

“CAPAZ” AS AN EMPHATIC NEGATIVE MARKER IN GAUCHO BRAZILIAN PORTUGUESE

Leonor Simioni

Universidade Federal do Pampa (UNIPAMPA/Jaguarão)
simionileonor@gmail.com

Rerisson Cavalcante de Araújo

Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA)
rerissonaraujo@yahoo.com.br

Our goal is to describe the syntactic, semantic and pragmatic behavior of the adjective *capaz* ('able, capable') in the southern Brazilian Portuguese dialect of Rio Grande do Sul (Gaúcho Brazilian Portuguese, henceforth GBP). In Portuguese, *capaz* functions as a common adjective, expressing ability or possibility/probability, as in (1)-(2). However, in GBP, *capaz* also functions as a negative element with a meaning similar to de *jeito nenhum* ('no way'), as in (3)-(4). As far as we know, this use is completely absent in other Portuguese dialects, in which a sentence as (4) only has the affirmative meaning 'It is very likely that João will do this job!'. In GBP, negative *capaz* never appears as a neutral/descriptive negation. Instead, it marks a strong rejection to an utterance either previously expressed or inferable from the linguistic context (cf. (5)-(6)). *Capaz* may appear isolated as a fragment of answer (cf. (5)-(6)) or in a complete sentence (cf. (3)-(4)). When in a sentence, *capaz* necessarily co-occurs with the complementizer *que* on its right side (cf. (3)-(4)). Generally, it also appears with the adverb *bem* on its left (cf. (4), (7)); and with a copula *é* ('is') (cf. (8)). The copula may appear without *bem*, but the sentence sounds much better when both items co-occur. In sum, (i) *é*, *bem* and *que* can co-occur with *capaz*; (ii) *bem* and *que* can co-occur without *é*; (iii) *que* can appear without *é* *bem*; (iv) but *que* can never be omitted in whole sentences, (v) unless *capaz* appears as a complete isolated element in fragment answers. When *é* and *bem* are present in *capaz*-sentences, they must appear in strict adjacency with each other (cf. (9)) and with *capaz* (cf. (10)); nothing can appear between *é* and *bem* neither between (*é*) *bem* and *capaz*. But the adjacency between *capaz* and *que* can be disrupted (cf. (11)). In non-negative uses of *capaz*, the copula undergoes inflection in person and/or in tense (cf. (12)); even in impersonal uses (cf. (13-14)), where the copula remains in third person, inflection in tense is still possible. However, in negative use of *capaz*, the copula is invariable, as shown in (13)-(14) where any variation in the copula produces only non-negative readings. Other syntactic properties will be addressed in more detail in the paper. We propose that in GBP *capaz* works as an emphatic negative marker, in the sense of Cavalcante (2012), generated in a functional category in the left periphery of the sentence. *Capaz* is partially similar to post-sentential negative marker *não* in sentences like (15). Both items mark non-neutral "anaphoric" negation: they reject a previously uttered or inferable proposition. But they differ in the fact that post-sentential *não* does not convey an emphatic reading and it is grammatical in non-declarative sentences and (with some restrictions) in embedded sentences. In this regard, *capaz* behaves like non-argumental *nada* ('nothing') in sentences like (16), which expresses a negation which is both anaphoric and emphatic and it is acceptable only in matrix declarative clauses. Additional evidences for this analysis are: (i) *capaz* cannot convey negative meaning in embedded and interrogative sentences (cf. (17)); (ii) negative *capaz* does not generate negative concord, but cancels a negation under its scope (cf. (18)). This analysis is similar to the one proposed by Martins (2010) and by Pinto (2010) for locative particles *cá* ('here') and *lá* ('there') and for non-argumental *nada* in European Portuguese (EP) in terms of metalinguistic negation, which was also applied by Marcelino (2017) to another possible (emphatic) negative particle: *ruim* ('bad') from northeastern Brazilian Portuguese. Syntactically, anaphoric *não* and emphatic *nada* appear in sentence-final position, metalinguistic *cá/lá/nada* in medial (post-verbal) position, while negative *capaz* is always in an initial pre-C° position. That is so because (i) anaphoric *não* and emphatic *nada* trigger a movement of the whole sentence to a higher functional position above CP (cf. CAVALCANTE, 2012); (ii) EP *cá/lá/nada* trigger verbal movement to C° and subject movement to TopP (cf. MARTINS, 2010; PINTO, 2010). In the derivation we propose here (cf. (19)), negative *capaz* does not trigger any sentential nor constituent movement: *capaz* does not behave as a head triggering movement, but as a XP, and the C° head is already fulfilled with *que*. Negative *capaz* is therefore similar to emphatic *ruim*, which appears in a similar configuration.

- | | |
|---|--|
| (1) O João é <i>capaz</i> de fazer isso. | ('João has the ability to do this') |
| (2) É <i>capaz</i> de João fazer isso. | ('It is possible/likely that João will do this') |
| (3) <i>Capaz</i> que eu vou na festa da Maria!
capable that I go in.the party.of.the M. | ('In no way I'll go to Maria's party!') |
| (4) É <i>bem capaz</i> que o João vai fazer esse serviço!
is well capable that the J. go do this job | ('In no way João will do this job!') |
| (5) A: Tu sabia que o Rib's fechou?
B: <i>Capaz</i> ! | ('Did you know that Rib's was closed?')
(= 'No! Seriously?!') |

- (6) A: Acho melhor tu ficar em casa hoje. ('I think it is better for you to stay home today')
 B: Mas bem *capaz*!
 but well capable (= 'No way I will stay home!')
- (7) *Bem capaz* que eu vou na festa da Maria!
 well capable that I go in.the party of.the M. ('No way I'm going to Maria's party!')
- (8) *É* (bem) *capaz que* eu vou na festa!
 is (well) capable that I go in.the party ('No way I'm going to the party!')
- (9) **É mesmo/de fato* bem *capaz* que...
 is really/indeed well capable that
- (10) **É* bem *mesmo/de fato capaz* que...
 is well really/indeed capable that
- (11) *É* bem *capaz mesmo* que...
- (12) Eles são *capazes* de fazer isso.
 they are capable of do this. ('They are able to do it')
- (13) Era *capaz* de acontecer um acidente!
 was capable of happen a accident ('An accident was likely to happen'; '*No way an accident would happen!')
- (14) Seria bem *capaz* de eu ir na festa.
 would-be well capable of I go in.the party ('I could go to the party'; '*No way I would go...').
- (15) (Não) quero sair hoje *não*.
 neg want.1sg leave today neg ('No, I don't want to go out today')
- (16) A: O João comprou um carro. B: Comprou (um carro) *nada*!
 the J. bought a car bought.3sg a car nothing ('No way he bought a car')
- (17) (Tu acha que) é *capaz* que tu vá/vai na festa? (only non-negative reading)
 you think that is capable that you go/go_{subj} in.the party
- (18) Bem *capaz* que eu *não* vou sair hoje!
 well capable that I neg go leave today ('No way I'm not going out today!')
- (19) [_{VP} é [_{XP} (*bem*) *capaz* [_{CP} que [_{IP} eu vou [_{VP} ... na festa de Maria]]]]]

SELECTED REFERENCES:

- CAVALCANTE, Rerisson. (2012). Negação enfática e negação exclamativa. In: Negação anafórica no português brasileiro: negação sentencial, negação enfática e negação de constituinte. Universidade de São Paulo. p. 135-239
- MARCELINO, Nara J. M. C. (2017). Sentenças de negação com *é ruim*, *breu*, *nem a pau* e vírgula no português brasileiro: uma análise sintática. Qualificação de Doutorado apresentada à Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, novembro de 2017.
- MARTINS, Ana Maria. (2010). Negação metalinguística (*lá, cá* e *agora*). In: BRITO, Ana Maria. (ed.). Actas do XXV Encontro da Associação Portuguesa de Linguística. Lisboa: Associação Portuguesa de Linguística. p. 567-587.
- PINTO, Clara. (2010). Negação Metalinguística e Estruturas com *nada* no Português Europeu. Universidade de Lisboa. Dissertação de Mestrado.