

Alina Tigău. 2020. *Experimental Insights into the Syntax of Romanian Ditransitives*. Berlin/Munich/Boston: De Gruyter Mouton. 294 pp.

Reviewed by Adina Camelia Bleotu*

The book represents the first large-scale experimental study on ditransitives in Romanian, allowing a theory-driven but, at the same time, data-grounded perspective upon crucial issues related to ditransitives (such as hierarchy, scope, binding among arguments, the dative alternation, the role of differential object marking (DOM), the role of the clitic doubling (CD) the indirect object a.o). The study is important in many ways. On the one hand, the book represents a significant step forward in positing a derivational theory of ditransitives that relies on native speakers' intuitions, bringing evidence that the direct object and the indirect object enter bidirectional binding relations, (along the lines of Giorgi & Longobardi 1991 – for Italian, Harley 2002 – for French, Ormazabal & Romero 2010, 2012, Pineda 2012, 2013 – for Spanish, Cornilescu et. al 2017b – for Romanian), contrary to claims about asymmetric binding (Barss & Lasnik 1986, Aoun & Li 1989, Cuervo 2003a, b – for Spanish, Diaconescu & Rivero 2007 – for Romanian a.o.). The field of linguistics has advanced a lot recently due to experimental work informing linguistic theory, so much so that claims about linguistic theory can no longer rely solely on one's linguistic intuitions. Instead, especially in the case of unclear native judgments, experiments are essential for getting to the bottom of certain linguistic phenomena. Given the sometimes variable and confusing nature of data on ditransitives, conducting experiments on ditransitives is a necessary undertaking, and Tigău answers this need precisely by probing into the matter through large-scale Likert scale acceptability studies. On the other hand, the book is merit-worthy from a crosslinguistic perspective. Ditransitivity has very different properties in different languages around the world. Ditransitives in Spanish and Romanian behave differently from ditransitives in English (e.g. Spanish and Romanian ditransitives exhibit DOM-direct object marking and CD-clitic doubling, even preferring CDed + DOMed direct objects over DOMed direct objects, see Avram 2014), but even ditransitives within the same Romance language family may differ: ditransitives in Spanish behave in many ways unlike Romanian ditransitives (e.g. in Romanian, unmarked direct objects seem to allow specific readings). A careful investigation of language-specific properties uncovers not just the invariant principles behind ditransitive constructions, but also the setting of variable parameters. The book is thus of interest to linguists interested in generative syntax, experimental syntax, comparative syntax, Romance linguistics.

Ditransitivity, in Romance as well as in Germanic languages, has attracted a lot of attention, with linguists splitting into two main factions: the derivational group, arguing that one ditransitive structure is derived from the other (Larson 1988, 1990, 2014, Ormazabal & Romero 2010, 2012, Pineda 2012, 2013 a.o.) and the alternative projection group, arguing that ditransitive structures with apparently scrambled arguments are actually separate, unrelated structures (Barss & Lasnik 1986, Aoun & Li 1989, Harley 2002, Cuervo 2003a, b, Diaconescu & Rivero 2007 a.o.). Following Cuervo (2003a, b), Diaconescu & Rivero (2007) have claimed that the Romanian cliticless ditransitive structure corresponds to the double object construction (DOC) in English, while the Romanian ditransitive structure with a clitic corresponds to the English prepositional object construction (POC). According to Diaconescu & Rivero (2007), Romanian patterns like English (and Spanish) in terms of asymmetric binding in ditransitive structures. However, such claims have mostly been made on the basis of the subjective judgments of the linguists investigating these constructions rather than collected data from large groups of speakers. Tigău's

*University of Bucharest, Department of English, cameliobleotu@gmail.com.

book addresses this problem by collecting data from more than 900 native speakers of Romanian, mostly undergraduates at the University of Bucharest. The results showing (among other things) bidirectional command/binding between the direct object and the indirect object seem to support a derivational account for the data (in Romanian, at least), very much in line with findings from other Romance languages like Italian (Giorgi & Longobardi 1991), French (Harley 2002) or Spanish (Ormazabal & Romero 2010, 2012, Pineda 2012, 2013). Moreover, the presence of the clitic does not seem to alter the interpretation as much as claimed by Diaconescu & Rivero (2007).

The book comprises seven chapters which build up a theory of ditransitivity based on experiments probing into several aspects related to ditransitivity: (i) specificity with marked and unmarked direct objects (DOs), (ii) scope dependencies with DOs, (iii) binding dependencies between a DP subject and the DO, (iv) binding with anaphors, (v) binding with possessives, and (vi) scope dependencies between DOs and IOs.

Following the “Introduction” (pp. 1-11), chapter 2, “Romanian direct objects: A comparative analysis with Spanish” (pp. 13-83), looks at the syntax and semantics of direct objects in Romanian in comparison to Spanish through two experiments on specificity with marked and unmarked direct in interaction with the existential quantifier *fiecare* ‘every’, the modal *trebuie* ‘must’ and negation. Just as in Spanish, marked DOs (either through DOM or through DOM and CD) seem to allow for and even favour wide scope and specific readings. However, unlike in Spanish, unmarked DOs also allow for wide scope and specificity in Romanian. This leads to the conclusion that, in Spanish and Romanian, unmarked DOs pattern differently: Spanish differentiates between (i) KPs and (ii) DPs and NumPs/NPs, whereas Romanian differentiates between (i) KPs and DPs and (ii) NumPs/NPs. Moreover, in contexts that require non-specific readings, all unmarked DOs no longer have a specific reading (which is otherwise preferred – Cornilescu 2000, Dobrovie-Sorin 1994).

Chapter 3, “Linking syntactic structure to interpretation” (pp. 85-129), focuses on the featural make-up of the DO arguments involved in ditransitive constructions. Adapting some ideas from López (2012) to the Romanian data, it assumes that *in situ* nominals are incorporated, while scrambled nominals have to move to check case by Agree. Importantly, the structures available in Romanian are a result of the features present in the DOs. Unmarked DOs are DPs, and they incorporate into V. In contrast, marked DOs are KPs with *pe* spelling out an [*i*Person] feature (Cornilescu 2000) – which accounts for animacy effects in DOM (Richards 2008), and they can no longer incorporate into V because of the KP barrier. The difference between DOM-ed DOs and CDed + DOMed DOs would lie in whether K contributes a valued or unvalued feature: K has an [*u*Person] feature in the case of CDed + DOMed DOs, leading to more scrambling, to an outer specifier of Agree.

Chapter 4, “Some considerations on the role of the clitic as a movement trigger” (pp. 131-155), details the theoretical analysis of CDed + DOMed DOs starting from new findings from three experiments probing into the binding relations between subject and DO (for three kinds of objects: unmarked DOs, DOMed DOs and CDed + DOMed DOs). The results show that, in contrast to unmarked DOs and DOMed DOs, CDed + DOMed DOs may bind into the subject DP regardless of surface order. This gives further support to theories assuming that CDed + DOMed DOs leave the VP and end up in a landing site from where they c-command the subject (Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Cornilescu 2002, Preminger 2007). In the absence of a clitic, T cannot access the subject to assign it case. Following Preminger (2007), cliticization thus enables case-assignment, by removing the DO blocking agreement between T and the subject.

Chapter 5, “On the feature specification of indirect objects” (pp. 157-164), focuses on the featural make-up of the IO arguments involved in ditransitive constructions, arguing that, just like DOs, IOs are KPs with a [Person] feature. For CDed IOs, this feature is bleached such that scrambling to an upper position is necessary for case reasons.

Chapter 6, “Romanian ditransitive configurations” (pp. 165-269), brings experimental evidence in favour of symmetric binding relations holding between the arguments of ditransitive structures. Both anaphors and possessives were tested through 4 experiments which take the work in Cornilescu, Dinu & Tigău (2017) and Tigău (2014) as a starting point. Importantly, the results show that DOMed DOs and CDed + DOMed DOs seem to pattern alike with respect to the c-command relations holding between the arguments of ditransitives. This goes against analyses where the clitic plays a major role in licensing the IO and leading to different interpretations (such as Diaconescu & Rivero’s 2007 analysis). Importantly though, participants gave very low scores to sentences containing both DOMed DOs and CDed IOs, which was not the case for unmarked DOs and CDed and DOMed DOs. Such facts lead the author to embrace an account where feature valuation observes a hierarchy: while DO has priority over the IO generally, the order of valuation may change if the IO has more features to check than the DO (Case and Person > Case).

Chapter 7, “General conclusions” (pp. 271-277), presents the main contributions of the book, focusing on the novel findings.

Experimental Insights into the Syntax of Romanian Ditransitives represents an important work contributing to the understanding of the structure of ditransitives on the basis of an extensive body of experimental evidence. Relying on scopal and binding facts, the book argues for bidirectional c-command holding between the arguments of a ditransitive structure, and, in consequence, for a derivational account. Importantly, the book manages to account for the results by means of the feature-checking needs of the DPs involved in the structure, couching the different resulting word orders in minimalist terms. In building up a theory of ditransitives, the book touches on many other related issues such as the role of the clitic, specificity, sensitivity to animacy a.o. The book is a must-read for linguists interested in how experimental work can inform syntactic theory, as well as for anyone who wants to understand ditransitivity better. The study can serve as a paragon for how linguistic research should be conducted, and it will hopefully inspire other linguists to engage in similar experimental work on other languages than Romanian.

References

- Aoun, J. & Yen-Hui Li, A. 1989. Scope and constituency. *Linguistic Inquiry* 20(2): 141-172.
- Avram, L. 2014. Differential object marking in Romanian: The view from acquisition. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the English Department 16, 5–7 June, University of Bucharest.
- Barss, A. & Lasnik, H. 1986. A note on anaphora and double objects. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17 (2): 347-35.
- Cornilescu, A. 2000. Notes on the interpretation of the Prepositional Accusative in Romanian. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 2 (1): 91-106.
- Cornilescu, A. 2002. Direct object at the left periphery. *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 4 (1): 1-15.
- Cornilescu, A., Dinu, A. & Tigău, A. 2017a. Experimental data on Romanian double object constructions. *Revue roumaine de linguistique* LXII (2): 157-177.
- Cornilescu, A., Dinu, A. & Tigău, A. 2017b. Romanian Dative configurations: Ditransitive verbs, a tentative analysis. *Revue roumaine de linguistique* LXII (2): 179-206.
- Cuervo, M. C. 2003a. Datives at Large. PhD dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.
- Cuervo, M. C. 2003b. Structural asymmetries but same word order: The dative alternation in Spanish. In A. M. Di Sciullo (ed.), *Asymmetry in Grammar*, vol. 1, *Syntax and semantics*, 117-144. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Diaconescu, C. R. & Rivero, M. L. 2007. An applicative analysis of double object constructions in Romanian. *Probus* 19 (2): 209-233.
- Dobrovie-Sorin, C. 1994. *The Syntax of Romanian. Studies in Generative Grammar*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Giorgi, A. & Longobardi, G. 1991. *The Syntax of Noun Phrases: Configuration, Parameters and Empty Categories*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harley, H. 2002. Possession and the DOC. *Linguistic Variation Yearbook* 2 (1): 31-70.

- Larson, R. K. 1988. On the double object construction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19 (3): 335-391.
- Larson, R. K. 1990. Double objects revisited: Reply to Jackendoff. *Linguistic Inquiry* 21 (4): 589-632.
- Larson, R. 2014. *On Shell Structure*. London: Routledge.
- López, L. 2012. *Indefinite Objects. Scrambling, Choice Functions, and Differential Marking*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ormazabal, J. & Romero, J. 2010. The derivation of dative alternations. In M. Duguine, S. Huidobro & N. Madariaga (eds.), *Argument Structure and Syntactic Relations: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*, 203-232. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ormazabal, J. & Romero, J. 2012. PPs without Disguises: Reply to Bruening. *Linguistic Inquiry* 43 (2): 455-74.
- Pineda, A. 2012. Transitividad y afectación en el entorno lingüístico romance y eusquérico. X. In V. Fernández (ed.), *Estudios sobre la variación sintáctica peninsular*, 31-73. Oviedo: Seminario de Filología Asturiana de la Universidad de Oviedo.
- Pineda, A. 2013. Double object constructions in Spanish (and Catalan) revisited. In S. Baauw, F. Drijkoningen, L. Meroni & M. Pinto (eds.), *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2011*, 193-216. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Preminger, O. 2019. What the PCC tells us about “abstract” agreement, head movement, and locality. *Glossa: A Journal of General Linguistics* 4 (1), 13. <http://doi.org/10.5334/gjgl.315>.
- Richards, M. 2008. Defective Agree, case alternations, and the prominence of person. In M. Richards & A. Malchukov (eds.), *Scales. Linguistische Arbeitsberichte* 86, 137-161. Leipzig: Universität Leipzig.
- Tigău, A. 2014. The two-object construction in Romanian and German. In R. Cosma, S. Engelberg, S. Schlotthauer, S. L. Stănescu & G. Zifonun (eds) *Komplexe Argumentstrukturen. Kontrastive Untersuchungen zum Deutschen, Rumänischen und Englischen*, 85-141. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter.

Tiparul s-a executat sub c-da nr. 4779 / 2020
la Tipografia Editurii Universității din București
B-dul Iuliu Maniu, 1-3, Complex Leu
Tel.: 0799 210 566,
E-mail: tipografia.unibuc@unibuc.ro, mihaela.stancu@unibuc.ro