss to Ana’
- **O Pedro deu a licença do João à Ana para sair* ‘Pedro gave Ana João’s permission to go out’

This does not happen with ordinary, distributional, full verbs, for which the distributional constraints result from the verb alone:

- (5) *O Pedro deu o (meu + vosso) livro à Ana*
‘Pedro gave my/your_pl book to Ana’
- (6) *O Pedro deu o livro do João à Ana*
‘Pedro gave João’s book to Ana’

2. **constraints on the determiner of the *Npred*:** while many aspects of the determination of the predicate noun are complex to model, it has been highlighted that SVC often present idiosyncratic constraints on the determiner of the predicate noun, often indicating some degree of syntactic fixity (the zero determiner is represented by *E*):

- (7) *O Pedro deu (E + *a + uma + uma grande) ajuda ao João*
‘Pedro gave E/the/a big/a great help to João’

- (8) *O padre deu (*E + a + *uma + *uma grande) extrema-unção ao João* ‘The priest gave E/the/a big/a great last rites to João’

On the contrary, the constraints on the determiner of the direct complement of a full verb, though complex to model, can arguably be said to be mostly a function of the noun, and not of the verb-noun combination:

- (9) *O Pedro deu (*E + o + um + um bom) livro à Ana* ‘Pedro gave E/the/a/a good book to Ana’

Remark: The zero determiner (*E*) is often acceptable with a concrete noun in the plural:

- (10) *O Pedro deu (E + os + uns + uns bons + muitos) livros à Ana* ‘Pedro gave E/the/some/some good/many books to Ana’

but only some predicate nouns accept plural (*_pl*) in the SVC, which can also be seen as a constraint of the predicate noun on its construction (‘?’ signals the doubtful acceptability of the sentence):

- (11) *O Pedro deu ?E/algumas/várias ajudas ao João* ‘Pedro gave E/some_pl/several_pl help_pl to João’

**O padre deu E/algumas/várias extremas-unções ao João* ‘The priest gave E/some_pl/several_pl last rites to João’

3. **double analysis** of prepositional complements: predicate nouns selecting a complement allow for a double analysis of this complement, which functions *both* as a complement of the *Vsup* (being detached alone) and of the *Npred* (kept together with the predicate noun), as it can occur in a relative clause (12a-12b), in a cleft sentence (12c-12e), or in a passive sentence (12f-12g), eventually reduced to a passive noun phrase (12h-12i) (‘<...>’ indicates that the sentence with that constituent, usually a noun phrase, could be completed):

- (12a) *O beijo que o Pedro deu à Ana <...>*
‘The kiss that Pedro gave to Ana ...’

- (12b) *O beijo à Ana que o Pedro deu <...>*
‘The kiss to Ana that Pedro gave ...’

- (12c) *Foi um beijo que o Pedro deu à Ana*
‘It was a kiss that Pedro gave to Ana’

- (12d) *Foi à Ana que o Pedro deu um beijo*
‘It was to Ana that Pedro gave a kiss’

- (12e) *Foi um beijo à Ana que o Pedro deu <...>*
 ‘It was a kiss to Ana that Pedro gave ...’
- (12f) *Um beijo foi dado pelo Pedro à Ana*
 ‘A kiss was given by Pedro to Ana’
- (12g) *Um beijo à Ana foi dado pelo Pedro*
 ‘A kiss to Ana was given by Pedro’
- (12h) *O beijo dado pelo Pedro à Ana <...>*
 ‘The kiss given by Pedro to Ana ...’
- (12i) *O beijo à Ana dado pelo Pedro <...>*
 ‘The kiss to Ana given by Pedro ...’

With the full verb *dar* ‘give’, the prepositional complement (*à Ana*) can *not* be extracted jointly with the direct complement (*um livro*), as it is only a complement of the verb and *not* of the object:

- **O livro à Ana que o Pedro deu*
 ‘The book to Ana that Pedro gave’
- **Foi um livro à Ana que o Pedro deu*
 ‘The book to Ana that Pedro gave’
- **Um livro à Ana foi dado pelo Pedro*
 ‘The book to Ana was given by Pedro’
- **Um livro à Ana foi dado pelo Pedro*
 ‘The book to Ana was given by Pedro’

4. **support verb variants:** in SVC, the support verb allows for lexical variants without changing the overall meaning of the construction, and the distributional constraints of the predicate noun on its argument slots; these *Vsup* variants introduce some aspectual (13) or stylistic nuances (14):

- (13) *O Pedro (tem + mantém + ?conserva + perdeu)*
toda a confiança no João
 ‘Pedro has/keeps/lost full/all confidence in João’
- (14) *O Pedro (deu + concedeu + prestou) auxílio ao João*
 ‘Pedro gave/granted/paid assistance to João’

In (13), the SVC of the predicate noun *confiança* ‘confidence’ shows a **durative** aspect with the support verb *ter* ‘have’, a **permansive** value with *manter* ‘maintain’ and a **terminative** aspect with *perder* ‘lose’. (in this paper, semantic features are noted in bold typeface). In (14), the stylistically neuter support verb *dar* ‘give’ accepts *conceder* ‘grant’ and *prestar* ‘pay’ as

its variants, which are associated with a more formal register. The more neuter support verb, which as a broader distribution over the lexicon of predicate nouns, is called the *elementary support verb*:

(13) *O Pedro (tem + *?mantém + *?conserva + perdeu) (a) fome*
 lit: ‘Pedro has/keeps/lost (the) hunger’, ‘Pedro is hungry’

(14) *O padre (deu + *concedeu + *prestou + (ad)ministrôu)*
a extrema-unção ao João
 ‘The priest gave/granted/paid/administered last rites to João’

Notice that it is the predicate noun who is responsible for the selection of its variants, hence the set of variants of an elementary *Vsup* has to be determined case-by-case:

(15a) *O Pedro (deu + *deitou + largou + soltou) um espirro*
 ‘Pedro gave/released/let go/lay down a sneeze

(15b) *O Pedro (deu + deitou (rare) + largou + soltou) um peido*
 ‘Pedro gave/released/let go/lay down a fart

(15c) *O Pedro (deu + *deitou + *largou + soltou)*
um (soluço) + bocejo
 ‘Pedro gave/released/let go/lay down a yawn/hiccup

It should be noted at this point that, unlike other parts-of-speech, predicate nouns can show several, different, SVC constructions, with *distinct* elementary support verbs, while keeping its overall meaning. Hence, one finds:

(16) *O Pedro (tem + está com) muita fome*
 lit: ‘Pedro has/is with a_lot_of hunger’ ‘Pedro is very hungry’

(17) *O Pedro (tem + está com + goza de) uma reputação impecável*
 ‘Pedro has/is with/enjoys an impeccable reputation’

(18) *O Pedro (fez + está em) greve*
 ‘Pedro did/is on strike’

(19) *O Pedro (tem + é de) uma grande coragem*
 ‘Pedro has/is of a great courage’

These distinct constructions of the same predicate noun may show slightly different properties (besides those that are structurally dependent, such as allowing for the passive transformation):

- (19a) *O Pedro (tem + *é de) coragem*
lit: ‘Pedro has/is of courage’
- (19b) *O Pedro (teve + *foi de) a coragem de fazer isso*
lit: ‘Pedro has/is of the courage of doing that’

An important aspect of this feature of SVC is the *converse* transformation (G. Gross 1989; Baptista 1997, 2005). This operation is similar to the passive transformation in full verb constructions, in the sense that it involves an exchange of places of the arguments of the predicate noun, where the **patient** (or the **object**) argument appears as the subject of the sentence and the **agent** can appear as the complement of the predicate noun:

- (20) *O Pedro deu um beijo à Ana = A Ana levou um beijo do Pedro*
‘Pedro gave a kiss to Ana/Ana got a kiss from Pedro’
- (21) *O Pedro deu ajuda ao João = O João recebeu ajuda do Pedro*
‘Pedro gave help to João/João received help from Pedro’
- (22) *O padre deu a extrema-unção ao João*
= *O João recebeu a extrema-unção do padre*
‘The priest gave the last rites to João/
João received the last rites from the priest’
- (23) *O Pedro deu autorização ao João para fazer isso*
= *O João teve autorização do Pedro para fazer isso*
‘Pedro gave permission to João (for him) to do this/
João had permission from Pedro to do this’

The fact that the same predicate noun can appear in several SVC with distinct elementary support verbs, and that (in conversion) different **agent-patient/object** linearizations are possible, are relevant for this paper, since we aim at describing alternative SVC of the same predicate noun, where it appears as the subject of the support noun. It is also relevant to notice

5. **support verb zeroing:** Since the support verb is just an auxiliary element of the predicate noun within the SVC, it can often be zeroed in an appropriate syntactic setting. In the case of constructions where the predicate noun is the direct complement of the support verb, this operation takes place within the setting of a relative clause (M. Gross 1981) and yields a complex noun phrase, whose head is the predicate noun and all its arguments appear as its complements; the **agent** appears introduced by the preposition *de* ‘of’ and the remaining arguments keep the same preposition of the elementary

sentence (the contraction of *de* was solved in the example below *do=de_o* ‘of_the’):

- (20) *O Pedro fez declarações à polícia*
 = *as declarações que o Pedro fez à polícia <...>*
 = *as declarações de_o Pedro à polícia <...>*

Other SVC, namely those with support verb *estar Prep* (Ranchhod 1990) and those with *ser de* ‘be of’ (Baptista 2005), may allow for this Vsup zeroing in different syntactic settings and then yield other type of sentence constituents, but for brevity, they are not presented here.

To conclude this section, a brief reminder these are general properties and depending on the specific SVC type, other, more fine-grained, features can be shown. Conversely, not all SVC constructions present all these properties, except for the first, the predicate noun’s argument selection, which is definitory. Even within the same SCV type, e.g., with the same elementary support verb, different nouns may present a distinct set of properties, so a case-by-case description is required.

3. Analysis of Non-standard SVC

One of the first evidence concerning non-standard SVC is provided by M. Gross (1995:73)’s remarks on different ways of expressing **sentiments** in French. Next to the adjectival construction of *anxieux* ‘anxious’ (21a), several equivalent sentence types with different elementary support verbs can be listed (all the examples, except (21e), taken from the author; our translation):

- (21a) *Luc est anxieux* ‘Luc is anxious’
 = (21b) *Luc a de l’anxiété* ‘Luc has anxiety’
 = (21c) *Luc (éprouve + ressent) de l’anxiété*
 ‘Luke experiences/feels anxiety’
 = (21d) *L’anxiété (envahit + gagne + pénètre) Luc*
 ‘Anxiety (invades + wins + penetrates) Luke’
 = (21e) *Il y a de l’anxiété chez Luc* ‘There is anxiety in Luc’

In these examples, a SVC with *avoir* ‘have’ (21b) is available, along with several variants (21c-21e), all of them are considered to be support verbs, but “ils peuvent comporter des modalités de sens” ‘they may involve terms of meaning’. The author remarks that, while the human **experienter** is the subject and the **sentiment** the complement in (21b)-(21c), the relative

syntactic slot of these elements is reversed in (21d), and that in (21e) they are both complements of the impersonal verb *il y a* ‘there be’.

All these sentences (21a)-(21e) share an “invariance of meaning”, which consists in the expression of the same semantic predicate: *anxiété/anxieux* (*Luc*), irrespective of the part-of-speech of the predicative element: *anxieux*/adjective and *anxiété*/noun.

This paper concerns sentences of the type illustrated in (21d), that is, where the predicate noun occurs in the subject position of the support verb, focusing on (European) Portuguese. This ‘non-standard’ syntactic configuration can be represented as in formula (N):

(N) $N_{pred} V_{sup} (Prep) N_0 (E + Prep_1 N_1)$

Based on the work developed for Baptista & Mamede (2020a, 2020b), we identify several support verbs that enter the configuration (N).

However, and to begin with, we distinguish the multiple *Vsup* entering (N) from a small number of verbs occur with nouns denoting **events** such as *acontecer* ‘happen’, *decorrer* ‘run/take place’, *ocorrer* ‘occur’, *passar-se* ‘happen’, *suceder* ‘take place’, *ter lugar* ‘take place’, etc. Their function seems to be just to associate to these nouns a circumstantial complement denoting the event circumstances (such as **time**, **place**, and others); we call these *occurrence support verbs* (*Vsup-occ*):

(22) *A exposição decorreu na galeria Trem ao início da noite*
‘The exhibition took place in the Trem in the early evening’

Some of these (*Vsup-occ*) seem to combine preferably to a certain type of circumstantial complements, such as **time-duration**:

(23) *O triste espetáculo arrastou-se durante mais de cinco minutos*
‘The sad spectacle dragged on for more than five minutes’

or **place**:

(24) *A violência circunscreveu-se àquele bairro*
‘The violence was confined to that neighbourhood’

In all these cases, the complements of the verb are *not* arguments of the predicate noun, which can be inserted in the sentences, as complements of the noun (22a), and are associated with a standard SVC (22b, 23b, 24b),

usually *via* the reduction of a relative (23b), eventually from a passive of the base SVC (24b):

(22a) *A exposição de pintura da Ana <decorreu na galeria Trem>*
= (22b) *A Ana fez uma exposição de pintura*
'Ana's painting exhibition <took place at Trem gallery>
'Ana did/has held a painting exhibition'

(23a) *O triste espetáculo que a Ana deu <arrastou-se ...>*
= (23b) *A Ana deu um triste espetáculo*
'The sad spectacle that Ana put on <dragged ...>,
'Anna put on a sad show'

(24a) *A violência cometida pelos jovens*
contra os lojistas circunscreveu-se àquele bairro
= (24b) *Os jovens cometeram (uma) violência contra os lojistas*
'The violence committed by the youths against the shopkeepers
was confined to that neighbourhood'
'The youths committed (some) violence against the shopkeepers'

In the case of support verbs entering the non-standard configuration (N), this reconstitution of the arguments of the predicate noun is not possible. In sentence (25):

(25) *Uma doença grave afligia o Pedro*
'A serious illness afflicted Pedro'

the human noun *Pedro* can only be interpreted as the **experiencer** of the *doença* 'illness'; while in sentence (26):

(26) *A doença grave da Ana afligia o Pedro*
'The serious illness of Ana afflicted Pedro'

we find the psychological verb *afligir* 'afflict', with is **experiencer** complement, but this entity is not interpreted as the person directly affected by the *doença* 'illness'; that person is the complement of the predicate noun, *Ana*.

Following Danlos (2009), who wrote on the same topic for French, we notice that in these sentences the choice of the determiner of the predicate noun (indefinite *uma* 'a_fem.sg.' or definite *a* 'the_fem.sg.')

 and the absence/presence of the complement *de N* 'of N' in the noun phrase headed by the predicative noun, are both key features to determine the status of the

elements within the sentence and their interpretation. This two patterns can not be reversed:

°/**Uma doença grave da Ana afligia o Pedro* (cp. (25))
'A serious illness of Ana afflicted Pedro'

°/**A doença grave afligia o Pedro* (cp. (26))
'The serious illness afflicted Pedro'

In the first expression, either this is unacceptable (as indicated by ‘*’), for breaking the relation between the predicate noun and its notional subject *Pedro*; or the meaning of the sentence is different (signalled by ‘°’), and the determiner *uma* ‘a_fem.sg.’ has a partitive interpretation. In other words, the sentence gets the same general interpretation of (26) plus the notion that *Ana* had several illnesses, and (only) one of them afflicted *Pedro*. The second expression, if accepted at all, can only be interpreted in a generic sense (‘all the serious illnesses’), a meaning absent from (26). For these complex interpretations may contribute that both *doença* ‘illness’ and *afligir* ‘afflict’ have an **experiencer** subject and direct complement, respectively.

Another situation occurs with one of the examples showcased by Danlos (2009), that also has a counterpart in Portuguese (Reis *et al.* 2021), though the syntactic phenomena associated differ. The predicate noun *grito* ‘cry/scream/yell’, besides the standard configuration (S), given in (27):

(27) *A Ana soltou um grito* ‘Ana let out a scream’

also accepts the non-standard structure (N), shown in (28):

(28) *Um grito escapou de_(os lábios da) Ana*
'A scream escaped from Ana's lips'

This type of noun allows for the facultative insertion of a bodypart noun (*Nbp*) *lábios* ‘lips’ holding a metonymic relation with the **agent**. Either form is introduced by the **locative-source** preposition *de* ‘from’, which is function of the verb basic meaning. There is a constraint coreference between the **agent** *Ana* and *grito* ‘scream’, which precludes the insertion of a non-coreferential *de N* ‘of N’ complement on the predicate noun:

**O/Um grito do Pedro escapou de_(os lábios da) Ana*

Because of this metonymical relation between *lábios* ‘lips’ and *Ana*, the sentence can under go several transformations, namely, a dative restructuring (Leclère 1995, Baptista 1997; e.g. (28a)) of the determinative complement *da*

Ana ‘of Ana’, which is often more acceptable when reduced to a dative pronoun (e.g. (28b); both were signalled in bold typeface):

- (28a) *Um grito escapou dos lábios (da=à) Ana*
 (28b) *Um grito escapou-**lhe** dos lábios*

It is important to notice that in the SVC, which often involves some metaphorical process, some of the syntactic properties of the basic (full) verbal construction may be kept. In this case, the verb also allows reflexive construction (*Vse*) without any change in meaning (the reflex pronoun is shown in bold), which is kept under the dative restructuring:

- (29a) *Um grito escapou-se de (os lábios da) Ana*
 ‘A scream escaped from Ana's lips’
 (29b) *Um grito escapou-**se-lhe** dos lábios*
 ‘A scream escaped from Ana's lips’

The same happens in the (literal) basic construction of the verb (cf. Baptista & Mamede 2020a; class 37LD), shown in (30):

- (30) *O bandido escapou(-se) da prisão*
 ‘The bandit escaped (himself) from the prison’

Other, more complex constructions, still involving the verb *escapar* ‘escape’, can be contrasted, as in (31):

- (31) *A Ana deixou escapar um grito*
 lit: ‘Ana let escape a scream’ ‘Ana let out a scream’

Notice that the overall meaning of (31) is similar to that (27)-(29) (and their transformations), and that, again, it is not possible:

- **A Ana deixou escapar (um + o) grito do Pedro*
 ‘Ana let out a/the Pedro’s scream’

In (31), the verb *deixar* ‘let’ can be analysed as a type of *linking operator-verb* (*Vopl*; M. Gross 1981), which is applied upon (28), provided the constraint coreference between the subject of the *Vopl* and the SVC complement (as indicated by the indices ‘i’, below):

A Ana_i deixou # Um grito escapou de (os lábios_i da) Ana_i

As suggested by M. Gross (1981), the function of this *Vopl* is to recover/redirect to the more salient syntactic position of subject a constituent

that is in less salient syntactic slot of a base sentence, such as in the non-standard structure here analysed.

The metonymical construction with the *Nbp* *lábios* ‘lips’ can also be found, as shown in (32); the possessive pronoun (*seus* ‘her_masc.pl.’), resulting from the reduction of the *de N* ‘of N’ complement is rendered facultative under the *Vopl*:

- (32) *A Ana deixou escapar um grito dos (seus) lábios*
lit: ‘Ana let escape a scream from_the (her) lips’
‘Ana let out a scream’

We notice, however, that, in this case, the *Vse* (reflexive) construction seems to be blocked, probably because of the constraint coreference that is condition for the application of the :

**A Ana deixou escapar-se um grito (E + dos (seus) lábios)*

To the best of our knowledge, both the *Vse* and the *Vopl* constructions have not been mentioned in the literature regarding non-standard SVC such as those studied in this paper.

4. Examples of non-standard SVC

In the following examples, we tried to group the support verbs entering the non-standard configuration (N) on a semantic basis. It is easy to detect several metaphorical processes involved in the formation of this structures. Thus, we find verbs involving a metaphor based on **movement** and **aggression**, such as *acometer*, *atingir* ‘strike’ (31) or just **movement**, like *alargar-se*, *alastrear*, *espalhar-se*, *grassar*, ‘spread’ (32):

- (31) *Uma doença súbita acometeu o Pedro* ‘A sudden illness struck Pedro’
(32) *A gripe aviária alastrou a/pelo continente inteiro*
‘Avian flu has spread to/across the continent’

Also associated with **locative** verbs, one finds *campear* ‘camp/encamp’ (33):

- (33) *O pessimismo campeava (em + (por) entre) a juventude*
‘Pessimism prevailed in/amongst the youth’

Notice that the quasi-synonym *acampar* ‘to do camping’ does not enter this pattern:

- **O pessimismo acampava (em + (por) entre) a juventude*
‘Pessimism was camping amongst the youth’

Others, like *afligir* ‘afflict’, *atormentar* ‘torment’ involve **psychological feelings** (34)-(35):

(34) *Uma doença súbita (afligia + atormentava) o Pedro*
‘A sudden illness struck/tormented Pedro’

(35) *Uma enorme emoção (assoberbava + avassalava) o Pedro*
‘A huge emotion overwhelmed Pedro’

or **physical violence**: *flagelar* ‘whip’, *fustigar* ‘wip, strike’ (36):

(36) *Aquela praga (flagelava + fustigava) toda a região*
lit: ‘That plague (whipped + stroke) the whole region’
‘That plague (plagued + scourged) the whole region’

A **negative** support verb, *faltar* ‘lack’ could also be found (37):

(37) *Faltava seriedade ao Pedro*
lit: ‘Seriousness lacked to Pedro’, ‘Pedro lacked seriousness’

which is to be associated with the corresponding construction with the noun *falta* ‘lack’, already noticed by Baptista (2005:133-139), as in (38):

(38) *O Pedro (era de + tinha) uma falta de seriedade impressionante*
lit: Pedro was of/had an impressive lack of seriousness’
‘Pedro lacked seriousness’

Other verbs, such as *escassear* ‘be/become scarce’ and *rarear* ‘become rare’, semantically similar, though not entirely negative in meaning, and rather with some progressive aspect, do not seem to enter this structure frequently. We only found, sentences like (39):

(39) *A honestidade escasseia naquele país*
‘Honesty is in short supply in that country’

though, it is possible that this lexical paradigm can be extended further. Conversely, the **positive** verb *abundar* ‘abound’ seems bore productive (40)-(41):

(40) *Muita esperteza abunda por aí, ...*
‘A lot of cleverness abounds out there’

(41) *Num país onde a inteligência política [...] abunda e a honestidade escasseia* (<https://irritado.blogs.sapo.pt/2021/05/>)

‘In a country where political intelligence [...] abounds and honesty is in short supply’

especially with an ironic negative twist (42):

(42) [...] *na Internet, meio onde a cortesia não abunda* [...] (<https://www.publico.pt/2022/01/19/>)
‘on the Internet, a medium where courtesy does not abound’

So far, we are unaware of any SVC entering the non-standard configuration (N) with more than one argument. This coincides with Danlos (2009) similar remarks on French noun predicates. Hence, the double analysis property of standard SVC does not apply to these SVC. Also, none of the non-standard SVC allows for the reduction of the verb. However, in several cases, one find variation of the support verb, along sets of (quasi-)synonymous verbs, when considering their base (i.e. literal) meaning, even if they are used here in a metaphorical way. The predicate noun - subject relation, as shown by both M. Gross (1981, 1995, 1998) and Danlos (2009), and the ensuing constraint on the determiners and determinative complements *de N* ‘of N’ of the predicate noun, remains the most significant property enabling the identification of these SVC.

5. Conclusion and future work

In this paper, we analysed non-standard SVC in (European) Portuguese, which we noted (N), where the predicate noun occurs not as a complement but as the subject of the support verb. We distinguish SVC from other verbal constructions, especially full or distributional verbs, based on the properties associated to the fact that in SVC the predicate noun selects its arguments. This special relation between the predicate noun and its notional subject, irrespective of the fact that this argument is not in the subject’s syntactic slot, precludes the insertion of any *de N* ‘of N’ determinative complement in the predicate noun’s phrase, and it also entails several constraints on the predicate noun determiners. Furthermore, and like Gross (1998), we notice that many of these non-standard SVC have a clear metaphorical interpretation, but they can still keep many of the syntactic properties of the base (or literal) construction of those verbs. We revisited the concept of linking operator-verb (*Vopl*), firstly introduced in the SVC literature by M. Gross (1981), to distinguish some sentences where the predicate noun is the subject of verbs that can be construed as *Vopl*, so as to define in a clearer way the lexical scope of non-standard SVC of the type (N). Finally, we provide several

examples of support verbs entering the (N) configuration, and compare them with their standard SVC.

As mentioned before, this paper is part of an ongoing research aimed at building a lexicon-grammar of the nominal predicates of (European) Portuguese (Baptista & Mamede 2020b), and later to relate it with the lexicon-grammar of (distributional) verbal predicates (Baptista & Mamede 2020a). By defining these non-standard SVC, we expect that a clearer picture of this complex domain can surface from an apparently overwhelming sea of linguistic data. This paper is but a modest contribute in that direction.

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