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ROMANIAN LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS HEADED BY A FACE

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Abstract: The paper focuses on the theory of light verb constructions, with respect to Romanian, such as "a face o plimbare" – "have a walk", discussing the main properties of light verbs as accounted for in the literature (Butt & Geuder, 2001, Grimshaw and Mester, 1988, Catell, 1984, etc.). We have selected the verb "a face"/ "make, do", which has a transitive configuration, but may also add a third optional, non-core argument (see Pylkkänen, 2002) which receives the Dative case. The aim of this paper is to distinguish between the cases where "a face"/ "make, do" has the syntax of a lexical verb, and those in which it truly behaves as a light verb. To this end, we analyze the types of nominalizations that can occur with the verb "a face", focusing on how the internal argument of the nominalized verb is realized.

Keywords: light verbs, nominalizations, internal argument, Dative, Romanian

1. Introduction

1.1. On light verb constructions

The issue of light verb constructions (LVCs henceforth), or more precisely, the way they are formed, has been addressed by many notable linguists, such as Wierzbicka 1982, Catell 1984, Butt 2001, 2010, Grimshaw & Mester 1988, Samek-Lodovici 2003, Heidy Harley 2003, etc. The main consensus has been that they are formed by a light verb together with the nominalization of another verb, a deverbal noun. Generally, they have been considered as periphrastic paraphrases of regular verbs. For example, expressions such as *have a drink, do exercises* or *take a bath* paraphrase the lexical verbs *drink, exercise* and *bathe*.

The verbs which head such expressions have been described as "light" because they appear to lack descriptive content (i.e. the meaning of the expression is given by the second, nominalized verb) and have only syntactic content (i.e. they carry inflection).

In terms of the distinction between lexical and functional categories, light verbs are considered to be an intermediary category (Gallego, 2007; Karimi Doostan, 2004, etc.): from the point of view of their impoverished content they resemble auxiliaries, but their syntax is that of lexical verbs. Butt (2003 : 10) states that "Light verbs are parts of complex predicates. Light verbs should be recognized as separate syntactic class. Or rather, that the syntactic properties of light verbs distinguish them from the syntactic distribution of auxiliaries as well as main verbs."

The fact that they have an impoverished descriptive content has been argued to be the indication of their inability to assign theta roles. For example, in (1) *Jim* is considered to be an argument of *a promise* and not of *made,* but in (2) it is clear the argument of *made* and not of *cake*. (Samardzic, 2008).

(1) Jim made a promise.
(2) Jim made a cake.

As we have previously argued (Anitescu, 2015, 2016) we do not agree with the fact that they are entirely devoid of meaning. From the examples under (3a) it can be clearly seen that they contribute aspectual features. *A avea* and *have,* as lexical verbs are both states as lexical verbs, but as light verbs *avea* continues to be a state, while *have* may also receive a dynamic value and therefore, the progressive aspect (3b). Furthermore, they are not interchangeable (Anitescu, 2015).

(3) a. Ion are o durere de spate.
Ion have 3rd P a ache of back
'Ion has a backache'
Ion *are/face o plimbare.
*Ion *have 3rd per/make 3rd per. a walk.*
'Ion has/takes a walk.'

b. John is having a shower.

Our proposal (Anitescu 2015, 2016) has been that they actually represent a subcategory of lexical verbs, and not functional: they spell out the lexical feature [+V] and their syntax is that of regular, lexical verbs since they project both a complete functional domain and a complete lexical VP (possibly) providing argument positions for the nominalised verb. Their contrast with auxiliaries which are functional verbs can be seen from the fact that auxiliaries occupy a position in the functional domain of the lexical verb (4) and with respect to NICE properties (5).

(4) Am avut mare admiratie pentru ea.

"I have had great admiration for her"

(5) a. takes a walk. Take a piece of cake.

b. He didn't take a walk. He didn't take a piece of cake.

c. *He tookn't a walk. *He tookn't a piece of cake. (examples taken from Elenbaas, 2011: 5)

2. An analysis of *a face* LVCs

2.1. The theoretical problem

We have started from the theoretical issue of the categorial status of light verbs. As previously discussed in the introduction, they have been argued to be an intermediary category between functional and lexical verbs, but our proposal is that they are a subcategory of lexical, full verbs. Therefore, we need to clearly distinguish between the cases where they behave as lexical verbs and those in which they are truly light. To this end, we focused on the realization of the arguments of the nominalized verb from the LVC, which poses two problems: theta assignment and case realization.

2.2. The Corpus

The Corpus we have gathered includes Romanian LVCs headed by the light verb a *face/make, do*. The verb *a face* has a transitive structure, with two obligatory arguments (the Agent and a Theme) (1). Sometimes, it may add a third argument, which is optional and receives the Dative case (2). This optional argument is a non-core argument in Pylkkänen's (2002) terms, in other words it is not part of the original argument structure of the verb, it is not an obligatory argument as the external argument (the subject, the agent) and the first internal argument (the theme) are.

(1) a face popas

'to make a stopover'

'to stop over'

(2) a face o promisiune cuiva

'to make a promise to someone'

2.3. The Analysis

2.3.1. The light verb behaving as lexical verb

The first case of the verb *a face* being a lexical verb with a regular syntax is that of *argumentless nominalizations* (Anitescu, 2015). We have used the term "argumentless" to indicate the absence of any other overtly expressed argument, except for the external argument, i.e. the subject.

In this class, we have found all types of verbs that undergo nominalization: unergative, unaccusative and transitive.

(3) Unergative: A face răbdare (obsolete) – a răbda

'to make patience"

'to wait'

Răbdare nu pot sa fac/ După boala care zac (Conachi, 54, DLRM, vol 13)

'I cannot wait for the illness that I'm done with

b. Transitive: A face o încercare – a încerca

'to make a try' '

to try'

Ion a făcut o ultimă încercare.

'Ion tried one last time'

c. Unaccusative : A face opoziţie – a se opune/ a opune pe cineva cuiva/ a se opune cuiva

'to make opposition to'

' to oppose someone or something'

' PNL a făcut opoziţie politicii PSD.

'PNL opposed the politics of PSD

(Anitescu, 2015)

We propose that this class of LVCs has an unproblematic syntax: both the argument positions of *a face* are satisfied: the nominalization is the DO of the LV, and the Subject is still under debate, but one solution may be that it is that of the deverbal noun and that it undergoes Subject-to-Subject raising.

With respect to internal argument realization, the most interesting case is that of transitive nominalizations, since they are the ones which may receive an internal argument (4). Their internal argument cannot be realized inside the nominalization

(4) A face ascultare (obs) MR a da ascultare– a asculta

'to conform, to comply with, to obey'

'Neascultarea ce îmi făcuşi va fi o aducere aminte în sufletul tău' (DLRM 293 Vol 1)

'The disobedience you have showed me will haunt you.' (Anitescu, 2015)

Our second class includes situations where the IA of the nominalized verb can be realized inside the nominalization, where it acquires the Genitive case and is theta-marked. We argue that the syntax of these constructions is also that of regular verbs.

The realization of the internal argument inside or outside the nominalization depends on the properties of the affix. Not all suffixes allow this to happen. For example, zero affixes have a very low scope. Therefore, the nominalization cannot accommodate an internal argument. See Huddlestone and Pullum (2002), who discussed this situation with respect to English doublets of the following form:

(5) Jane gave an excellent description of the city.
Jane gave an excellent description to the city.

In Romanian this construction is also available to complex event nominals, which may also develop resultative readings, and which require overt IAs in the genitive case (either inflectional (6) or prepositional (7)):

(6) Turiştii au făcut înconjurul lumii.
'The tourists made a trip around the world.'

(7) Ion i-a făcut Mariei un juramânt de fidelitate.
'Ion made an oath of faithfulness to Maria.' (Anitescu, 2015)

Sometimes, a third argument may be added (8), but not all nominalizations allow this to happen (9):

(8) a face prezentarea muzeului pentru turişti/ turiştilor
'To make a tour of the museum for tourists / to tourists'
a face un schimb de experienţă cu alţi studenţi
'to make an exchange of experience with other students'.

Not all the nominalizations above accept a third argument:
(9) ? a face oamenilor ocolul primăriei
? 'To make the roundabout of the city hall to someone' (Anitescu, 2015)

Even though this unacceptability of the third argument may be argued to indicate that the third argument is an IA of the nominalization, and not a face, we can provide some counter examples. As can be seen in (10), the same variation holds true when a face combines with an underived noun. Thus, there are cases where a Dative or a PP can be added and cases where it is not possible.

(10) a. a face loc / a face loc cuiva

'To make room/ to make room to someone/ to upset someone'

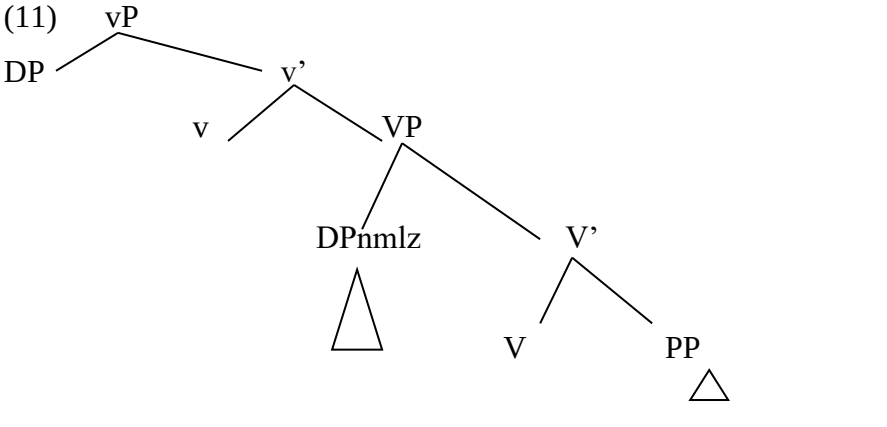
b. a face insolaţie (*cuiva)

' to make a heatstroke to someone'* (Anitescu, 2015)

Our proposal (Anitescu, 2015) was that this class includes examples of *non-light face*, which has a regular syntax.

When *a face* has three arguments in this construction, their semantic compatibility is secured inside the lower VP to *a face*. (11)

(11)



face O prezentare ~~face~~ pentru judecători
do a faptelor *for the judges*
a presentation
of the facts

2.3.2. *A face as light verb*

The most interesting cases that we have found are those where the IA of the nominalization is realized in the main clause, as a Dative, instead of an Accusative or Genitive.

(12) Maria a făcut textului corecturile necesare.

'Maria made the necessary corrections to the text'

Seceta a făcut pagube însemnate tuturor zonelor limitrofe.

'The drought did considerable damages to all bordering areas'

Ministerul a făcut o inspecţie spitalelor din oraş.

'The Ministry did an inspection of the hospitals from the town.'

The IA of the nominalization receives the Theme theta role from the deverbal noun, but receives the Dative case in the functional domain of the LV. The fact that this argument bears the theta role of Theme instead of Goal/Beneficiary can be seen in the Dative/Accusative alternation (13). In this case, the verb *a face* is clearly a light verb.

(13) a face cuiva o vizită – a vizita pe cineva

to pay someone a visit / to visit someone

Matei i-a făcut o vizită tatălui său.

Matei paid his father a visit

Matei l-a vizitat pe tatăl său.

Matei visited his father

A face cuiva ocară – a ocarî pe cineva

To pick a quarrel with someone

Mumă-sa i-a făcut ocară băiatului.

The mother picked a quarrel with her son

Mumă-sa l-a ocărât pe băiat.

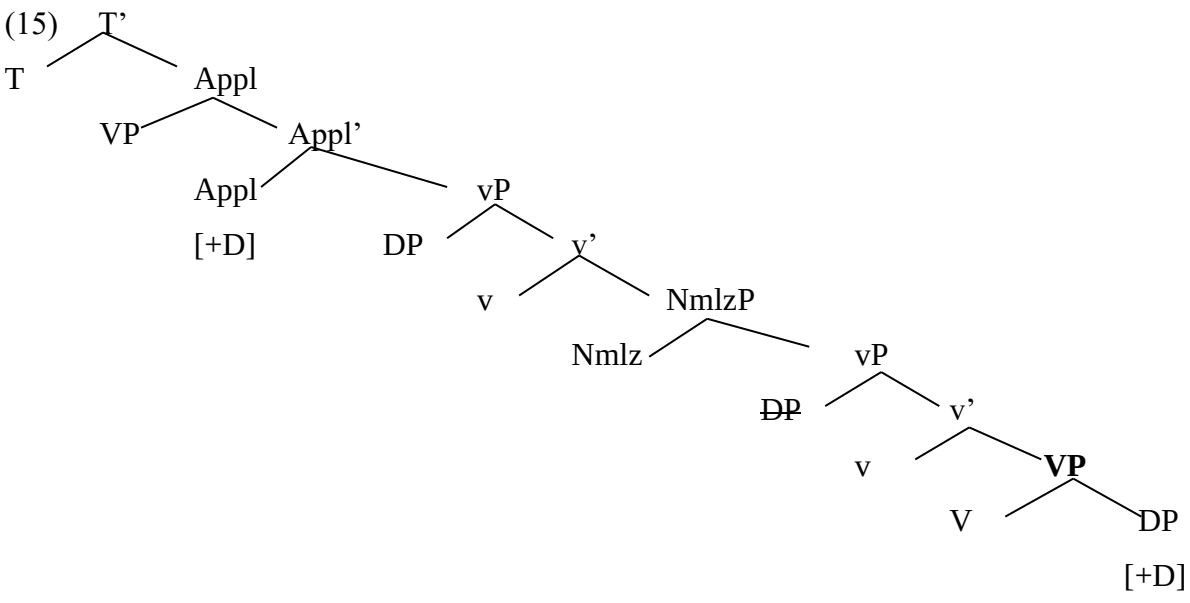
The mother quarreled with her son (Anitescu, 2015)

In Anitescu (2015) we proposed a syntactic approach within which this Dative is assigned by an Applicative head. The notion of *applicative head* was coined by Pylkkänen (2002) and since then it has been discussed by many other linguists such as Georgala (2010) or Nash & Boneh (2011). Applicative heads are functional heads that license non-core argument and there may be *high* or *low applicatives.* According to Pylkkänen (2002: 16), high applicative heads "denote a thematic relation between an individual and the event described by the verb", while low applicative heads describe describe "a recipient-relation between the

indirect and direct objects" or "a source relation"). Accordingly, we proposed that the Dative will be assigned by a high applicative head, since a low one would have been preferred with a location interpretation (14b)

(14) a. a face un denunţ cuiva. – a denunţa pe cineva
'to denounce someone'
Ion mi-a făcut un denunţ mie.
'Ion denounced me.'
b. *a face un denunţ la cineva
*'*denounce to someone'*
*Ion făcut un denunţ la mine.
*'*Ion denounced to me.'*

We proposed the following derivation for such sentences :

(15)


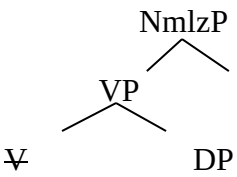
As can be seen from the tree above, our proposal (Anitescu, 2015) was that the subject of the second, nominalized verb raises to Spec vP and then to Spec T in the main clause.

Because the IA must receive case, the lower VP which contains the IA must move to a position where the IA's case can be valued, to a position where the IA is accessible to the functional domain of the light verb. Thus, we proposed that the second, lower VP moves to Spec Nmlz in order to be c-commanded by the applicative head.

The Dative is an inherent case, so it is checked earlier than structural cases (Sigurðsson, 2012). Therefore, the applicative values the dative feature of the internal argument under Agree, and not the feature of the subject. In this way, both of the arguments can be theta-marked inside the nominalization and case-marked in the functional domain of the LV.

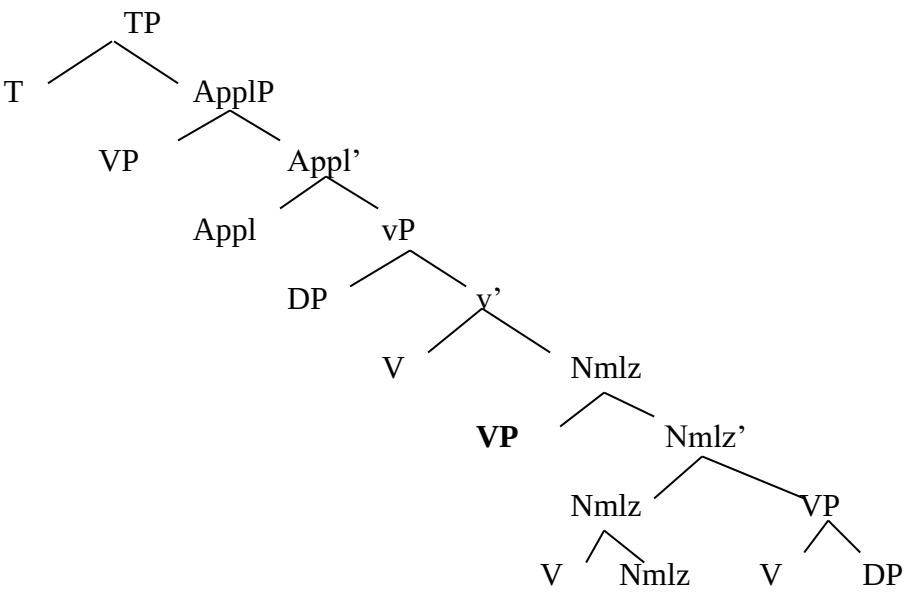
The intermediate configuration would be:

(16)



The final configuration:

(17)



As mentioned earlier, the Subject is still under debate. In Anitescu (2015) we showed that there are two options: It can belong to the nominalized verb and in this case it behaves as discussed above, but it can also be of the LV *face*. In all the examples that we discussed, the subject is agentive, and state verbs which undergo nominalization would select the LV a avea. In (18) the subject should be an Experiencer according to the nominalized verb, but they are infelicitous.

(18) *Ion face o dorinţă. – a dori
'Ion makes a wish'- to wish
**Maria face ură- a urî*
'Maria hates'

If the subject is that of the LV, and not of the nominalized verb, only the lower VP containing the IA moves to the main clause.

3. Conclusions

To sum up what we have discovered with respect to LVC in Romanian, in most of the cases *a face* is a lexical verb, having the regular syntactic structure of a transitive verb: the nominalization is the DO, while the subject may or may not be that of the nominalization. When *a face* adds a third, non-core Dative argument we may talk about instances of *light face*, since the IA of the nominalization receives the theta role (Theme) inside the nominalization and case in the functional domain of the LV, in what is called restructuring. Thus, the case feature on the IA is valued by a functional head (the Applicative) in the domain of the main verb.

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