

## AN UNEXPLAINED DIFFERENCE BETWEEN REFLEXIVE AND COPULAR CLAUSAL PASSIVES IN ROMANIAN

Alexandra Cornilescu \*

**Abstract:** Romanian possesses a reflexive passive structure, the *se*-passive, where *se* is a reflexive clitic, and a copular passive, formed with the auxiliary *fi* ‘be’. For both passives, the passivized object is either nominal or clausal. While for nominal objects there is a balanced distribution of the two passives, with clauses, there is a sharp difference of acceptability between clausal *se*-passives and clausal *fi*-passives. Clausal *se*-passives occur with any transitive verb and sound perfect. Clausal *fi*-passives are infrequent and sometimes even unattested. The aim of this paper is to present an account of this difference, while also predicting which syntactic means improve the acceptability of *fi*-passives. We argue that the contrast between clausal *fi*- and *se*- passives springs from the different manner in which the features of Tense, in particular the *uD* feature, are checked, and show that it is only in *se*-passives that all the features of T are valued.

**Keywords:** reflexive passive, copular passive, expletive subject, free inversion

### 1. Introduction

It is well known that Romanian possesses a reflexive passive structure, the so-called *se*-passive, where *Se* is the accusative (= Acc) reflexive third person clitic, alongside of a copular passive, formed with the auxiliary *fi* ‘be’. For both *se*- and *fi*-passives, the passivized Direct Object (= DO) can be either a nominal expression (NP/DP) as in (1) or a clause (CP), as in (2). While for nominal DOs, there is a balanced distribution of the two passive forms, in terms of their frequency, with clauses, there is a sharp difference of acceptability between clausal *se*-passives and clausal *fi*-passives. Clausal *se*-passives occur with any transitive verb and sound perfect. Clausal *fi*-passives are infrequent and even unattested for some verbs, e.g. *a zice* ‘say’, *a vrea* ‘want’ (see Table 1). This contrast has been noted in studies and grammars of Romanian (e.g. Dobrovie-Sorin 1994, Pană Dindelegan 2008a, 2008b), but not completely explained.

The aim of the present paper is to present a syntactic account of this difference. The proposed explanation also correctly predicts what syntactic means are used to improve the acceptability of copular clausal passives.

- (1) a. Au deschis magazinul la ora 7.  
have opened shop-the at hour 7  
‘The shop was opened at 7 o’clock.’  
b. Magazinul s- a deschis la ora 7.  
shop-the SE has opened at hour seven  
‘The shop was opened at 7 o’clock.’  
c. Magazinul a fost deschis la ora 7.  
shop-the has been opened at hour 7  
‘The shop was opened at 7 o’clock.’

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\* University of Bucharest, Department of English, alexandracornilescu@yahoo.com.

- (2) a. Mulți știu că știrea este falsă.  
many know that news-the is false  
'Many know that the news is a fake.'
- b. **Se știe de mulți** că știrea este falsă.  
SE knows by many that news-the is false.  
'It is known by many that the news is a fake.'
- c. **Este deja știut de mulți** că știrea este falsă.  
is already known by many that news-the is false  
'It is already known by many that the news is a fake.'

The balanced distribution of the nominal passives forms is controlled by aspect (Pană Dindelegan 2008a, 2008b, Manoliu-Manea 2013), the Person Constraint (Cornilescu 1998, Cornilescu & Nicolae 2015, Giurgea 2019, Dobrovie-Sorin 2021), and discourse factors. Some of these constraints (e.g. discourse factors, aspect) are likely to remain active in clausal passives too, but will not be discussed in this paper, which only addresses the difference of acceptability resulting from the choice of the passive form, i.e. reflexive or copular. The data in Table 1 represent the result of an informal corpus search, which compared the number of occurrences registered on Google for the two passive forms for each examined verbs. For each verb, we have registered the Present Tense form as well as the compound perfect form. Authentic Google examples to illustrate the *fi/se*-clausal passive contrast are given in (3) and (4). The quantitative results in Table 1 speak for themselves. Copular clausal passives on the left-hand column run in the thousands. *Se*-clausal passives on the right-hand column run in the tens or hundreds of thousands of occurrences, thus representing a different order of magnitude. It is this distributional contrast that the paper is about.

Table 1

Verb	<i>fi</i> -passive + CP	occurrences	<i>se</i> -passive	occurrences
<i>a crede</i> 'to believe'	este crezut că is believed that	522	s- a crezut că SE has believed that	207,000
	a fost crezut că has been believed that	1,220		43,000
<i>a afirma</i> 'to assert'	este afirmat că is asserted that	675	SE afirmă că se asserts that	60,100
<i>a spune</i> 'to say'	a fost spus că has been said that	9,730	s- a spus că SE has said that	454,000
<i>a regreta</i> 'to regret'	a fost regretat că has been regretted that	0	s- a regretat că SE has regretted that	5
<i>a vrea</i> 'to want'	*este vrut să is wanted to	0	se vrea să SE wants to	115,000

- (3) *a crede* ‘to believe’
- a. ?Mult timp a fost crezut că jocul a fost inventat de  
 much time has been believed that game-the has been invented by  
 un inginer.  
 an engineer  
 ‘For a long time it has been believed that the game had been invented by  
 an engineer.’
- b. Inițial s- a crezut că problema nu este gravă.  
 initially SE has believed that problem-the not is serious.  
 ‘Initially it was believed that the problem was not serious.’
- (4) *a afirma* ‘to assert’
- a. ?**Este afirmat** că dorința umană este nemărginită.  
 is asserted that desire human is boundless  
 ‘It is asserted that human desire is infinite.’
- b. **Se afirmă** că acest tratament poate îmbunătăți vederea.  
 SE assert that this treatment can improve eyesight  
 ‘It is asserted that this treatment can improve eyesight.’

These quantitative data show that the clausal copular passive is a marked construction in Romanian, a fact that has not gone unnoticed. For instance, Dobrovie-Sorin (1994) even considers clausal copular passives to be ungrammatical (see also Pană Dindelegan 2008a, 2008b, Nicolae 2019).

In all likelihood, the contrast between active sentences and their passive counterparts is due to the different features of the probes that the CP interacts with.

Consider object clauses first. As will be shown, Romanian CPs possess valued  $\phi$ -features, and, therefore, they are able to value the  $u\phi$ -features of the verb and can regularly appear as DOs, alongside of DPs. Given this, active constructions with clausal objects are unproblematic. Unlike DO clauses, subject clauses agree with Tense. Romanian is a consistent null subject languages (= NSL), and, consequently, Tense is provided not only with an interpretable Tense feature ( $iT$ ) and a set of  $u\phi$ -features, but also with an uninterpretable D-feature ( $uD$ ). The feature matrix of Tense in NSLs is thus [ $iT$ ,  $u\phi$ ,  $uD$ ]. CPs can value the [ $u\phi$ -features] of T, but not its [ $uD$ ] feature. A means must be found to value this [ $uD$ ] feature.

We propose that with Romanian subject clauses, the problem is solved by means of a  $\langle DP_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chain, where the expletive is a null *pro*. In this analysis, *pro<sub>expl</sub>* contributes the needed D-feature, and has interpretable unvalued  $\phi$ -features. The  $\phi$ -features of *pro<sub>expl</sub>* are valued by Agree with the CP. This requires *pro<sub>expl</sub>* and the CP to merge in the same  $\nu P$ -phase, with *pro* in Spec, $\nu P$  and the CP in a lower position (Deal 2009, Longenbaugh 2019). After Agree with the CP, *pro<sub>expl</sub>* can duly check all the features of Tense. Recall now that in passive clauses there is no syntactic representation of the *su*, and, thus, no expletive subject either (Bruening 2011). In a clausal passive, the CP is projected in an object position, but should check the features of T. It is not clear how or whether the D-requirement of T in passive subject clauses can be satisfied, since even if the CP may be endowed with  $\phi$ -features, it cannot also be provided with a D-feature.

We propose that, in principle, in the absence of *pro<sub>expl</sub>*, any nominal in a configuration of agreement with T can check the latter's *uD* feature. Consequently, we claim that reflexive clausal passives are flawless because in this case the *uD* feature of Tense is valued by the reflexive clitic before cliticization. In contrast, with *Fi*-passive clauses, the DO CP, which becomes the passive subject clause, cannot value the *uD* feature of T. Hence clausal *fi*-passives are instances of failed agreement (Preminger 2012), and their acceptability is imperfect. This leads to a considerable amount of lexical variation and to the low frequency of clausal *fi*-passives, as apparent in Table 1.

The proposal we made is strengthened by the fact that the acceptability of clausal *fi*-passives increases whenever the pattern provides a clitic or a DP which can check the *uD* feature of Tense.

The outline of the paper is as follows. Sections 2 and 3 discuss the grammar of subject clauses with focus on Romanian, arguing that Romanian subject clauses are based on  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chains. Section 4 turns to clausal passives and proposes an explanation for the difference of acceptability between reflexive clausal passives and auxiliary clausal passives. Section 5 illustrates other remedial strategies of improving the acceptability of clausal *fi*-Passives.

## 2. On subject clauses and expletives

It has often been claimed that there is an important difference between DP and CP subjects, in that only DP subjects can occupy the canonical subject position, i.e. Spec, T. A recent formulation of this claim is Hartman's (2012: 31) DP Subject Requirement:

- (5) DP Subject Requirement  
DPs, but not CPs can be promoted to subject position. i.e. raised to Spec, T.

Versions of the DP requirement have a long history. A well-known example is the categorial NP restriction on subjects already present in phrase structure grammars:

- (6)  $S \rightarrow NP \wedge \text{Pred Phrase}$  (Chomsky 1965: 106)

In current terms, the DP-Subject Requirement claims that subjects, including subject clauses, are endowed with a nominal feature. (No difference is made between NPs and DPs). Two strategies have often been proposed for verifying the nominal feature of subject clauses: One strategy is to claim that clauses in subject position are not CPs, but DPs, since the subject clause itself is projected inside a DP, in the following configuration  $[_{DP} D \wedge CP]$ , an analysis adopted by Hartman (2012), Davies & Dubinsky (2010) for English. In the particular case of English, the D-head is null, but in other languages (e.g. Russian, Greek) the D-head is visible. The strongest type of evidence for the DP-shell hypothesis is precisely the presence of an overt determiner which is required for preverbal subject clauses, but is not required, or (even) degraded for object clauses. Thus, in Russian (Knyazev 2016), clausal subjects must be introduced by the demonstrative *to*

(7a). *To* is infelicitous if the subject clause is postverbal (7b), and it is likewise rejected in accusative position (7c):

- (7) a. To/\* $\emptyset$  *čo* Daša ušla izvestno vsem  
 that.N.SG that Dasha left.F.3SG known.N everyone.DAT  
 ‘That Dasha left is known to everyone.’  
 b. Vsem izvestno (??to) *čo* Daša ušla.  
 everyone.DAT known.N that.N that Dasha left-F.3SG  
 c. Vse znajut (?\*to) *čo* Daša ušla.  
 everyone know-3PL that.N that Dasha left-F.3SG  
 ‘Everyone knows that Dasha left.’

(Hartman 2012)

Romanian shows no evidence of a nominal head (D or N) on top of the subject clause, so there is little support for a DP-shell analysis.

A second option to satisfy the DP-Subject Requirement is to claim that clauses are not true subjects, but occupy periphery positions. Koster (1978) is the first to claim that preverbal subject clauses are actually topics in Spec CP linked to an empty expletive DP in Spec, T, as in (6)

- (8) The Topic phrase analysis  
 [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> that Mary left]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DPE</sub> ]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> t ]<sub>i</sub>T’ will [<sub>VP</sub> surprise everyone]]]]  
 (Hartmann 2012: 34)

A similar analysis is more recently defended by Alrenga (2009) and Moulton (2013, 2015) for preverbal subject clauses. Generalizing, whether they are preverbal or postverbal, subject clauses occur in chains composed of an expletive DP (=DP<sub>expl</sub>) in Spec, T and the CP subject in a non-argumental left periphery or low periphery position. This strategy is well-known from languages like English or French, which have phonologically realized expletives, overtly showing the <DP<sub>expl</sub>...CP> chain. Finally, a third option for subject clauses is that in some languages they are sufficiently nominalized to require structural case, a situation in which they occupy the Spec, T position themselves. An example is given by Zulu subject clauses, described in Halpert (2015). English gerunds also represent a case in point.

Even if Romanian does not have overt expletives, we will opt for a solution of the second type in the analysis below, attempting to prove that Romanian subject clauses are licensed in <pro<sub>expl</sub>...CP> or <CP ...pro<sub>expl</sub>> chains, where pro<sub>expl</sub> and its associate agree, as already explained above. Pro<sub>expl</sub> always ends up in Spec, T, it is endowed with an [*i*D] feature and values the [*uD*]- feature of T, actually satisfying the DP-Subject Requirement.

## 2.1 Motivating null *pro* in Romanian: On the more recent theory of *pro*

At first sight, an analysis based on an expletive null *pro* seems to be undesirable, given the difficulties to integrate this null pronoun in minimalist theory. Currently,

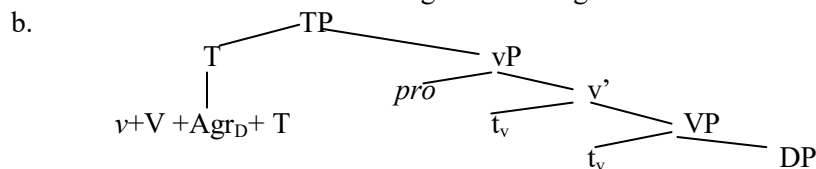
however the theory of expletives has developed in ways which permit the reintegration of *pro*, as will be shown below. As is well known, the GB theory of *pro* in Rizzi (1986) imposes two conditions for the well-formedness of this empty category: a condition of licensing and a condition of identification. The first condition states that *pro* is licensed under government by some lexical or functional head  $X_y$ , typically a case assigner, since *pro* appears in case-marked positions. Since the concept of government is currently discarded, this condition must be given up or restated. The second condition states that *pro* is identified by binding from features of the local head  $X_y$ , again a requirement that would be hard to formulate as an instance of Agree. Even worse, the existence of a null expletive *pro* became very suspicious in minimalism, since this element played no role at either interface. It doesn't contribute to PF, since it is not pronounced. It doesn't contribute to LF, where the information was actually supplied by the identifier of *pro*. Hence the attempts to eliminate this type of subject altogether, usually in favor of its overt identifier, the rich inflection of *pro*-drop languages.

## 2.2 Rich morphology

In an important paper, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998) propose that the rich agreement morphology of the verb in *pro*-drop languages has interpretable features, including a categorial nominal element [+iD]. The features of finite Tense in a NSL are as follows [+D, +iφ-features, +Case, iT]. As a result, in *pro*-drop languages, the AGR component of T has exactly the same status as a pronoun in the English paradigm, and may on its own satisfy the DP-Subject Requirement.

Since in Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou's (1998) view, AGR cannot incorporate θ-roles, *pro* continues to be projected in Spec, vP, but it is always θ- marked and endowed with interpretable φ-features, i.e. it is a null referential pronoun. What the two authors do away with is only the expletive *pro*, the unnecessary doubler of the referential subject. The two authors continue to assume that T is universally endowed with an EPP feature, but they propose that there are two manners of EPP-checking, presented in (9a). In null- subject languages, the EPP feature is simply checked by head movement of the verb to T. No Spec, T position is necessary, precluding the need for an expletive in Spec TP, as had been proposed by Rizzi (1986). Non-*pro*-drop languages, whose T has uninterpretable nominal features check EPP by moving or merging a nominal phrase in(to) Spec, T.

(9) a. Parametrized EPP-checking: Move/merge XP vs. Move/Merge X.



Through its elegance and economy (the elimination of *pro<sub>expl</sub>*), the rich morphology account has been and still is very influential. However, not all the predictions of this account are correct for all *pro*-drop languages.

### 2.3 Some consequences

The interpretable morphology proposal and similar theories (e.g. Roberts 2010) make a very strong claim. They predict that in *pro*-drop languages, preverbal subjects can only occupy A'-positions. There is only one argumental subject position, and this is the post-verbal position, Spec, *v*P. Preverbal subjects always discharge discourse functions, and are mostly analyzed as clitic left dislocated constituents.

As remarked by Sheehan (2016), however, there is by now a growing body of syntactic evidence that even in consistent *pro*-drop languages, there may be differences between subjects and left-dislocated topics, so that even consistent *pro*-drop languages have a preverbal argumental subject. The important empirical point is that preverbal subjects have some properties that differentiate them from topics.

For instance Goodhall (2001) notes that in Spanish, clauses with fronted topics are islands for extraction, whereas clauses with preverbal subjects are not. This is observable in Catalan, European Portuguese and Spanish, according to Goodhall, and the same facts are observable in Romanian, as shown below.

Consider, for instance, sentence (10) where the DO is in Topic position, and suppose you want to question the indirect object. The question on the indirect object can be formed if the DO is inside the VP (10b), but not if it has been topicalized (10c). In contrast, if there is a preverbal lexical subject, the sentence easily allows questioning of the indirect object (7d).

- (10) a. **Premiul** i- l vor da Mariei.  
prize-the to her it will give Mary-DAT  
'The prize they will give (it) to Mary.'
- b. Cui crezi că vor da **premiul**?  
to-whom believe that will give prize-the  
'Who do you think that they will give the prize?'
- c. \*Cui crezi [că **premiul** vor da ?]  
to whom believe [that prize-the will give
- d. Cui crezi că **președintele** i- a dat un premiu?  
to whom believe [that president-the to him has given a prize  
'Who do you think that the president gave a prize to?'

This provides evidence that not all preverbal subject occupy positions of left dislocation, and there are differences between preverbal subjects and topics.

The contrast between *se*-clausal passives and *fi*-clausal passives examined in this paper is also problematic for the rich morphology account. It is shown that, given the presence of the clitic in *se*-passives, the [*u*D] feature of Tense can finally be valued, which explains the acceptability of *se*-clausal passives. In contrast, as will be seen, in *si*-clausal passives the [*u*D] feature of T remains unchecked, and failed agreement may lead to low(er) acceptability. This difference is unexpected under the account proposed by Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998). To put it briefly, if the DP requirement had been

satisfied by pronominal inflection, there would have been no difference between clausal *se*-passives and clausal *fi*-passives, because the Agr component of T is identical for both types of passives.

Given the data, we are forced to adopt an updated Rizgian account, taking advantage of the more recent theory of expletives.

#### 2.4 A different view of the roles of expletives: *pro* enriched by agreement

Starting from the principle of Full Interpretation and its more modern restatement as the Strong Minimalist Thesis, a body of recent research has brought to light the LF role of expletives (Fu 2017, Longenbaugh 2019) and also the syntactic role of overt expletives like *it* and *there*, the tendency being to assimilate expletives to referential elements.

One element of the earlier theory that is contested on many grounds is the insertion of expletives in Spec, T, as had earlier been proposed (Chomsky 2008). Deal (2009) has successfully argued that subject expletives must be generated in a low position which would allow them to agree with their associate. The expletive *there*, for instance, requires a contentful DP associate, whose  $\phi$ -features it gets by agreement. Since the associate DP remains in  $vP$ , agreement with the associate should take place within the lexical phase ( $vP$ ). As shown by Deal (2009) and Harwood (2013), *there* is selected in  $vPs$  with no external argument; it merges in a higher non-thematic Spec,  $vP$  position, a position where it c-commands and agrees with its associate. Subsequently, *there* undergoes A-Movement to Spec, T. In English, this local agreement relation is the so far unique manner of solving the problem of “two many there’s” which arises in the interaction of *there* with raising verbs, as in (11).

- (11) \**There* seemed *there* to be a man in the room.

Examples like (11) are ungrammatical precisely because in such examples the higher *there* doesn’t have a chance to agree with a contentful associate and its  $\phi$ -features remain unvalued. Thus, expletives appear to have a role in narrow syntax, as well as at LF. The new ingredients in the syntax of expletive subjects are the low merge position and the obligatory agreement with their associate, before they target their dedicated Spec, T position.

#### 2.5 Belletti on Free Inversion

In a series of papers, Belletti (2001, 2004, 2005) argues that in SVO *pro*-drop languages, postverbal subjects in the Free Inversion construction are licensed in a doubling structure, which actually represents a  $\langle pro_{expl}\text{-DP} \rangle$  chain. Her theory of Free Inversion is highly innovative both in its conception and in its implementation. On the conceptual side, she argues that in Italian, and, plausibly in other *pro*-drop languages, the postverbal subject ends up occupying an A’-position (mostly, Focus) in the  $vP$  periphery. Regarding the implementation, under the assumption that Italian is a SVO language

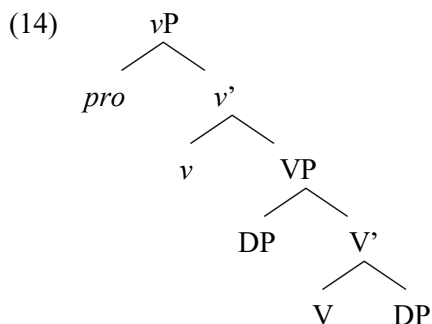


where Tense has a strong EPP feature, the necessity of some double of the postverbal subject to fill the Spec, T position becomes apparent. She concludes that Free Inversion must be a doubling configuration as in (12) or (13). In Belletti's (2005: 18) words: "all instances of subject inversion can be analyzed as cases of doubling, with a silent *pro* moved to the nominative position and the lexical part moved to the relevant periphery position".

- (12) *pro* parlero io  
       speak-FUT.1SG I
- (13) *pro* parlera Gianni  
       speak-FUT.3SG Gianni

Like Deal (2009), Belletti argues that *pro* is no longer merely an expletive element merged in Spec,T, but should be treated as "a silent referential pronoun", since *pro* merges in a lower position and enriches its content through agreement with its associate. After agreement, *pro* can target Spec, T, checking the EPP feature of Tense. Apparent verbal agreement with the post-verbal subject is a reflex of T's actual agreement with *pro*, which has inherited all the grammatical features of the post-verbal subject by agreement. With Belletti (2001, 2004, 2005), *pro* merges in a big DP configuration, inside which it agrees with the associate.

Putting together Belletti's analysis of Free Inversion with the proposal that expletives merge in a low in a non-thematic Spec, vP position (Deal 2009, Wu 2017), we propose that sentences with Free Inversion rely on the following type of vPs.



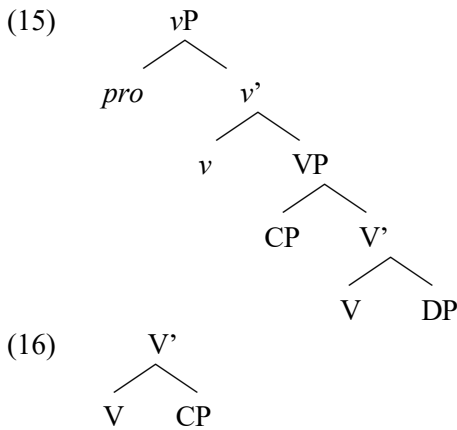
In this configuration, *pro* is in the same vP-phase as the  $\theta$ -marked subject, and moreover it is in a configuration of Agree which allows it to value its unvalued  $\phi$ -features by agreement with the lexical subject. Through agreement with its associate, *pro* becomes more like a referential pronoun, an element which is visible at LF. Since the lexical verb V moves to the highest vP position and higher to T, both *pro* and the lexical subject may move out of their merge position. *Pro* targets Spec, T, while the lexical subject moves to a vP periphery position.

### 3. An analysis of Romanian subject clauses

#### 3.1 The basic configuration

While in Italian post-verbal subjects represent a limited domain (unaccusative configurations), in Romanian, considered a VSO language, Free Inversion is possible with all verbs. The configuration in (14) underlies one of the highly frequent constructions of Romanian syntax. It appears natural to extend Belletti's Free Inversion analysis to the grammar of (post verbal) subject clauses.

Under this assumption, Romanian subject clauses are born in configuration (15), while DO clauses, which are ordinary complements, merge as in (16):



In configuration (15) the expletive is projected in the same phase as the CP. This allows the expletive to agree with the CP, before raising to Spec, TP. On the other hand the CP may move to the vP periphery, assuming a discourse role, presumably Focus. As to preverbal subject clauses, we provisionally adopt an analysis à la Koster (1987), as presented in (8) above, repeated in (17) below. Koster's (1987) empty category is notated *pro<sub>expl</sub>*. The head of *pro<sub>expl</sub>* raises to C, in a configuration of (reverse) agree.

- (17) The topic phrase analysis  
 [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> that Mary left]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>CP</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> *pro<sub>expl</sub>*]<sub>i</sub> [<sub>DP</sub> t]<sub>i</sub>T'] will [<sub>VP</sub> surprise everyone]]]

#### 3.2 Evidence for the proposed analysis: CPs have valued $\phi$ -features

The main claim in the analysis in (15) is that (null) expletives agree with their associates in a local domain. In configuration (15), the null subject is supposed to agree with the CP. For this analysis to go through, it has to be the case that the CP is endowed with valued  $\phi$ -features, while *pro<sub>expl</sub>* has unvalued  $\phi$ -features. Fortunately, for both claims there is empirical evidence to which we now turn.

### 3.2.1 On the feature content of *pro<sub>expl</sub>* in Romanian

Postulating an expletive *pro* in Spec, T as a means of solving Case problems has sometimes been done in the literature on Romanian (e.g. Alboiu 2009, Alboiu 2019). What we claim is that in the case of clausal subjects, it is not only that the CP is in a periphery position, but that, in whatever position it might be, the CP itself cannot value the *u*D feature of T. In other words, the features of T [*u*D, *u*φ, +iT] are jointly satisfied by the <*pro<sub>expl</sub>*, CP> chain. As is known, there are crosslinguistic differences between expletives regarding their feature structure. At this point, a comparison with the English formal subjects, *it* and *there*, is welcome, since it will show that the Romanian null expletive is more like *there*, than like *it*. Expletive *it* has a complete φ-set and case, forcing the associate clause to occupy a non-DP, caseless position. In other words, the CP-introducing it, disallows DP associates like the Poss-ing in (18b).

- (18) a. It surprises me that he came.  
b. \*It surprises me his coming.

This also accounts for the fact that expletive *it* controls agreement, to the exclusion of the associate (19):

- (19) It is/\*are equally likely that he will win the race and that he will lose it

Moreover, the extraposed clause is syntactically inactive, it does not participate in agree processes, and all the subject properties are assigned to the expletive *it*-subject (McCloskey 1991). Notice that it is *it* that undergoes Raising to Subject in (20a), and that it is *it* that undergoes Auxiliary Inversion (20b), and that occurs in tag-questions (20a). A'-movement of the extraposed clause is also prohibited, since A'-movement is possible only out of case-marked positions (21c, d) and the extraposed clause does not occupy a case position

- (20) a. It<sub>i</sub> seems [t<sub>i</sub> to be likely [ for him to be promoted, doesn't it<sub>i</sub>?  
b. Does it<sub>i</sub> seem [t<sub>i</sub> to be likely for him to be promoted]?  
(21) a. [That he will be promoted]<sub>i</sub> everybody considers [ t<sub>i</sub> to be very likely]  
b. \*[That he will be promoted]<sub>i</sub> everybody considers [ it to be very likely t<sub>i</sub>]

Expletive *there* has opposite properties. Given its adverbial origin, it lacks φ-features and can only supply a D-feature, which grants it the ability to occupy Spec, T and function as a syntactic subject, for the purpose of Raising (22a), Auxiliary Inversion (22b), tag questions (22c), and the like.

- (22) a. There<sub>i</sub> seems [t<sub>i</sub> to be a man under you bed].  
b. Did there<sub>i</sub> seem [t<sub>i</sub> to be man under your bed?]  
c. There is trouble in the streets, isn't there?

Since *there* lacks  $\varphi$ -features the only kind of associate that it allows is a DP/NP, and, as is well-known, it is the associate that controls agreement (23).

- (23) a. There seems [t to be a lot of wind/\*windy outside].  
 b. There seem [t to be two men under your bed].

Thus, the matrix of *there* is [*i*D, *u* $\varphi$ :\_\_], while the associate DP is [*i*D, *i* $\varphi$ :val]. The <there, DP> chain is very much like the Romanian <*pro*<sub>expl</sub>, CP> one. In both cases the first term has unvalued  $\varphi$ -features which are valued by the second term.

Consider now the following examples, due to Postal (2003). Both (24a, b) are grammatical since *there* duly combines with DP associates. Sentence (24c) is ungrammatical. The associate of *there* is a CP and, presumably, English CPs do not have  $\varphi$ -features (Hartman 2012).

- (24) a. On the door there was written [a message].  
 b. On the door there were written [two messages].  
 c. \*On the door there was written [that Mary was away].

(Hartman 2010)

The Romanian counterparts of (24) are all flawless:

- (25) a. Pe uşă era scris un mesaj.  
 on door was written a message  
 ‘On the door there was written a message.’  
 b. Pe uşă era scris că Maria a plecat.  
 on door was written that Mary has left.  
 ‘On the door it was written that Mary had left.’

If our proposal is correct then the contrast between (24c) and (25b) follows. In both languages there is an expletive DP subject, overt in English, covert in Romanian, an expletive devoid of  $\varphi$ -features. Sentence (24c) is ungrammatical: English CPs lack  $\varphi$ -features and cannot be associates of *there*. In contrast, in (25b), Romanian CPs appear to be endowed with  $\varphi$ -features and can value the features of the expletive which later agrees with T.

Interestingly, under more recent analyses of locative inversion (Bruening 2011 and references therein), English would also have a covert, *there*-type expletive, as is suggested by the examples in (26), due to Pesetsky (1995):

- (26) a. In this room, ladies and gentlemen, was discovered [the cure for cancer].  
 b. In this room, ladies and gentlemen, were discovered [many different cures]  
 c. \*In this room *pro* was discovered [that cancer is caused by tomatoes].

It is assumed in such analyses of locative inversion that the subject position is occupied by a null expletive *pro* and T is valued by the  $\varphi$ -features of the post-verbal

associate. If English CPs do not have  $\varphi$ -features, the features of *pro* in Spec, T remain unvalued and the derivation crashes, as in (26c)

Bruening (2011) winds up his analysis proposing that English has two kinds of expletives, with complementary properties, as shown, which he labels: *it* and *there/pro*. In our analysis, Romanian has a null expletive with the same properties as *there/pro*. Specifically, *there/pro* is endowed with a categorial N/D feature, and, moreover it is endowed with unvalued  $\varphi$ -features which are valued by agreement with an associate that is provided with valued  $\varphi$ -features.

In the next section, we bring evidence from clausal substitutes that Romanian CPs are fully specified for  $\varphi$ -features.

### 3.2.2 A specialized demonstrative clausal substitute and the $\varphi$ -features of CPs

In an important paper, Picallo (2002) demonstrates that while for some types of overt subject expletives (e.g. English *it*) it might perhaps be assumed that the subject CP lacks  $\varphi$ -features (as assumed for English by Hartman 2012), this is not possible for covert subject expletives, which must value their features by Agreement with the contentful subject CP. Picallo (2002) had long noticed that for this account of null expletives to go through, CPs must have valued  $\varphi$ -features, and she proved that at least for Spanish and Catalan, it is enough to assume that CPs simply have negatively specified features [ $-$ Person,  $-$ Number  $-$ Gender]. This feature matrix allows CPs to Agree with the relevant clausal heads [ $v$ , T], as well as with expletive subjects.

Romanian offers the example of a language that gives evidence of positive specification of CP  $\varphi$ -features, since it has a demonstrative *asta* ‘this’ exclusively used for anaphoric reference to CPs (Giurgea 2008). Under the uncontested assumption that substitutes inherit the grammatical features of their antecedents, it follows that this demonstrative clausal substitute shows which features it has inherited from the CP, and therefore, which are the valued features that the CP enters the derivation with. Examine Table 2, below.

Table 2. The inventory of the *a*-augmented demonstratives in Romanian

M.SG (standard)			M.SG (informal)		
creionul	acesta	acesta	creionul	ăsta	ăsta
pencil-the	this	this	pencil-the	this	this
F.SG (standard)			F.SG (informal)		
cartea	aceasta	aceasta	cartea	aceasta	asta
book-the	this	this	book-the	this	this
Ion fumează	Asta nu este bine.		asta (standard) (features?)		
Ion smokes	This is not good				

Table 2 presents the set of Romanian *a*-augmented demonstratives of proximity, with their formal and informal (colloquial) forms. It is noticeable in the glosses that augmented demonstratives combine with definite nouns in a double definite construction. What matters for the present discussion is that, as a rule of the demonstrative system, augmented *a*-forms also occur independently, as pronouns.

As apparent in the chart, demonstratives vary for gender, number, and case, and have the distribution of definite phrases. Romanian has been standardly described as having three genders, masculine, feminine, neuter, where the neuter is formally homonymous with the masculine in the singular and with the feminine in the plural.

The form of interest in the present context is the clausal demonstrative *asta* ‘this’ which is always a pronoun, anaphoric to a preceding sentence, as illustrated in Table 2. Table 2 also shows that the clausal demonstrative is homonymous with the informal feminine demonstrative, but it actually has very different and complex agreement properties, reviewed below.

The clausal demonstrative *asta* ‘this’ shows a unique gender agreement pattern. While the regular feminine demonstrative imposes feminine gender agreement on predicative adjectives, the clausal demonstrative imposes masculine agreement, suggesting that clausal *asta* is neuter (see also Vasilescu 2008: 251) for the same description.

- (27) a. Care carte        ți-        a        plăcut mai mult?  
 which book.F.SG to you has liked more much  
 ‘Which book did you like more?’  
 b. Asta.        a        fost mai interesantă.  
 this.F.SG has been more interesting.F.SG  
 ‘This (one) has been more interesting.’
- (28) a. Ion a câștigat.  
 ‘Ion has won.’  
 b. **Asta** este **important**.  
 this.N.SG is important.N.SG  
 ‘This is important.’

Secondly, clausal *asta* ‘this’ contrasts with feminine *asta*, with respect to Clitic Left Dislocation (= CLLD). As a rule demonstratives at the left periphery require clitic doubling. For clausal *asta*, clitic doubling is both optional and unusual. Notice that the clitic that doubles clausal *asta* ‘this’ is the feminine accusative clitic *o*. The clitic and the doubler always agree in  $\phi$ -features, so in this case *asta* ‘this’ must be assigned feminine gender.

- (29) a. Ion te iubește.  
 ‘Ion loves you.’  
 b1. Asta știu de mult timp.  
 this.F.SG know of much time  
 ‘I have known this for a long time.’  
 b2. Asta o știu de mult.  
 this.F.SG it.F.SG know of much  
 ‘I have known this for a long time.’

The examples above show that clausal *asta* ‘this’ shows a split between a formal lower gender feature, which is [+feminine], and a higher level outer semantic gender feature which is [+abstract, +neuter], in line with the semantic properties of clauses.

The formal gender feature [+feminine] accounts for resumption by the feminine accusative clitic *o*, since in doubling configurations the clitic and the associate must share their formal features (29b2). The higher D-level gender is a semantic gender feature [+abstract, +neuter] which accounts for adjectives agreeing in the neuter, i.e. masculine singular (28b), in predicative constructions

The number feature of this demonstrative is singular. Coordinated object clauses are standardly resumed by the singular demonstrative, but pluralization is occasionally possible. Expectedly, both the demonstrative and the clitic show a feminine plural form (formal agreement)

- (30) a. A declarat și că va candida și că nu va candida la  
has declared and that will run and that not will run at  
aceeași întrunire.  
same meeting  
‘He declared both that he would run for office and that he wouldn’t at  
the same meeting.’
- b. A declarat asta /?astea și altă dată.  
has declared this.F.SG/ these.F.PL and other time.  
‘He has declared this/these before.’

Finally, while regular *asta* (F.SG) alternates with the standard (formal) form *aceasta* (F.SG), clausal *asta* does not alternate, presumably because the more formal demonstrative (still) lacks the semantic neuter gender feature.

- (31) a. Ion fumează.  
‘Ion smokes.’
- b. ??\*Aceasta este important.  
‘This is important.’

Summing up this complex agreement pattern of the clausal substitute, one may tentatively propose that this unique demonstrative pronoun has the following feature matrix *asta*[ *i*D, *i*Dem *u*Formal gender: +F, *i*Sem Gender: N, Num: SG].

Since the features of *asta* are inherited from the antecedent CPs, it follows that CPs have valued  $\phi$ -features: CP [–P, Num: SG/?PL, formal gender: F, semantic gender: abstract neuter]. In  $\langle pro_{expl} \text{ CP} \rangle$  chains, *pro\_{expl}* has unvalued  $\phi$ -features, and may value them by agreement with the CP.

### 3.2.3 One more clausal substitute: *așa* ‘so’<sub>CP</sub>

CPs have a second substitute, the adverbial particle *așa*<sub>CP</sub>, roughly corresponding to the English *so*, as described in Hooper (1975). *Așa* ‘so’ is a polysemous item, with

lexical and functional uses. Like English *so* it may be a (deictic) adverb of manner, a degree head in adjectival constructions, a conjunction, and a clausal substitute, as shown by its comprehensive description in *Dicționarul limbii române* (Academia Română 2010, vol. 1: 283-287)

A brief description of the clausal substitute is useful since it reveals other semantic and syntactic properties of CPs. More than that, as will be shown in the next subsection (3.3) subject clauses and object clauses differ with respect to the substitutes they accept. Also, Romanian *așa* 'so' is more grammaticalized than its English counterpart.

Clausal *așa* 'so' may appear postverbally, as well as preverbally, with a preference for the second option.

- (32) a. Se întâmplă că Ion este mereu plecat.  
SE happens that Ion is always left  
'It happens that Ion is always away.'
- b. Se întâmplă așa/asta.  
SE happens so /this  
'It so happens.'
- (33) a. Crezi că Ion va veni?  
think that Ion will come  
'Do you think that Ion will come?'
- b. Așa/asta cred.  
so /this believe  
'I believe so.'

Although *asta* 'this' and *așa* 'so' are interchangeable in many contexts of the type illustrated above in (32), (33), they differ in the range of the syntactic categories they may stand for. The adverbial *așa* 'so' cannot substitute for DPs or NPs, whether they are arguments or even predicatives. In contrast, *asta* 'this' has  $\phi$ -features and looks for nominal categories. For example, in (34), the predicative NP *student la medicină* 'student at the Medical School' can be replaced by *asta* 'this', but not by *așa* 'so'.

- (34) a. Ion este acum **student la medicină**.  
Ion is now student at medicine  
'Ion is a student at the Medical School.'
- b. \***Așa/Asta** a devenit.  
so /this has become.  
'This is what he has become.'

In exchange, *așa* 'so' easily refers back to any predicative content realized as an AP (35), VP (36) etc, therefore a predicative content which is not a nominal expression.

- (35) a. Ion este **înalt**.  
Ion is tall  
'Ion is tall.'



- b      **Așa** e.  
 so    is  
 ‘So he is.’
- (36) a.    Oamenii **cântau**        **pe străzi**.  
 people    were singing on streets  
 ‘The people were singing in the streets.’
- b.      **Așa** făceau.  
 so    were-doing.  
 ‘So they were.’

The following empirical generalization emerges: *Așa* ‘so’ cannot substitute for DPs, because they are entity denoting phrases, i.e. <e> type constituents. But it substitutes for constituents with predicative content, of different syntactic categories (APs, VPs, etc.). Surprisingly it may also be a CP-substitute, [<sub>CP</sub> *așa*], as in (32) and (33).

The presence of a predicative substitute for argument CPs, puzzling at first, is understandable in light of the recently proposed semantics for CPs (e.g. Kratzer 2006, Moltmann 2015, Moulton 2013, 2015). Semanticists claim that though, syntactically, finite CPs merge as c-selected arguments, yet they do not combine with the selecting V by functional application, but by predicate modification, because of type mismatch. It is claimed that CP-selecting Vs incorporate or, at least, entail the existence of DPs that denote propositional contents, such as *belief, desire, fact, idea, order, information*, etc. These nouns do not take complements, (Stowell 1981), but rather the CP is a modifier of the implicit content noun, a modifier which spells out the content of the nominal (e.g. *the belief/the fact that Tom will win*). *The fact that Tom will win does* cannot be analyzed as a predicate-argument relation, for the simple reason that nouns like *fact* do not take arguments.

With type <e, st>, the CP cannot directly combine with the Verb of type <e,t>, because of the type mismatch. The CP moves from its complement position leaving behind an individual variable <e> which saturates the V’s argument slot. The CP targets a Spec, VP modifier position. The individual variable left behind when the CP moves allows for the formation of a lambda abstractor, so that the VP can now be interpreted as a property of type <e, st>. At this moment the CP and the VP lambda abstractor have the same <e, st> type and may combine by predicate modification.

Semantically, since *așa* ‘so’ may substitute for properties, as in (35), it may also substitute for CPs, too.

Moulton (2013, 2015) and Hinterholzl (1999) argue that the final clausal position of the CP is the result of remnant movement of the VP to the left, but still within the *vP*. The same authors argue that CPs never move out of the *vP*. The semantic analysis confirms the (non-argumental) right periphery position of the CP, at the end of the derivation.

### 3.3 The distribution of the two substitutes with subject and object clauses

From the point of view of the clausal passives discussed in this paper, clausal substitute are relevant since they pattern differently with object, and, respectively, subject clauses.

### 3.3.1 Direct object clauses

The description given to the two substitutes leads to the prediction that direct object clauses may be substituted by both *asta* ‘this’ and *așa* ‘so’, given that transitive verbs normally select both DPs and clauses.

- (37) Verbs [\_\_\_ DP, \_\_\_ CP]
- a. Prizonierul a declarat completa sa nevinovăție.  
prisoner-the has declared complete-the his innocence  
‘The prisoner declared his complete innocence.’
- b. Prizonierul a declarat **asta**  
prisoner-the has declared this  
‘The prisoner has declared this.’
- (38) a. Prizonierul a declarat că e nevinovat.  
prisoner-the has declared that is innocent.  
‘The prisoner declared that he is innocent.’
- b. Asta a declarat. Așa a declarat.  
this has declared so has declared.  
‘He declared this/so.’

Suggestively, (most of) the (very) few verbs that select CPs, but not DPs, do not permit substitution by *asta* either. Verbs that select only CPs [\_\_\_ CP] include: *a interveni*, ‘to intervene’, ‘to interfere’, *a întrerupe* ‘to interrupt’, *a se răsti la cineva* ‘to bark at someone’, etc.).

- (39) a. A intervenit că nu mai sunt fonduri.  
has intervened that not more are funds.  
‘He has intervened that there are no more funds.’
- b. A intervenit așa/\*asta.  
has intervened so / this
- c. S- a răstit la mine că să -i mai lăsam în pace. (Google)  
SE has barked at me that SĂ him more leave in peace  
‘He barked at me that we should leave them alone.’
- d. S- a răstit așa/\*asta.  
SE has barked so / this

With such verbs the nominal substitute is ungrammatical. The adverbial substitute may be interpreted as clausal substitute, as in (27b), or it may be a clausal substitute or a manner adverb.

### 3.3.2 Subject clauses

In contrast with DO clauses, subject clauses must satisfy the DP-Subject Requirement and we have proposed that they do this in a  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chain, where the

only candidate for targeting SpecT is *pro<sub>expl</sub>*, because only a DP can value all the features of T, in particular its [*uD*] feature.

The crucial remark is that verbs or adjectives which s-select subject CPs permit *only* substitution by the demonstrative *asta* ‘this’. *Așa* ‘so’ is an adverb, i.e. it is [–D, –N...] and cannot occupy the subject position.

Below we illustrate this property for some well-known verb classes and adjectival classes which accept subject clauses. This class first includes the extended group of transitive psych-verbs, but also psych adjectives and evaluative adjectives.

- (40) Psych verbs: *a surprinde* ‘to surprise’, *a uimi* ‘to amaze’, *a ului* ‘to amaze’, *a deranja* ‘to disturb’, *a supăra* ‘to bother’, *a enerva* ‘to irritate’, etc.
- a. Mă deranjează că fumează.  
me bothers that smokes.  
‘It bothers me that he smokes.’
- b. Mă deranjează asta/\*așa.  
me disturbs this/\*so  
‘It/\*so disturbs me.’
- (41) Psych adjectives: *surprinzător* ‘surprising’, *uimitor* ‘amazing’, *uluit* ‘amazing’, *deranjant* ‘disturbing’, *supărător* ‘bothersome’, *enervant* ‘irritating’, etc.
- a. Este surprinzător că a plecat  
is surprising that has left  
‘It is surprising that he left.’
- b. Asta/\*Așa este surprinzător.  
this /\*so is surprising.  
‘This/\*So is surprising.’
- (42) Evaluative, factive, modal adjectives a.o.: *important* ‘important’, *însemnat*, ‘important’, *îngrozitor* ‘terrible’, *ciudat* ‘strange’, *tragic* ‘tragic’, *clar* ‘clear’, *neclar* ‘unclear’, *îndoielnic* ‘doubtful’, etc.
- a. Este important/clar că a câștigat.  
is important/clear that has won.  
‘It is important/clear that he won.’
- b. Asta/\*așa este important/clar.  
this /\*so is important/clear  
‘This /\*so is important clear.’
- c. Este bizar /tragic că nu a venit.  
is bizarre/tragic that not has come.  
‘It is bizarre/tragic that he didn’t come.’  
Asta/\*așa este bizar/tragic.  
this/\*so is bizarre/tragic.  
‘This/\*so is bizarre/tragic.’

In conclusion, predicates which s-select subject clauses, accept only substitution of the subject clause by *asta* ‘this’.

#### 4. Back to passive clauses

##### 4.1 Subject clauses in passive constructions

Given the topic of this paper we are actually interested in subject clauses of passive sentences and would like to determine how they meet the DP-Subject requirement. Our hypothesis is that *se*-clausal passives and *fi*-clausal passives do this in different ways and that this is the source of the difference in grammaticality/acceptability in the two types of clausal passives.

In the present context, the essential point is that clausal subjects of passive verbs are derived subject clauses. Although they end up as subjects, some of their properties are determined by their merge direct object position. One of these properties is behavior with respect to substitution. Unlike basic subject clauses, derived subject clauses freely allow both clausal substitutes *asta* ‘this’ and *așa* ‘so’ (43):

- (43) a. Se spune că pleacă din țară.  
SE says that leaves from country.  
‘It is said the he is going to leave the country.’
- b. Asta se spune.  
this SE says.  
‘This is what is being said.’
- c. Așa se spune.  
so SE says  
‘So it is said.’

This is uncontroversial evidence that clausal subjects of passive sentences merge as CPs in object position.

At the same time, the analytical framework we assumed leads to the conclusion that in clausal passives there simply is no room for any *pro<sub>expl</sub>*. This in fact follows from important relatively recent minimalist analyses of the passive, such as Collins (2005) or Bruening (2011). Returning to the transformationalist analysis of the passive in Chomsky (1957), both authors insist that the passive is a transitive, not an unaccusative configuration, i.e. a configuration with a thematic subject. For simplicity, we here refer to Bruening’s (2011) analysis. In the latter, in long passives, the thematic subject is in the *by*-phrase, and the *by*-phrase is as an adjunct that *c*- and *s*-selects a VP with an unsaturated (subject) variable. In short passives, the thematic subject is an implicit argument, invisible in syntax, but active semantically, whose role is to existentially quantify the VP. On such a view, there simply is no room for the formation of the  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chain.

This raises the question of how the derived subject clause satisfies the DP-Subject requirement, more precisely, which constituent(s) satisfies the requirements of T [*i*T, *u*φ, *u*D]. As already shown the CP can value the φ-features of T, but not the [*u*D] feature.

And it is on this point that *se*-clausal passives and *fi*-clausal passives differ considerably.

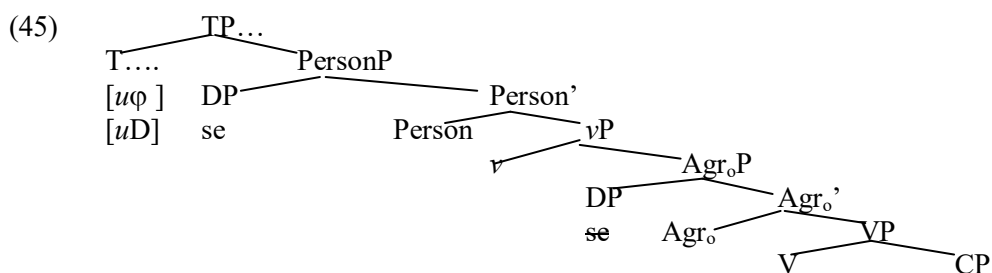
## 4.2 Checking the nominal feature [ $uD$ ] of T in passive clauses

### 4.2.1 The reflexive passive

It is well-known that in passive constructions (whether propositional or not) *Se*-itself has no  $\theta$ -role (Schäffer 2008, among many). It is simply an expletive which blocks the realization of the accusative case of the internal argument, because *se* itself values the accusative feature of the [ $v$  V+ $v$ ] complex. The DP which merges as a thematic internal argument is consequently externalized and must value its case feature in Spec, T. The externalized DP values all the uninterpretable features of T, i.e. the  $\phi$ -features and [ $uD$ ]. Importantly, in nominal (DP) reflexive passives, the expletive reflexive also agrees with the associate internal argument regarding  $\phi$ -features, Number in particular, as in (33a-b). Non-paradigmatic *se* thus appears to be a functional constituent which merges in the specifier of the accusative case projection (here called  $\text{Agr}_o\text{P}$ ), following Schäffer's (2008) widely accepted proposal.

- (44) a. S- **a** scris o scrisoare deschisă către Președinte.  
SE has written a letter open to president.  
'An open letter has been written to the President.'
- b. S- **au** scris multe scrisori către Președinte.  
SE have written several letters to President.  
'Several letters have been written to the President.'

From the point of view of clausal passives, what matters is that *se* is born with an  $iD$  feature, which is ultimately used to satisfy the DP-requirement of derived subject clauses. The derivation is maximally simple, including the steps below, which can be followed in the representation in (45):



First, *se* merges in the specifier of the accusative assigning projection,  $\text{Agr}_o\text{P}$ . *Se* c-commands the CP and agrees with it with respect to its  $\phi$ -features. At the next step, *se* values the  $\phi$ -features of [ $v$  V+ $v$ ] and thus also values its own accusative feature by agreement with little *v*. Next, *se* values its [ $u\text{Person}$ ] feature, by targeting  $\text{PersonP}$ , a  $v\text{P}$  periphery position whose head is [ $i\text{Person}$ ] (see Preminger 2011, Stegovéc 2015, Cornilescu 2020). While it is in Spec,  $\text{PersonP}$ , the *se*-phrase is accessible to T. The T head can now value all its uninterpretable features [ $iT$ ,  $u\phi$ ,  $uD$ ], including the D feature. The DP-requirement is thus satisfied. Since all the features of SE have been valued, *se* may cliticize on T.

#### 4.2.2 The copular passive

In the present analysis the relatively degraded status of *fi*-passives follows from the fact that the [*uD*] feature of T remains unvalued. The CP is projected as an object in a transitive configuration. The thematic subject is an implicit argument or an adjunct phrase (Bruening 2011), and there is no space for an expletive *pro*.

- (46) a. S- a crezut că e un tiran.  
SE has believed that is a tyrant.  
'It was believed that he was a tyrant.'
- b. ??A fost crezut că e un tiran.  
has been believed that is a tyrant  
'It was believed that he was a tyrant.'

Sentences of type (46b) have an interesting theoretical status. As seen, Agree between T and the subject clause, presumably on the edge of *vP* is not fully successful, since the [*uD*] feature remains unvalued. Preminger (2012) examines such situations and proposes that agreement is a "fallible operation". What counts for Agree and other operations is that they be initiated, and possible failure is tolerated by grammar. We propose to classify copular clausal passives like (46b) as instances of failed agreement and also add that failed agreement may impair acceptability up to a point; hence the degraded status of clausal *fi*-passives with many verbs.

#### 4.2.3 A note on unaccusatives

One may wonder about another class of sentences which have derived subjects but do not seem to encounter problems of agreement. This is the class of unaccusatives. The data show that subject clauses of propositional unaccusative accept substitution by both *asta* 'this' and *aşa* 'so' verbs:

- (47) Propositional unaccusative verbs: *a părea* 'to seem', *a se întâmpla* 'to happen', *a se nimeri* 'to happen', etc.
- a. Părea că au găsit deja soluția.  
seemed that have found already solution  
'It seemed that they had already found the solution.'
- b. Aşa/Asta părea ieri  
so /this seemed yesterday.  
'It seemed like this yesterday.'

As expected, subject clauses of unaccusative verbs pattern like DO clauses of transitive verbs, and also as expected, they admit both substitutes, i.e. they behave as internal, not external, arguments as in (47)

Unlike passives, however, unaccusative verbs do not have thematic subjects, and thus in unaccusative configuration with CP-object there is room for projecting *pro<sub>expl</sub>* in

Spec, vP and forming the  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chain. Therefore subject clauses of unaccusative verbs are completely unproblematic.

The different behavior of subject vs. object clauses regarding substitution should be added to the catalogue of subject/object asymmetries.

### 5. Remedial strategies

Evidence that the unchecked D-feature of T is one reason for which *fi*-clausal passives are unacceptable is shown by the fact the acceptability of copular passives can be improved by syntactic means that remove this problem.

Just as *se*-clausal passives solve the DP-Subject Requirement problem by using the clitic *se*, other D or N elements, which are in an Agree configuration with T, can also be used to the same effect.

We will mention two situations which can be regarded as remedial strategies for improving the acceptability of *fi*-clausal passives.

One possibility is to allow a Dative clitic (possibly doubled by a lexical Dative DP argument) to supply the [*i*D] needed by the Tense head, as in (48b-c) which are noticeably better than (48a):

- (48) a. ??A fost spus **tutoror** să se rezinte la lucru  
has been said all.DAT SĂ SE report at work.  
'It has been said to all of them that they should report for work.'
- b. **Le-** a fost spus **tutoror** să se prezinte la lucru  
them.DAT.CL has been said all.DAT SĂ SE report at work.  
'They have all been told to report for work.'
- c. **Tutoror le-** a fost spus să se prezinte la lucru  
all.DAT them.DAT. CL has been said SĂ SE report at work  
'They have all been told to report for work.'

The increased acceptability of the clitic pattern is also observable in the increased frequency of the clitic pattern (48b, c) as compared to the bare V + Subject clause one. Also, the Dative clitic pattern has created idioms in a number of cases, one of which is (49):

- (49) Nu mi- a fost dat să -l întâlnesc a doua oară.  
not me.DAT.CL has been given să him meet a second time  
'To meet him a second time was not given me.' [= I didn't have the chance to meet him again]

A second operation which can increase the acceptability of clausal *fi*-passives is Raising to Subject. A configuration of agreement with the main clause T-head is thus created. Subsequent to raising, the SpecT position of the main clause verb is occupied by a DP, which can check all the features of Tense. The ameliorative effect of Raising to Subject is easy to feel (for natives) by comparing the bare passive sentences (50a), (51a), with their variants (50b) and (51b), where passive is followed by Raising to Subject. The

Raising to Subject sentences are authentic Google examples. As an empirical difference between the alternating sentences, notice, in addition to word order, the agreement of the passive participle of the main verb with the raised subject in (50b) and (51b).

- (50) a. A fost **acceptat** ca temperatura de –18 grade să fie  
has been accepted that temperature-the of –18 degrees SĂ be  
temperatura standard pentru congelare  
temperature-the standard for freezing.’  
‘It was accepted that the temperature of –18 degrees should be the  
standard temperature for freezing.’
- b. Temperatura de –18 grade a fost **acceptată** să fie  
temperature-the.F of –18 degrees has been accepted-F SĂ be  
temperatura standard pentru congelare  
temperature-the standard for freezing.’  
‘The temperature of –18 was accepted to be the standard temperature for  
freezing.’
- (51) a. Este **recomandat** să fie consumată cafeaua cu moderație.  
is recommended SĂ be consumed coffee with moderation  
‘It is recommended that coffee should be consumed with moderation.’
- b. Cafeaua este **recomandată** să fie consumată cu moderație.  
coffee-the.F is recommended.F SĂ be with moderation  
‘Coffee is recommended to be consumed with moderation.’

## 6. Conclusions

Understanding the contrast between *se*-clausal passives and *fi*-clausal passive forced us into the study of Romanian finite subject clauses, in contrast with object clauses. In sections 1-3 we proposed an analysis of finite subject clauses in Romanian. In the final sections 4-5 we proposed an explanation for the full acceptability of reflexive clausal passive as opposed to the degraded status of auxiliary passives. The following are the main results on the grammar of finite subject clauses in active and passive sentences.

(i) This study fully confirms the old assumption that subjects are nominal constituents, restated as the DP-Subject Requirement, i.e. the claim that only DPs/NPs may occupy Spec, T, i.e. the canonical subject position. At least in pro-drop languages, this requirement follows from the feature structure of T, which includes a [*uD*] feature.

(ii) Since CPs cannot check D-features, we argued that Romanian subject clauses are licensed in a  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  configuration, where the two members of the chain jointly contribute to value the uninterpretable features of T[ *iT, uD, uφ* ]

(iii) The two members of the  $\langle pro_{expl} \dots CP \rangle$  chain have well-defined properties. A comparison with the English subject expletives *it* and *there* has shown that *pro\_{expl}* is a *there*-type expletive. This means that both *there* and *pro\_{expl}* possess an interpretable



valued D-feature, while their  $\phi$ -features are interpretable, but unvalued. Their unvalued  $\phi$ -features are valued by agreement with their respective associates.

(iv) An important finding of the study is that Romanian finite CPs are endowed with valued  $\phi$ -features, which they can transmit through agreement. This is shown by the existence of a specific demonstrative clausal substitute, with a unique feature structure, which directly reflects the properties of the CP.

(v) The grammar of subject clauses is simply based on a relation of agreement between the expletive and the associate CP, an operation which enables the CP to value the features of *pro<sub>expl</sub>*, while the expletive (a DP) is then in a position to value all the features of T.

(vi) The grammar of (post)verbal subject clauses is an instance of Free Inversion in the sense of Belletti (2004). The postverbal subject, in this case, the CP, moves to the  $\nu$ P periphery, mostly acting as a Focus, while the strong features of T are valued by the expletive in SpecT.

(vii) As to passive subject clauses, their difficulty is that they are derived subjects, i.e. object clauses which become subjects and must check the features of T. In the case of object clauses, no expletive subject has been merged, and the (object) CP cannot value the *u*D feature of Tense, a subject/object asymmetry that had gone unnoticed.

(viii) We have proposed that a last-resort strategy for checking the nominal feature of T, is that another nominal, which is in a configuration of agreement with T, values the *u*D feature of T. In reflexive clausal passives, the reflexive clitic is the needed nominal which checks *u*D and thus secures the flawless grammaticality of *se*-clausal passives. In contrast, in *fi*-clausal passives, the nominal features of T may remain unchecked. *Fi*-clausal passives may thus instantiate failed agreement, with consequences on their acceptability.

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