Impersonal Constructions in Old Romanian

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ABSTRACT

The paper describes the impersonal constructions attested in Old Romanian (16th c. - 18th c.) highlighting their diversity and continuity in time, from Latin to present-day Romanian. The form-function correlations involve syncretism and complex combinations that qualify the Romanian impersonal domain as one of the most complex in the Romance area. The corpus analysis is illustrated with a large number of examples excerpted from the oldest written texts preserved in Romanian.

Keywords: impersonals, R-impersonals, T-impersonals, A-impersonals, form-function correlations, Old Romanian, present-day Romanian, Romance languages

1. Introduction

The impersonal domain has been lately defined at the intersection of structural and functional properties of several related constructions. Formally, impersonals are constructions that display deviations from the canonical encoding of the subject, following operations on the argument structure (Malchukov & Siewierska 2011a: 1). Functionally, impersonals convey a construal of events that correlates with a decrease in subjecthood properties, i.e. definiteness, topicality, and animacy/agentivity (Keenan 1985), canonically marked overtly as case, agreement, and word order (Givón 1997: 29). Accordingly, three classes of impersonals have been identified cross-linguistically (Keenan 1976: 102, Malchukov & Siewierska 2011a: 4, 7, Malchukov & Ogawa 2011: 19ff): R-impersonals, T-impersonals and A-impersonals, each class subsuming several semantic subclasses (meteorological verbs, presentatives, emotional, modals, etc.) and various overlapping morpho-syntactic strategies of encoding information (zero subject, dummy subject, indefinite subject noun, indefinite subject pronominals, grammaticalized pronominals, etc.). Some subclasses represent basic, inherent impersonals, others are derived from personal constructions via valency reducing operations. Impersonal structures are viewed as a transitional/intermediate stage of a more basic diachronic change, i.e. transitive to intransitive, active to passive, participant-centred to event- centred structures (Malchukov & Siewierska 2011a: 5, 11, 13).

In the impersonal domain, Latin displayed inherent impersonals (zero valent/subject predicates) both active (impersonals with active morphology) and passive (impersonals with passive morphology), and indefinite subject constructions. Impersonals fell in several semantic subclasses like: meteorological predicates (*pluit* 'it rains', *nuit* 'it snows', *hoc lucebit* 'it's daybreake'); feeling predicates, construed as exterior forces of unknown origin affecting the individual who was expressed as an Accusative (*me miseret*) or a Dative of interest (*mihi dolet*); modal impersonals (of probability, necessity, obligation, etc.). Indefinite constructions included

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3rd person plural predicates, 2nd person singular predicates, the Dative present participle, and some negative *nemo homo* forms (Ernout & Thomas 1959: 209-211, 144-145).

As expressions of a (more or less) depersonalized discourse stance, contemporary Romanian impersonal constructions are syntactically and semantically heterogeneous (GLR 2008, II: 143-147, GR 2013: 104-110, 173-174). From old to contemporary Romanian few changes have occurred, especially on the lexical level and in point of register selections, while basic structural and semantic (sub)types were preserved.

2. R-impersonals

R-impersonals display a zero subject or a subject deficient in referential/definiteness properties. A large number of R-impersonal constructions have been attested in Old Romanian, transmitted to Modern Romanian. The basic structural-functional types were: (1) weather predicate constructions; (2) generic nominal subject constructions; (3) indefinite pronominal subject constructions; (4) impersonal *se* constructions; (5) indefinite null subject constructions; (6) nominalizations.

2.1. Weather predicate impersonals

Weather predicate impersonals illustrated in (1) featured several morpho-syntactic strategies: zero valence meteorological predicates (1a); zero valence aspectual ('in progress') predicates derived from atmospheric nouns marked by the reflexive *se* (1b) or zero marked (1c), occurring in simplex structures (1b) or in complex structures with a subject (1d) or a prepositional object (1e); full verbs with meteorological noun subjects in intransitive (1f-g) or in transitive structures (1h); predicates with cognate/internal subject (1i) or object (1j); god-subject predicates (1j, k); predicative *be* + a meteorological/atmospheric noun (1l); elliptical nominal sentences (1m). It is worth noticing alternative impersonal structures for the same verb, as shown in (1a/k), (1b/g/i), (1k/n). Occasionally, transitive structures occurred, which seemed to have a *pro* subject standing for a god-subject (1n). Dummy/expletive subjects did not occur. Some meteorological/weather/atmospheric subjects (*noapte* 'night', *seară* 'evening') stood in a derivative relationship to the corresponding verbs (*înnopta* 'get dark', *însera* 'get night'), others did not have such counterparts (*dimineaţă* 'morning', *întuneric* 'dark'), displaying lexical asymmetries which persisted over time.

(1) a. şi nu ploo spre pământ trei anii şi şase luni
and not rained.3SG toward ground three years and six moths
'And no rain had falen on Eearth for three years' (CPr.1566-1567: 158)

b. Şi fu când apuse soarele şi **se întunecă** (PO.1582: 51)
and was when set sun.DEF and SE darkened.3SG
'And it happened when the Sun went down and it was getting dark'

c. până va înnopta (Prav.1646: 66)
until AUX.FUT.3SG get night.INF
'until night will fall'

d. se **răvărsa** zorile (PO.1582: 61)
SE overfilled.3PL dawn.PL

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'the dawn was braking'

e. Şi zuoa era vineri, şi **să lumina** spre **sâmbătă** (NT.1648: 102v)
and day was Frididay and SE lighten.3SG toward Saturday
'and it was Friday, and Saturday morning was breaking out'

f. **vântul să stea** (CC[2].1581: 297)
wind.DEF SĂ stop.3SG
'for the wind to stop'

g. **căzu** [...] **ceaţă** şi întunearec (NT.1648: 152r)
fell.3SG fog and darkness
'it was getting dark and foggy'

h. **Luminară** fulgerele lui toată lumea (CP.1577: 187v)
lightened.3PL thunders.DEF his all world.DEF
'his thunders lightened all over the world'

i. înturerecul nu **înturecă-se** (PS.1577: 289)
darkness.DEF not darken.3SG=SE
'it was not getting dark'

j. [Domnul nostru] ce **nuoreadză ceriul de nuori** (PH.1500-1510: 123v)
Lord our who clouds sky.DEF with clouds
'Our Lord who clouded the sky with clouds'

k. Domnul Domnedzeu încă nu era ploat pre pământ (PO.1582: 16)
Lord.DEF God yet not rained on earth
'our Good Lord had not rained on Eearth yet'

l. fu **seară** şi fu **demâneaţă**; zua a doa (PO.1582: 12)
was eavning and was.3SG morning; dayDEF second
'it was evening, and it was morning; the second day'

m. stătu ploaia şi frig (CPr.1566-1567: 136)
stopped.3SG rain.DEF and cold
'the rain stopped and it was cold'

n. Ploa-va pre greaşnici [...] foc **şi piatră** (PH.1500-1510: 94)
rain=AUX.3SG on sinners fire and stone
'Fire and stones will fall upon sinners'

The verb was marked for the 3rd person (most often singular). When they occurred, weather/atmospheric/god-subjects were pre- or postposed, probably correlated with the topic-comment information structure of the sentence. The structures (1a) and (1b) are the unmarked choice in standard contemporary Romanian, but all the others are still available in various registers (colloquial, popular), in contemporary Biblical texts or in literature, with metaphoric or mystic connotations.

2.2. Generic nominal subject constructions

The constructions with generic subjects illustrated in (2), frequent throughout the 16th-18th centuries, displayed a [+human, - referential] singular/plural noun (*om/oameni*) in the subject position, usually modified by the universal quantifier *tot/toţi.* The finite verb predicate agreed in person and number with the subject (3rd person singular/plural) in pre- or postverbal position. Unlike the German *man*-constructions or the French *on*-constructions, the noun in the Romanian

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counterparts preserved its lexical features. The strategy did not involve grammaticalization. The pattern persisted through the 19th century, but its frequency decreased in the 20th century. Nevertheless it is still available in colloquial present-day Romanian.

(2) a. să înţeleagă **toţi oamenii** (CCat.1560: 1v)
SĂ understand.3PL all people.PL.DEF
'everybody to understand'

b. totu omu [...] a audzi (CV.1563-1583: 341)
all people.SG A_{INF} hear
'everybody to hear'

c. să ştie totu omul (DÎ:XIV: 9)
SĂ know.3SG all people.SG
'everybody to know'

d. când iaste omul învăţat într-acest meşterşug a furtuşagului (Prav.1646: 65)
when is man.DEF learned in this craft A_{GEN} stealing.DEF.GEN
'when the man is used with stealing'

2.3. Indefinite pronominal subject constructions

Indefinite pronominal subjects illustrated in (3) were spelled out in various ways: as a 2nd person singular pronoun (3a), a 3rd person singular pronoun (3b), a 1st person plural pronoun (3c), a 3rd person plural pronoun (3d), a generic demonstrative (3e), and an indefinite quantifier (3f). They co-occurred in the same text, as shown in (3a-d). The verb agreed in person and number with the indefinite generic pronominal subject. The demonstrative *(a)cel(a)* conveyed both a [+ unique] and a [+ generic] reading, as illustrated in (3g) and (3h), respectively.

(3) a. de va fi vrăjmaşul tău flămând, tu satură pre el (CC^2.1581: 42)
if AUX.FUT.3SG be enemy.DEF your hungry you cram PE him
'if your enemy will be hungry, cram him'

b. Făţarnic […] iaste acela ce, de cumu
hypocrite is that who of how
i- e obrazul, elu-l
CL.DAT.3SG=is cheek.DEF he=CL.ACC.3SG
strămutează într-alt chip (CC^2.1581: 44)
changes in another face
'he who changes his appearance is an hypocryte'

c. să nu postim noi pentru să ne laude oamenii (CC^2.1581: 44-45)
SĂ not fast.1PL we in order to CL.ACC.1PL praise people.PL.DEF
'to not fast in order to be praised by other people'

d. înotăm, neprecepându-ne până la o vreame şi an cu soroc,
swim.1PL not $knowing_{GER}$=CL.REFL.1PL until a time and year with term
cum şi ceia ce înoată pre mare cu precepătură. Şi ei încă, […]
like and those who swim on sea with skill and they also
aorea înoată (CC^2.1581: 51)
sometimes swim […]

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'And we swim unskillfully until a given time and year, like those who skillfully swim at sea. Sometimes, they also swim […]'

e. înotăm, neprecepîndu-ne, până la o vreame şi an cu soroc,
swim.1PL not.knowing$_{GER}$=CL.REFL.1PL until a time and year with term
cum şi ceia ce înoată pre mare cu precepătură (CC^2.1581: 51)
like and those who swim on sea with skill
'And we swim unskillfully until a given time and year, like those who skillfully swim at sea. Sometimes, they also swim […]'

f. unii zic că se cheamă boală (CC^2.1581: 82)
some say.3PL that SE called.3SG illness
'some people say it is called illness'

g. cela ce ploae vă dă (CB.1559-1560: 177)
that who rain CL.DAT.3PL gives
'he who gives you rain'

h. Ceia ce vor aprinde casa omului (Prav.1646: 43)
those who AUX.FUT.3PL fire house.DEF man.DEF.GEN
'those who will set man's house on fire'

The same strategies function in present-day Romanian (GR 2013: 108-109, 396-398). Patterns (3a-d, h) are oral, informal, having the impersonal *se*-type (described in section 2.4. below) as a written, formal counterpart in present-day standard Romanian. The pattern illustrated in (3e/h) is marked as formal in oral and written present-day Romanian.

2.4. Impersonal 'se' constructions

Impersonal *se* constructions reduce one valency of the verb and insert *se* as a marker of the backgrounded generic human agent. Formally, the reflexive has the morphological Accusative Case and it was grammaticalized as an impersonal marker in Vulgar Latin. The *se* impersonalizer has been transmitted to Romanian, Spanish (*se*) and Italian (*si*), while French inherited *on (*< Lat. *hommo)* (Dobrovie-Sorin 1987: 489, Reinheimer & Tasmowski 2005: 107, 142-148). Impersonal *se* constructions of transitive verbs (4a-c) interfered with *se*-passive constructions (4'a-c) in Old Romanian. While *se* constructions with [+ specific subjects] and an overt agent-phrase can be viewed as fully fledged instances of passive constructions (4'a-b), *se*-constructions with non-specific subjects and deleted agent-phrases (4a-c) were on the borderline with impersonals, on a par with agentless *be*-passives with non-specific subjects (illustrated in 4''a-c). The verb often agreed with the pre/postverbal non-agent formal subject (4a-b); nevertheless the singular agreement (4c) with the adjacent noun has been spotted, which persists in substandard contemporary Romanian. Less often, the impersonal *se* marked intransitive (4d-e) and antitransitive verbs (4f). The (passive-) impersonal *se* became more frequent in the 18th century, while the 2nd person impersonal had fewer attestations (Chivu 2000: 54, 69, 111-112). The number of intransitive *se* impersonals increased at the middle of the 20th century, although the normative linguists of the time seemed to reject them (ILR 2013: 729-730). Contextually, some verbs that were used impersonally acquired a modal (4d) and/or iterative reading (4e). Unlike in contemporary standard Romanian the impersonal *se* also marked the verb *to have* (4g).

(4) a. se luo mare frâmseaţea ta (PS.1577: 10r)
SE took.3SG great beauty.DEF your

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‘your great beauty was taken’

b. Glas […] se auzi, plângere şi suspin şi ţipet mult (NT.1648: 4r)
voice SE heard.3SG, cry and sigh and scream much
‘voices were heard, cries and sighs and screams’

c. se aude plânsuri şi suspini (Ev.1642: 55)
SE hear.3SG cries and sighs
‘cries and sighs are heard’

d. e dzisă din leage **să se tacă** (Prav.1581: 179)
is said from law SĂ SE cease.3SG
‘the law stipulates to keep silent’

e. Cu inema se creade întru direptate (Ev.1642: 265)
with heart SE believe.3SG in justice
‘one should trust justice with all one’s heart’

f. cine va îmbla cu vită ce **nu se mănâncă**, post 3 leti
who AUX.FUT.3SG touch beef which not SE eat.3SG fast 3 years
‘who will touch beef which is forbidden to eat, 3 years fast’

g. Ce se avea (GB.XVI-XVII : 413r)
which SE had.3SG
‘which people used to have’

(4’) a. s-au dat domniia lui Lupu Vasilie-vornicul
SE=AUX.PAST.3PL given reign.DEF to Lupu Vasilie-governor.DEF
de sultan Murat (CLM.1700–1750: 90)
by sultan Murat
‘the reign was given to Lupu Vasilie, the governor by Murat, the sultan’

b. multă moarte […] de ai **noştri** s- au făcut (RG.1688-1798: 52)
much death by AI_{GEN} ours SE=AUX.PAST.3PL done
‘a lot of people were killed by our men’

(4’’) a. aceia **măngâiaţi vor** fi (CTd.1600-1650: 90v)
those relieved AUX.FUT.3PL be
‘those will be relieved’

b. ţie **este datŭ** să mergi aproape de raiu (A.1620: 15v)
you.DAT is given SĂ go.2SG close to heaven
‘you were given to go to Heavens’

c. **Lăsate**-i vor fi lui şi iertate vor fi
allowed=CL.DAT.3SG AUX.FUT.3PL be him.DAT and forgiven AUX.FUT.3PL be
lui (MI.1630: 181r)
him.DAT
‘these will be allowed and forgiven to him’

2.5. Indefinite null subject constructions

As a pro-drop language, Old Romanian displayed indefinite null subjects (5) projected in syntax via the verbal morphology, i.e. person 2 singular (5a), person 3 singular/plural (5b-c),

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person 1 plural (5d). Impersonalized passives (5e) can be viewed as a variety of indefinite null subject constructions, as suggested by Frajzyngier (1982).

(5) a. De ruşaţă la dinţi să arzi un ou în foc, să-1 pisezi,
for redness at teeth SĂ burn.2SG an egg in fire SĂ=CL.ACC.3SG grind.2SG
să priseri la dinţi (CB.1559-1560: 441)
SĂ spread.2SG at teeth
'for sore teeth, burn an egg in fire, grind it and spread it on the teeth'

b. scrie derepce s-au împeliţat ş-au
write.3SG that SE= AUX. PAST.3SG incarnated and= AUX.PAST.3SG.
luatu trup de om pre sine din Sfânta Maria (CC[1].1567-1568: 2r)
taken body of man on self from Saint Mary
'it is written that he incarnated and took human body from Saint Mary'

c. să nu judece, nece **să săduiască** (CCat.1560: 2r)
SĂ not judge.3SG, nor SĂ scold.3SG
'neither to judge, nor to scold'

d. "Nu era elu acea lumină", cum **să înţeleagemu**? (CC[1].1567-1568: 6r)
„Not was he that light" how SĂ understand.1PL
'How should we interpret „He was not that light"'

e. Nu iaste voo dat a înţeleage vreamea (CPr.1566-1557: 3)
Not is you.DAT given A$_{INF}$ understand time.DEF
'you were not given to understand time'

2.6. Nominalizations

Along the lines in Mettouchi & Tosco (2011: 308), we will consider the nominalization as an instance of acquired impersonalization. In Old Romanian, nominalizations were frequent, some displaying an impersonal reading (6a), others a personal reading (6'). Impersonal reading nominalizations were structurally heterogenous as to the root of the nominalized head: long infinitives (6a, 6'), supines (6b), participles (6c), suffix/prefix derived nouns (6d-e), loan compounds (6f), and nouns related to verbal roots (6g).

(6) a. mărturisirea pre Hristos (NT.1648: 12v)
avow-*re*.DEF PE Christ
'avowal of Christ'

b. sculatul *morţilor* (CCat.1560: 8^{r})
resurrection.SUP dead.PL.DEF.GEN
'resurrection of the dead'

c. în sângele **greșitului** (PH.1500−10: 48v)
in blood.DEF sin.PART.DEF.GEN
'in the blood of the sinner'

d. **Credinţa** creştinească (CCat.1560:3r)
believe-*inţa*.DEF Christian
'the Christian faith'

e. *nepaza* lui (Prav.1646: 107)
ne-guard.DEF his

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'him not being guarded'

f. cale-**făcătorii** (CL.1570: 12v)
way-make-*tor*.PL.DEF
'travelers'

g. au venit veaste că (DÎ. LXXXIX: 181)
AUX.PAST.3SG come rumor that
'a rumor came that'

(6') a. văzându noi perirea noastră (DÎ. XLIV: 143)
seeing.GER we perish-*re*.SG.DEF our
'as we saw our peril'

b. bucură-se Ie<ghi>ptul în **ieşita** lor (PH.1500-1510: 89v)
enjoy.3SG=SE Egypt.DEF in escape.SUP.DEF their
'Egypt enjoyed their escape'

3. T- impersonals

T-impersonal constructions are deficient in subject topicality and include thetic sentences/sentence-focus utterances of two types: (i) extraposed propositional subject sentences and (ii) presentational and existential sentences.

3.1. Extraposed propositional subject sentences

Extraposed propositional subject sentences include a modal/evaluative phrase in the matrix clause pertaining to three morpho-syntactic subclasses: verbal constructions, copular constructions, and adverbial modal constructions.

3.1.1. Verbal constructions

Verbal constructions (7a-k) were headed by inherent impersonal verbs like *a trebui* ('must'; see Fr. *il faut*), *a părea* ('seem'), *a se cădea* ('ought'), *a se cuveni* ('ought'), *a ajunge* ('be enough'), *a rămâne* ('be settled'), *a însemna* ('mean'), *a fi* ('be'), etc. The verb occurred in the 3rd person singular, rarely plural. Some impersonal verbs were zero marked (7a-d, j-k), some were obligatorily marked by the impersonal reflexive *se* (7g-i), others showed the zero/*se* free variation (7e/f). The expletive subject was not allowed. The extraposed subject was a tensed clause headed by various complementizers (*să, că, de, cum*, etc.), as exemplified in (7a, d, e, f, h, i, j, k) or a non-finite infinitival as in (7c, g), rarely participial clause (7b). Subject/object Raising was allowed (7b, h), and produced agreement of the modal/aspectual verb with the non-argument subject. Other impersonal verbs attested in Old Romanian are: *a avea* ('to have'), *a se prileji* ('to happen, to occur'), *a sosi* ('to suffice') (Dindelegan 2013 PC/Dindelegan ms.).

(7) a. **trebuiaşte** să dăm seama (DÎ.1600: XLIV)
must.3SG SĂ give.1PL report
'we must explain'

b. slujbele [câte$_i$ trebuie [t$_i$ scoase t$_i$] (DÎ.1602: LV)
services.DEF how many must held
'all the church services that are to be held'

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c. **rămas-a** se-mi da 7500 […] (DÎ.1590-1591)
remained=AUX.PAST.3.SG SE=CL.DAT.1SG give 7500
'there were still 7500 to be given to me'

d. **au rămas** să fie ţiganul a lui Aron Vodă
AUX.PAST.3SG remained SĂ be gypsy.DEF A_{GEN} of Aron Vodă
'It was settled that the gypsy would be Aron Vodă's'(DRH.A.1635-1651: 18)

e. pare-vă-se voao că cătră aceaia alergŭ eu? (CC^2.1581: 58)
seems=CL.DAT.2PL=SE you.DAT that towards those run I
'it seems to you that I am running towards them?'

f. vă pare voao că sântŭ hulitoriu (CC^2.1581: 58)
CL.DAT.2PL seems you.DAT that am s landerer
'it seems to you that I am a slanderer'

g. cuvine-se a şti (PO.1582: 298)
ought.ESG=SE A_{INF} know
'one ought to know'

h. [Trei lucrure]$_i$ se cad să aibă t_i omulu (FD.1592-1604: 143)
Three things SE ought.3SG SĂ has man.DEF
'there are three things man ought to have'

i. **să va** tâmpla cum faraon pre voi va fi chiemând
SE AUX.FUT.3SG happen that Pharaoh PE you AUX_1.FUT AUX_2.INF call.GER
'It will happen that Pharoh will be calling you' (PO.1582: 126)

j. agiunge de să-i pue […] să giure (Prav.1646: 193)
come.3SG that=CL.ACC.3PL put.2SG SĂ swear
'It cames that he put them swear'

k. Ce **iaste să fie** (MC.1620: 115)
What is SĂ be.SUBJ.3SG
'What is to happen'

3.1.2. Copular constructions

Various copular impersonal modals occurred in Old Romanian, as exemplified in (8). The structures included the verb *to be* inflected for mood and tense in the 3rd person singular + AvP (8a) / AdjP (8b) / NP (8c) / supine clause (8d) / infinitival clause (8e). The supine and the infinitive complement of the copula were first attested in the texts from the 2nd half of the 17th century (Dindelegan 2011, Dragomirescu 2013: 232). The copula – complement order was free, probably correlated with emphasis on the inverted modal. Expletive subjects were not allowed, as in Modern Romanian. Other lexicalizations were *e lesne* 'it is easy', *e destul* 'it is easz', *e lucru* 'it is a fact', *e folos* 'it is useful', *e mare rău* 'it is great evil', *e cu putinţă* 'it is a possibility', *e poftă* 'it is appetence', *e de ajuns* 'it is enough', etc. (Dindelegan: 2013, PC/Dindelegan ms.).

(8) a. Bine e omului deaca va purta jugul Domnului
well is man.DEF.DAT if AUX.FUT wear yoke.DEF God.DEF.DAT
'It's good for man to wear God's yoke'(CC^1.1567-1568: 94r)

b. Şi-i era drag a ceti la scripturi (MC.1620: 179)
And=CL.DAT.3SG was dear A_{INF} read in Scriptures
'And he loved reading the Scriptures'

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c. **e păcat** a mânca peaşte sau carne (CC[1].1567-1568: 152)
is sin A_{INF} eat fish or meat
'It is a sin to eat fish or meat'

d. De mirat este că limba moldovenilor […] (CLM: 146)
DE surprise.SUP is that language.DEF Moldavians.DEF.GEN
'It is a surprise that the Moldavian's language'

e. de a crede iaste cum [...] acei schiti să fie izvorât (CIst.1700-1750: 77r)
DE A_{INF} believe is how those Scythians SĂ be risen
'this is for everybody to believe where those Scythians came from'

3.1.3. Adverbial modal constructions

Adverbial modal constructions (9) were rare during the second half of the 16th century and the first half of the 17th century, but became ever more frequent by the end of the 17th century. Some of them were instances of copular constructions (9a), while others were fully adverbialized and followed by a complementizer (9b). A periphrastic modal impersonal construction (*poate fi că*) was identified in some texts form the 16th and the 17th century (9c-d) (Zafiu 2006, Dindelegan 2013 PC), exemplified in (9c-d) below.

(9) a. e op a fi tărie astădzi cuvântul lui Dumnedzeu
is need A_{INF} be might today word.DEF of God
'It is needed that God's word be almighty today' (CS.1580-1619 : 299)

b. Poate **că** cu noi vei veni (PO.1582: 292)
May that with us AUX.FUT.1PL come
'You might come with us'

c. cest om poate-a hi **că** gândeaşte (DÎ.1593: XCV)
this man maybe=AUX.FUT.3SG be.INF that think.3SG
'this man might think'

d. Poate hi **că** poftesc să ni iea şi capetele (ISN.1674: LVI)
May be.INF that wish.3PL SĂ CL.DAT.1PL take and heads.DEF
'They probably want to take our heads too'

3.2. Presentational and existential sentences

Old Romanian, like present-day Romanian, appeared to be a thetic-V1 language (Gast & Haas 2011: 127) which allowed verb initial presentationals, asserting/posing a state of affairs. No expletive subject was/is inserted. The novel NP occurred postverbally, agreed in person and number with the predicate and was indistinctly marked for the Nominative=Accusative (10a). Formulaic presentationals included the verb *to be* + NP/complement clause (10b-c), the inherent impersonal reflexive *a se întâmpla* ('to happen') (10d) and the double impersonal *be + happen* structure (10e). The existential *be* + *când/deacă* construction (10d) was interpreted as a loan structure influenced by the Biblical Greek originals (Dindelegan: 2013, PC/Dindelegan ms.).

(10) a. cumu se-au sporit oamenii de la Adam şi de la Eva
how SE=AUX.PAST.3PL multiplied people.PL from Adam and from Eve
'how people got multiplied after Adam and Eve' (PO.1582: 4)

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b. după acéea a[u] fost ani 6918 (MC.1620: 216)
after that AUX.PAST.3PL been years 6918
'after that it was year 6918'

c. fu când ei mergea cătră răsărită (PO.1582: 40)
was when they were going towards East
'it happened when they were heading Eastwards'

e. Aşa se va tâmpla tuturora voauă (FT.1570-1575: 1v)
so SE AUX.FUT.3SG happen everybody.DAT you.DAT
'so will happen to you all'

f. Atunce se **tâmplă** de fu cutremur mare
then SE happened.3SG that was earthquake big
'Then it happened to be a big earthquake'(CM.1620: 114v)

In Old Romanian one place predicate formulaic existentials were attested in constructions with the verb *to be* (Cornilescu 2009), as illustrated in (11a-b) and the impersonal reflexive ***se*** *află*, exemplified in (11c). No expletive subject filled the topical subject slot. The non-topical subject normally occurred postverbally, although inversion under free word-order might have been correlated with emphasis. Formulaic existentials with the verb *există* (< Lat. *ex(s)istere*, 'to emerge'), attested in other Romance languages, emerged later, in the 18th century (DA, sv).

(11) a. nu e într-însele alte nemică (CCat.1560: 2r)
not is in=them others nothing
'there is nothing else in them'

b. Nu e […] lemn bun să facă rod rău (CT.1561: 129v)
not is wood good SĂ make.3SG fruit bad
'there is no good tree which bears bad fruit'

c. tuturor ce **să află** în părţile Ardealiului (VRC.1645: 480)
everybody.DAT who SE find.3SG in parts.DEF Ardeal.DEF.GEN
'to all those found in the Ardeal region'

A special subclass of *be* existentials, productive in old Romanian but fossilized in present-day Romanian, was represented by *be/have* + *wh*-complement/infinitival clause, illustrated in (12a-d) (Dindelegan's examples, 2013, PC). Either the *a*-infinitive or the bare infinitive was selected in relative + infinitive clauses. The expletive subject was disallowed. Raising enabled subject/object topicalization in the embedded clause.

(12) a. nu e [cinre a face binre] (PH.1500-1510: 132)
not is who A_{INF} do well
'there is no one who's doing good'

b. nu e [cinre se- mi agiute] (PH. 1500-1510: 103)
not is who SĂ=CL.DAT.1SG help
'there is nobody to help me'

c. [haraciul]$_i$ n- are [de unde t_i i se da t_i] (ISB.1655: LI)
tax not=has from where CL.DAT.3SG SE give.3SG
'there was no resource for the tax to be payed from'

d. **neavăând** [cine o lega] (CB.1571)

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not heaving.GER who CL.ACC.3SG.F tie
'without being anyone around to tie it'

As documented by Dindelegan (2013, PC/Dindelegan ms.) presentational and existential constructions showing an expletive pronominal subject (syncretic with the 3rd person singular/plural personal pronoun) were exceptionally recorded in MC.1620 (13).

(13) a. Deaca muri Enia, el stătu domn fiiu-său Ascanie (MC.1620: 119)
if died Enia he stood prince son=his Ascanie
'after Enia died, his son Ascanie was crowned prince'

b. ei crescură voinici Vasilie şi Costantin (MC.1620: 194)
they grew up strong Vasilie and Constantin
'Vasile and Constantin grew up strong'

c. el era numărul ailor 6960 (MC.1620: 218)
he was number years.GEN 6960
'It was the year 6960'

d. ei au fost ani 6867 (MC.1620: 219)
they AUX.PAST.3PL been years 6867
'it was the year 6867'

4. A-impersonals

The class of A-impersonals includes several constructions with subjects deficient in point of agentivity/animacy: (i) transitive verbs with an inanimate [+force] / [+instrument] argument, (ii) transimpersonal sentences, (iii) intransimpersonal sentences, and (iv) anticausative structures.

4.1. Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs with an argument pertaining to natural forces and instruments in the subject slot (Croft 2001) include structures like those exemplified in (14). They entered the active/passive opposition (*împlu/purtată* in 14a) and had *se* counterparts (14b/14b').

(14) a. fu [...] den ceri **hreamăt** ca o **bură** **purtată de vânt** şi **împlu toată** casa (CB.1559-1560: 79)
was from sky rustle like a drizzle borne by wind and filled all house.DEF
'a drizzle carried by the wind came from the sky and filled the house'

b. fu [...] un sunet din ceriu [...] şi **împlu toată** casa (Caz.V.1643: 199v-200r)
was a sound from sky and filled all house
'there was a sound from the sky which filled the house'

b' casa **să împlu** de mirezma unsorei (Caz.V.1643: 87v)
house.DEF SE filled.3SG with scent.DEF grease.DEF.GEN
'a scent of grease filled the house'

The same structural synonymy occurs in present-day Romanian.

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4.2. Transimpersonals

Transimpersonal sentences refer to transitive constructions taking an indefinite A-argument (Malchukov & Siewierska 2011a: 5). They have an experiential meaning (Verstraete 2011: 615) and show a physical or mental state of unknown origin, imposed from the exterior. On a par with their Latin counterparts, Old Romanian transimpersonals were structured as two-place predicates syntactically projected as an Accusative (15a-b)/Dative (15c-e) preverbal quirky subject + a postverbal NP/sentential subject which agreed with the verb in person and number. Alternative structures, with no experiencer and no formal subject but an adjunct instead were also attested (15f). The Accusative/Dative form expressed the experiencer and the Nominative lexicalized a locative/source. The structures occur also in present-day Romanian, with various verbs of body experiences: *mă supără ficatul* ('I have liver problems'), *mă înţeapă inima* ('I have a heart ache'), *mă trec căldurile* ('I have hot flushes'), *îmi curge nasul* ('I have a runny nose'), *îmi ţiuie urechile* ('My years are ringing'), *îmi vine rău* ('I feel bad'), etc. Structures with no subject and no experiencer convey in present-day Romanian (probably like in Old Romanian) a higher degree of impersonality.

(15) a. o doare inima de fiiul său (Caz.V.1643: 143)
CL.ACC.FEM.SG aches heart for son.DEF her
'she is heart-broken for her son'

b. nu-l doare capul (Bert.1774: 177)
not=CL.ACC.3SG aches head.DEF
'he has not a head-ache'

c. de-i place a lăcui cu el (CPr.1566-1567: 302)
if=CL.DAT.3SG A_{INF} like.3SG A_{INF} live with him
'if she likes to live with him'

d. carele-I plac Lui (NT.1648: 195r)
which=CL.DAT.3SG like him.DAT
'which he likes'

e. mie foarte îm place (Bert.1774: 165)
me.DAT very CL.DAT.1SG pleases
'I like it very much'

g. nu iaste dureare ca când doare spre suflet (Ev.1642: 100)
not is pain as when hearts on soul
'there is no greater pain than a broken heart'

4.3. Intransimpersonals

Intransitive impersonal constructions with an experiential meaning (body or psych experiences) showing a preverbal Dative quirky subject + *to be* + NP, as illustrated in (16a-c), will be referred to as intransimpersonal constructions. The structures can be simplex (16a) or complex, with a prepositional object realized as an NP (16b) or a complement clause (16c). Various other lexemes for physical/psychical experiences fit the pattern: *a-i părea rău* ('to feel sorry'), *a i se urî* ('to be sick of'), *a i se supăra* ('to be angry with'), etc.

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(16) a. Fu-i foame (CPr.1566-1567: 44)
was=CL.DAT.1SG hunger
'he was hungry'

b. ne pare bine de sănătatea domilor voastre
CL.DAT.1PL seems well for health.DEF highness.PL.DEF.DAT your.PL
'we are happy for the good health of Your Highness'(SB.1604-1618: 75)

c. mi-i şi **frică** a chiti de acealea (VN.1630: 153)
CL.DAT.1SG=is and fear A_{INF} think of those
'I am afraid of eaven thinking of those'

Alternative *have* (17a), full verb (17b) or transimpersonal (17c) constructions were allowed.

(17) a. Pentru frica ce are (Prav.1646: 117)
For fear that has
'because of his fear'

b. **păţia** rău mare şi foame (MC.1620: 41v)
suffered.3SG harm big and hunger
'he was harmed and hungry'

c. foamea pre ei prinde-i (CC^2.1581: 16)
hunger.DEF PE them reached
'they got hungry'

In present-day Romanian, the pattern illustrated in (16) is the standard option, while the patterns illustrated in (17) are probably peripheric, emphatic, and feature intensity/aspectual oppositions.

4.4. Anticausatives

Anticausatives are intransitive structures with an inanimate subject derived from an original object, which present a process as occurring spontaneously, without the intervention of an animate causer (18). In old Romanian most verbs in aticausative constructions were *se* marked (18a, c-d), but zero marked verbs also occurred (18b), probably subject to free lexical selections. The same situation occurs in present-day Romanian.

(18) a. sparse-se pre mijloc şi **se vărsară** toate maţele lui
broke=SE on middle and SE split all intestins.DEF his
'it broke in the middle and all his intestins spread around'(CPr:.1566-1567: 6)

b. nu iaste putinţă focul **să ardză** fără de leamne (Caz.V.1643: 147)
not is possibility fire.DEF SĂ burn.3SG without wood.PL
'fire cannot burn without wood'

c. **să deşcheiară** ceriurile (DPar.1683: 174-175)
SE opened.3PL sky.PL.DEF
'the sky opened'

d. copaciul [...] era numai cât de puţin **să se surpe** (SVI.~1670: 295)
tree.DEF was almost SĂ SE fall down
'the tree almost fell down'

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Kulikov (2011: 230ff) documented some special semantic classes of verbs (i.e. verbs of perception, knowledge and speech) which had a special evolution in Old Church Slavonic, i.e. from passives to anticausatives: *to be seen* > *to be visible*, *to be known* > *to be famous*/*to be obvious, to be said* > *to name* etc. The process was active in Old Romanian too; the texts attest anticausative impersonals for 'call/name/nick-name' (19a-c), as alternates for possessive Dative structures (19d) or for personal *dicendi* structures (19e). A special use had the reflexive passive/anticausative structure with the verb *to say* in (19f), later replaced by an adverbial functioning as a specialised apposition marker.

(19) a. tine te **cheamă** Chifa (CT.1561: 183v)
you.ACC CL.ACC.2SG call.3SG Chifa
'your name is Chifa'

b. Ştefan vodă ce l-au poreclit
Ştefan prince whom CL.ACC.3SG=AUX.PAST.3PL nicknamed
Lăcustă (ULM.~1725: 51)
Lăcustă
'Prince Ştefan whom they nicknamed Lăcustă'

c. **cheamă-se** Sihar (CC[1].1567-1568: 20v)
call.3SG=SE Sihar
'his name is Sihar'

d. Legheon mi-e numele (CC[1].1567-1568: 66v)
Legheon CL.DAT.1SG=is name.DEF
'My name is Legheon'

e. au dat peste o fiară ce-i zic ei bour
AUX.PAST.3PL come across a beast which=CL.DAT.3SG call they aurochs
'they came across a beast which they call aurochs'(Istoria.1709-1719: 181)

f. a aduce lucru Domnului de toate (ce se zice
AUX.FUT.3SG bring thing God.DEF.DAT of everything that SE say.3SG
smerenie, răbdare […] (CC[2].1581: 10)
humbleness, patience
'he will bring God everything, namely humbleness, patience'

5. Conclusions

In the framework provided by Malchukov & Siewierska (2011), the article presented an overview of the impersonal structures in Old Romanian: R-impersonals (section 2), T-impersonals (section 3), and A-impersonals (section 4). Further form-function correlations led to the identification of several subclasses pointing to various morpho-syntactic strategies of impersonalization in Old Romanian. Accordingly, for R-impersonals several structural subtypes have been identified: weather predicate constructions (section 2.1); generic nominal subject constructions (section 2.2); indefinite pronominal subject constructions (section 2.3); impersonal *se* constructions (section 2.4); indefinite null subject constructions (section 2.5); nominalizations (section 2.6). For T-impersonals, constructions showing extraposed propositional subject sentences (see section 3.1) and presentational or existential sentences (see section 3.2) were recorded. The diversity of A-impersonals included structures relying on transitive verbs with an

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inanimate [+force]/[+instrument] argument (as in section 4.1), transimpersonal sentences (as in section 4.2), intransimpersonal sentences (as in section 4.3), and anticausative structures (as in section 4.4).

The description of the patterns highlighted several syncretisms and synonymies, while the comparison with present-day Romanian showed few changes across centuries, which were basically non-structural, but mostly lexical and concerned register allocations. At the same time, a glimpse to Latin impersonals (see Introduction) revealed their preservation in Romanian, while an implicit comparison with Slavonic (which influenced Church texts in the 16thc-18thc.) pointed to their proliferation and high frequency. Thus, the Romanian impersonal domain appears to be one of the most intricate in the Romance area.

The corpus analysis relied on a rich selection of examples extracted from texts in different time intervals of old Romanian and from different regions, both ritual church texts, and secular ones.

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