ROMANIAN IMPLICATIVE VERBS REVISITED: *A ÎNCERCA* 'TRY' VERSUS *A REUȘI* 'MANAGE'

MARIA AURELIA COTFAS[1]

Abstract. Starting from a difference between *a încerca* 'try' and *a reuși* 'manage' with respect to the different extent to which they evade control, the paper aims to a) look more closely at the semantics and (in particular) syntax of the two verbs, as well as their lexical semantic representations and thus b) to show that – even though they can both obviate control with subjunctive complements in Romanian – *a reuși* 'manage' displays unaccusative behavior and is thus less-subject-oriented than *a încerca* 'try'. In other words, while the external argument of *a reuși* 'manage' seems to be underspecified (an 'effector' argument of sorts), that of *a încerca* 'try' must always be typically agentive (i.e., intentional and necessarily animate). By this token, on the scale of control verbs (cf. Landau 1999 & subseq.), *a reuși* shares properties with aspectual predicates (to its right), whereas *a încerca* patterns with intensional predicates to its left.

Key words: implicative verbs, control, subjunctive, unaccusative, aspectual predicate, intensional predicate.

The paper looks at the semantic and syntactic behaviour of two Romanian verbs which have played a major role in cross-linguistic analyses of control. Even though they behave similarly in control contexts, the different extent to which they do this – as well as their different actuality entailment possibilities – are put down to a clear difference in the way they specify their external arguments, such that only *a reuși* allows underspecified arguments, similarly to raising predicates. The paper is structured as follows: the first section discusses data concerning control and actuality entailment; the second section looks at the differences between the two verbs concerning situation type, auxiliary selection, quirky arguments and causative alternation and shows that 'try' has highly specified (intentional) Agent EAs whereas the EA of 'manage' is underspecified. The third and last section draws the conclusions and highlights some points for future research.

1. STARTING POINT: IMPLICATIVE VERBS, CONTROL AND ACTUALITY ENTAILMENT

This first section sets the ground for the ensuing discussion by addressing some relevant similarities as well as differences in the syntactic and semantic behaviour of the two verbs. While they behave similarly as far as their capacity to obviate control is concerned, they do so to different degrees. Moreover, there is a clear difference in their actuality entailment possibilities. The question that arises is, therefore, why verbs which

[1] Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures, English Department, University of Bucharest, maura_cotfas@yahoo.com.

RRL, LXI, 1, p. 29–55, București, 2016

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

share significant properties are, nonetheless, different and how this difference can be addressed.

1.1. (Subject) Implicative Verbs and Control in Romanian (Cotfas 2012)

Challenging classical approaches to Obligatory Control (OC), in English Landau (1999) isolates the domain of control predicates to the ones listed in (1) below and the ingredients of OC as a) a null PRO whose reference has to strictly match that of the main clause antecedent and b) the temporal anaphoricity of the infinitival complement. He thus identifies two types of OC, Exhaustive and Partial Control, with the cut-off point as in illustrated in (1):

(1) Landau (1999): the scale of control predicates
propositional > factive > interrogative > volitive **> implicative** > aspectuals > modal
PC predicates (+T, -Agr) EC predicates (-T, -Agr)

While all PC predicates can display EC behaviour, EC predicates never allow Partial Control, which refers to the possibilityfor the infinitival PRO to be only partially controlled by a matrix singular controller – in the sense that it need merely include the reference of this antecedent, while also retrieving other individuals more or less salient in the discourse– see the indices in (2).

Thus, with a syntactically singular matrix antecedent, PC predicates (bolded) can select (PC) infinitival complements whose null subject is syntactically singular but semantically plural, as shown by the possibility of these complements to host collective predicates (given in italics in (2a, b)). This is referred to as the "Partial Control effect". Moreover, these PC infinitival complements are not temporally bound by the tense of the matrix predicate, as (2c, d) show: the complement can establish its own independent temporal specification.

(2) a. The chair$_i$ **wants / preferred** [PRO$_{i+}$ to *gather* at 6].
b. Mary$_i$ thought that John$_j$ **didn't know** [where PRO$_{i+j}$ to go *together*].
c. *Yesterday*, John **hoped** to solve the problem *tomorrow*.
d. *Today*, John **claimed** to have lost his car keys *last week*.
(examples adapted from Landau 1999)

Conversely, EC predicates select EC complements whose null subject is strictly identical to the specification of the antecedent (no collective predicates allowed if the controller is singular) and whose temporal specification is anaphoric[2].

(3) a. *The chair$_i$ **managed** [PRO$_{i+}$ to *gather* at 6].
b. *Mary$_i$ knew that John$_j$ **began** [PRO$_{i+j}$ to work *together* on the project].

[2] For a more elaborate account of OC as well as NOC instances in English, alongside the techinicalities, we refer the reader to Landau (1999). Our purpose here is not to discuss control data, but merely to lay the ground for the following discussion.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

c. Mary$_i$ **managed** [PRO$_i$ to solve the problem.]
d. John$_i$ **began** [PRO$_i$ to work on the project.]
e. **Yesterday*, John **began / had** to solve the problem *tomorrow*.

In subsequent work (Landau 2004-2013), the author extends his claims to other languages, where the equivalents of the control predicates in (1) no longer select infinitive complements, but subjunctive forms (or sometimes inflected infinitives). Starting from the assumption that "the phenomenon of *finite control* is cross-linguistically robust" (2013: 101), Landau isolatesthe finiteness determinants of OC, which are *semantic tense*, detectable by the possibility of tense mismatch between the main clause and the subordinate and *morphological agreement*, i.e., the presence of overt verb morphology.

This allows him to formulate the following generalization on the finiteness rule for OC:

(4) *The finiteness rule for OC*
In a fully specified complement clause (i.e., I° carries slots for both [T] and [Agr]):
a. If I° carries both semantic tense and agreement ([+T, +Agr]), No Control obtains.
b. Elsewhere, OC obtains.

No Control (NC) complements are those which host lexical DPs or *pro* as subjects. Also, the rule in (4) is "an elsewhere rule": NC always obtains in complements specified as [+ T, + Agr], which ensures lexical DPs/*pro* as subjects (as well as semantic tense); OC is the elsewhere case of NC, obtaining in environments where either of the two heads – or both – are negatively specified. By this token, OC is predicted to obtain in three types of contexts: a) [- T, - Agr] (e.g., English untensed infinitives, which instantiate EC); b) [+ T, -Agr] (e.g., English tensed infinitives, which instantiate PC) and c) [-T, + Agr] (e.g., Balkan subjunctives and some inflected infinitives. Obviously, for the purposes of the present discussion, the last type is of interest for us.

Analyzing finite control in Balkan languages (Romanian included), the author maintains the same dichotomy in (1) above. He claims that subjunctive complements to volitional, desiderative, interrogative verbs instantiate NC, whereas subjunctive complements to implicative, aspectual and modal predicates trigger OC and hence both temporal anaphoricity and an exhaustive-type PRO subject.

Drawing on compelling empirical evidence coming from implicative verbs in Romanian[3], Cotfas (2012) challenges this bi-partite classification and – factoring in object control into the picture – proposes that the cut-off point between NC and what appears to be OC (but can be analyzed as raising) is lower down the scale of control predicates, cf. (5):

[3] Roughly following Landau (1999 and subseq.), under the label of "implicative" we have investigated the behaviour of predicates like: *a încerca* 'try', *a reuşi* 'manage', *a căuta (să)* 'endeavour', *a se strădui* 'try/do your best', *a izbuti* 'succeed', *a risca* 'risk'.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

(5) (… factive> interrogative) > volitive > **implicative >** aspectuals > modals
NC (No Control) (+T, +Agr) OC (-T, +Agr) (≈ raising)

As such, a tripartite classification of subjunctive complements according to the chart in (6) is claimed to better account for the Romanian control data:

(6) Tripartite classification of subjunctive dependents (in Control environments)

	Independent subjunctives	**Restricted Subjunctives**	**Anaphoric Subjunctives**
Type of selecting predicates	volitional/desiderative Vs	**Subject implicative**& object control Vs	aspectual & modal Vs
Presence (and type) of embedded tense	YES – morphological/syntactic tense & – semantic tense	YES – semantic tense only	NO
Featural make-up of the C° and T° heads	C°: **∅ T** T°: [+T] /iT ⇒ phasal CPs with **unselected/unconstrained C**	C°: **[+T]** T°: [+T] /iT ⇒ phasal CPs with **selected/constrained C**	C°: **[-T]** T°: [-T] /uT ⇒ non-phasal/defective CPs
Control properties	No Control	No Control	OC (parametrized as raising)

In short,we have confirmed the idea that 'finite control' is ultimately connected to anaphoricity. However, in agreement with Alboiu (2007) – but without adopting the movement theory of control – we have claimed that OC instances with aspectual and modal verbs may be analyzed as raising – proving that Romanian is a raising rather than a control language in the contexts under discussion.

As for implicative verbs, it is shown beyond any doubt that in Romanian they can obviate control and hence select Restricted Subjunctive complements. However, 'try' and 'manage' seem to be doing this to a somewhat different extent. The results of two questionnaires show that *a reuşi* 'manage' is more restrictive than *a încerca* 'try' in its ability to allow disjoint subjects in the complement[4].

[4] The first questionnaire tests the possibility of implicative predicates to allow overt disjoint subject DPs in their complements. As the first two charts below show, there is a 10% difference between 'try' and 'manage', with the former scoring higher. The second questionnaire aimed to put the raising account of control to the test as far as our verbs were concerned. Again, as shown in (iii), 'manage' lists poorer scores (by roughly 15% as compared to 'try').
Questionnaire 1: implicative matrix verbs + subjunctive complements with disjoint subjects

(i) Results of grammaticality judgements for *a încerca* 'try' (Cotfas 2012:135)

YES (score: 5)	**NO (score: 1-4)**
85%	15%

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

1.2. Actuality Entailment: typical versus mis-behaved / semi-implicative

Though *a încerca* 'try' may arguably be included in the class of implicative predicates, with which it has been shown to share (cross-linguistically) significant properties (see previous sub-section), it is different from *a reuși* 'manage' in more ways than one. Semantically, the most striking difference between the two comes from actuality entailment phenomena. Unlike *a reusi, a încerca* does not in itself entail the truth of its complement clause; it merely implies that some sort of effort was made by the subject of the main clause in order to bring about the event described by the verb in the complement clause.

This can be seen by comparing (7a), with 'manage' and (7b) with 'try' as matrix predicates selecting subjunctive complements: only 'try' allows a sequel which denies the truth of the complement clause. In other words, only 'manage' triggers actuality entailments (AE).

(7) a. A reușit să repare mașina. (*dar nu a reparat-o)
has managed SBJV fix.3SG car.the (*but not has fixed it)
'He managed to fix the car' (*but didn't fix it)

b. A încercat să repare mașina (dar nu a reușit/nu a reparat-o)
hastried SBJV fix.3SG car.the (but not has managed/not has fixed it)
'He tried to fix the car' (OK: but didn't manage to/didn't fix it (after all)).

A încerca in (7b) is therefore non-veridical, since there is no AE. However, it does entail initiation of the embedded event (for more discussion on this, see below). Thus, instead of treating it as 'non-implicative', a more appropriate label would be that of semi-implicative or, possibly, conative, cf. Cinque (2006). Please note that the lack of veridicality entailment with *a încerca*'try' is kept regardless of the aspect of the predicate: in the examples above, it appears in the *perfective past (perfect compus)*, therefore perfective, but similar judgements would obtain if it appeared in the *present* or *imperfect*.

In Cotfas (2014), we have argued that the only instance when 'try' behaves like 'manage' (i.e., as a typical implicative) is when it selects a *de* + indicative construction

(ii) Results of grammaticality judgements for *a reuși* 'manage' (Cotfas 2012: 136)

YES (score: 5)	NO (score 1-4)
75%	25%

Questionnaire 2: testing the raising account of control with (subject) implicatives→ sentences with unique subject DPs in the subjunctive complement

(iii) Results for structures with implicative matrix verbs and unique embedded DP (Cotfas 2012:149)

	Disjointedness reading	Co-valuation reading
***a reuși* 'manage'**	**70.45 %**	29.5%
***a încerca* 'try'**	**85.71%**	14.28%

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

instead of a subjunctive (8), behaving thus similarly to its implicative version in English, which always selects an *-ing* complement (9a), or which is followed, on occasion, by a coordination construction with the second verb in the indicative (9b):

(8) Am încercat **de-am** **mutat** toată mobila într-o singură cameră,
have.1SG tried DE have.1SG moved all furniture.the into one single room
(*dar n-am reușit)
(*but not have.1SG managed)

(9) a. I've tried mov**ing** all the furniture into one single room.
b. I've tried **and moved** all the furniture into one single room.

A very insightful way to capture the differences that we observe between the two verbs is Kartunnen (2012), who analyzes *manage* as a two-way implicative with the following notation: ++/- -. In more plain terms, 'manage' yields an entailment both in affirmative and negative contexts (10). On the other hand, verbs like *try* or *attempt* are one-way implicatives notated as - -, i.e., they yield entailments only under negative polarity (11). Actually, - - implicative predicates express a necessary condition for the truth of the complement clause. If the host clause is under negative polarity, the complement clause is false (Kartunnen 2012: 3)

(10) a. Au reușit să câștige cursa.
have.3PL managed SBJV win.3PL race.the
→ Au câștigat cursa. (+ +)
→ have.3PL won race.the
'They managed to win the race' → 'They won the race.'

b. Nu au reușit să câștige cursa.
not have.3PL managed SBJV win.3PL race.the
→ Nu au câștigat cursa. (- -)
→ not have.3PL won race.the
'They didn't manage to win the race' → 'They didn't win the race'

(11) Nu a încercat să fugă. → Nu a fugit.
not has tried SBJV run.3SG → not has run
'S/he did not try to escape' → 'S/he did not escape'

Grano (2011) takes another route towards the semantics of 'try'. Discussing the difference between *try* and the progressive, he claims that this is best captured in how close the outcome is to being realized: for the progressive – but not for *try* – the event must be developed sufficiently so that the theme argument has started to be affected (in the right way). The use of the progressive in (12a) necessarily entails that the action is significantly underway; *try*, however, has no such entailment: (12b) could very well be felicitous in a context in which the apple in question is still untouched/unaffected.

(12) a. John was eating an apple. → Part of the apple was consumed.
b. John tried to eat an apple. ≠ Part of the apple was consumed.
(Grano 2011: 433)

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

Moreover, if eventualities are decomposable into 'stages', as shown in (13), the use of the progressive would signify that the event progresses to somewhere in the 'inner stage', whereas the use of *try* entails that the event progresses to somewhere in either the 'preparatory stage' or *possibly* the 'inner stage':

(13) ——————I————————————-I————————————-
PREPARATORY INNER STAGE ENDPOINT RESULT STATE
[- - - - - PROG - - - - - -]
[- - - - - - - - - - - - try- - - - - - - - -] (Grano 2011: 435)

Now, adopting the scheme in (13) for *a reuși* 'manage', it will be different from both the progressive and *try*, in that it focuses on and necessarily implies a/the result(ant) state, as shown in (14):

(14) ——————I————————————-I————————————-
PREPARATORY INNER STAGE ENDPOINT RESULT STATE
[- **[manage-- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -]**

This would account for its actuality entailment abilities and would motivate the analysis of 'manage' as a causative transitive predicate, unlike 'try'.

In conclusion, we notice that the two verbs under analysis both select restricted subjunctive complements but are quite different in their actuality entailment possibilities. We would like to claim that these differences stem from their different syntactic behaviour as transitive verbs and their different lexical semantic representations. More precisely, it is ultimately the different type of external argument that each of the two verbs selects that tells them apart and draws 'manage' closer to the class of Anaphoric Subjunctive triggers (see the chart under (6) above). The second section looks more closely at the syntactic behaviour of the two predicates in Romanian.

2. WIDENING THE GAP: SYNTACTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *A ÎNCERCA* 'TRY' AND *A REUȘI* 'MANAGE'

In this second section, we will be looking at the syntactic properties of our two verbs and show that in spite of similar transitive frames, there are significant underlying differences in terms of event structure, auxiliary selection (not visible in Romanian, though), lexical semantic decomposition, case on the external argument and, most importantly,anticausativization phenomena.

2.1. The data

Let us start with what they have in common, namely the fact that both verbs appear in transitive frames (15): they take an external argument and their internal argument

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

can be either clausal (a Restricted Subjunctive) or nominal[5]. In the examples below, all naturally-occurring examples, the direct object has been bolded:

(15) a. încearcă **o lingură** **de oțet** **de mere** pentru slăbit!
try.IMPV.1SG one spoon of vinegar of apples for slimming
'Try a spoonful of apple vinegar for your diet!'
(http://www.doarnatural.ro/otet-de-mere-pentru-slabit/)

b. realizatorul emisiunii... a reușit **o scamatorie**…
host.the show.GEN has managed a trick
'The host of the show managed a trick…'
(http://www.ziare.com/mircea-badea/stiri/pag3)

c. Chirurgii francezi au reuşit o **operaţie** pe inimă fără...
surgeon.the French have.3PL managed a surgery on heart without...
'The French surgeons managed a heart surgery without...'
(http://jurnalul.ro/viata-sanatoasa/starea-de-sanatate/premiera-mondiala-chirugi- francezi-operatie-inima-deschidere-torace-663549.html)

However, they differ in significant respects. First off, they have diverging event decomposition frames: while 'try' is atelic and thus behaves like an activity predicate, 'manage' focuses on the result (change of) state (see also (14) above), i.e. it can be taken as a causative verb. That is to say, 'try' behaves like mono-eventive verbs (for example, verbs of consumption like the English *eat* [6]), whereas 'manage' (in its transitive use) behaves like a bi-eventive verb of the type [x CAUSE [BECOME y]].

As shown in (16), *a încerca* 'try' is felicitous with *for*-adverbials rather than completive *in*-adverbials. If the variant with the *in*-adverbial is to be accepted at all, the meaning of the adverbial *în două luni* would not be 'the interval *within* which the event occurred', but it would instead acquire an ingressive reading, denoting an interval elapsed *before* the beginning of the trying event (cf. 16a'). Conversely, as shown by (16b), *a reuși* 'manage' only accepts completive adverbials, not durative ones – since *for*-adverbials are generally incompatible with telic predicates. Also, no re-categorization seems possible with the durative adverbial in Romanian, unless it is forced into a multiple-event type reading

[5] Assumedly, the nominal is semantically related to its subjunctive counterpart (and vice-versa); see Pustejovsky's (1991) method for the decomposition of lexical categories (*qualia structure*).

[6] See Folli and Harley (2005) for a discussion on the differences between lexical causative verbs expressing a change-of-state (e.g., *destroy*) and transitive verbs of consumption (such as *eat*, for example). What is more, as den Dikken observed (remark at ACED 16, Bucharest, 2014, when a first draft of this paper was presented), 'try' remains atelic even when a particle is added to it, i.e., 'try *out*'. This is obviously not the case with other non-causative transitive verbs which, upon receiving a particle, become resultative/causative. A case in point would be 'eat' vs. 'eat up'. As observed in Folli and Harley (2005), when verbs of consumption are combined with a secondary resultative predicate the event becomes bi-eventive and an important consequence of this is that the new structure allows causer subjects (non-animate) as their subjects, unlike the basic/unmodified (mono-eventive) predicate:

(i) a. *The sea ate the beach. / *The wind carved the beach.
b. The sea ate *away* the beach. / The wind carved *away* the beach.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

(see (16b'), where 'managing the trick for x minutes' involves repeated events of (successfully) performing the trick)

(16) a. Maria *a încercat* dieta **timp de 2 luni / * ?? în două luni**
Maria has tried diet.the time of 2 months / ??in 2 months
'Maria has been trying/has tried the diet for 2 months/ *in 2 months.'

a'. **În (=după) două luni**, Maria *a încercat* dieta.
in (after) two months Maria has tried diet.the
'In two months (= at the end of the two months), Maria tried the diet'

b. Magicianul *a reuşit* scamatoria **în mai puțin de 5 minute /**
magician.the has managed trick.the in less than 5 minutes /
***timp de 5 minute.**
*time of 5 minutes
'The magician managed the trick in less than 5 minutes/ *for 5 minutes'
(= It took the magician less than 5 minutes to (successfully) perform the trick.)

b'. Magicianul *a reuşit* trucul cu mingea
magician.the has managed trick.the with ball.the
timp de vreo 10 minute, dar apoi cineva a fluierat şi...
time of about 10 minutes but then someone has whistled and...
'The magician managed (to do) the trick for about 10 minutes, but then someone booed and…'

Almost-modification may provide further evidence for the telicity of 'manage' and atelicity of 'try': (17a) entails that no event of dieting occurred (though, bearing in mind the meaning of 'try'(see (13) above), there might well have been intention and some preparation). As for (17b), its interpretation is somewhat similar to a sentence like *John almost wrote a novel*, which has two readings: one according to which the event occurred but was not completed and another whereby the event did not occur at all. Thus, *almost* can refer either to the whole process or just to the end-point. By this token, the contrast between (17a) and (17b) is that with 'try' the event (of dieting) did not occur at all (despite there being intention/preparation), whereas with 'manage' the default reading would be that the event (of performing the trick) did occur (i.e., was instantiated) but was not completed – at least not successfully.

(17) a. **Aproape** (că) am încercat şi eu dieta cea nouă.
almost (that) have.1SG tried and I diet.the that.FEM new.FEM.SG
'I almost tried the new diet myself' → 'I didn't go on the new diet'

b. Magicianul **aproape** (că) a reuşit scamatoria.
magician.the almost (that) has managed trick.the
'The magician almost managed (to do) the trick'

The second difference concerns auxiliary selection in periphrastic past tense forms. Even though Romanian is a language which does not overtly mark the distinction unaccusative-unergative via selection of different auxiliaries – it having only *a avea* 'to have' for periphrastic past structures, for the purposes of the present discussion it is worth

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

looking at evidence from other Romance languages. An example in point is Italian, which, among other Romance languages where auxiliary selection is one of the diagnostics for the unaccusative-unergative dichotomy, seems to be the only one to overtly mark this difference for the two verbs under analysis. As observed from (18) below, *provare* 'try' selects *avere* as auxiliary, whereas *riuscire* 'manage' selects *essere*.

(18) **Ho** *provato* a venire alla tua festa,
have.1SG tried INF come to your party,
ma non **sono** *riuscito*.
but not be.1SG managed.MASC.SG
'I've tried to come to your party, but I didn't manage to/couldn't'

Why other (West) Romance languages (French, for example) which do have the auxiliary selection option at their disposal do not (pending evidence to the contrary) manifest it with the predicates in question remains a yet unanswered issue, one which does not however hamper the claim the paper is making. If anything, the fact that Italian 'manage' selects the same auxiliary used with unaccusatives, unlike 'try', should be reason enough to suggest that the argument structure of the two verbs is different (both in Italian and cross-linguistically).

In line with the evidence above, *a încerca* 'try' is only felicitous with animate/sentient subjects. This has also been argued for by Sharvit (2003), who speaks of an '*attitudinal* component' in the semantics of 'try'. In a similar vein, when discussing the semantics of 'try' (as opposed that of the progressive), Grano (2011) makes reference to the "internal spark on the part of the agent". Therefore, there is a consensus that 'try' verbs impose a [+ animate] restriction on their external argument. Conversely, 'manage' is fully compatible with [-human/ -animate], i.e., causer subjects. The examples in (19) below are taken from online sources and they feature *a reuși* with such subjects. Note that the use of *a încerca* would result in ungrammaticality:

(19) a. **Spectacolul** a reuşit / *a încercat să mă impresioneze.
show.the has managed / has tried SBJV me.ACC impress.3SG
'**The show** managed*/tried to impress me'

b. **Ploaia** a reuşit să strice buna dispoziție
rain.the has managed SBJV ruin.3SG good.the disposition
a mai multor VIP-uri
several.GEN VIPs.GEN
'**The rain** managed to ruin the good disposition of several VIPs…'
(http://www.wowbiz.ro/ploaia-torentiala-a-dat-batai-de-cap-vedetelor-vezicum-au- scapat-de-vijelia-de-ieri-din-capitala_55561.html)

c. **Filmul Taken 2** a reuşit să atragă
movie.the Taken 2 has managed SBJV attract.3SG
peste 10.000 de vizitatori.
over 10,000 of visitors
'**The movieTaken 2** managed to attract over 10,000 viewers'
(http://e-film.ablog.ro/2012-10/)

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

d. **Apa** a reuşit să se infiltreze printr-o
water.the has managed SBJV REFL infiltrate.3SG through-a
fisură, picurând în foaierul sălii…
crack, dripping in foyer.the hall.GEN
'(**The) water** managed to penetrate through a crack and then drip in the foyer of the hall'
(http://www.b1.ro/stiri/eveniment/ploua-in-senatul-romaniei-zapada-de-pe-acoperis-a-inceput-sa-se-topeasca-video-21812.html)

What is more, while both verbs are compatible with [+ human/+ animate] subjects, only 'try' also presupposes intention (i.e., volition) on the part of the subject and is as such infelicitous with embedded eventualities which normally cannot be under the control of – or in the wish worlds of – the subject (20). By the same token, 'manage' is shown to be incompatible with subject-oriented adverbs or purpose adjuncts (in italics) (21):

(20) a. Cum ai reuşit/ *încercat *să* *răceşti/ te stropeşti*
how have.2SG managed/*tried SBJV get cold/soaked
atât de rău/ *să-ţi* *rupi* *piciorul*?
so bad/ SBJV-your break.2SG leg.the
'How did you manage/*try to get a cold/get soaked so badly/ to break your leg?

b. Un şofer a reuşit *să* *se rătăcească* în munți,
a driver has managed SBJV REFL get.lost.3SG in mountains
după ce a rămas cu maşina în zăpadă.
after has remained with car.the in snow
'A driver managed to get lost in the mountains, after his car got stuck in the drifts'
(http://www.presaonline.com/ziare-subiecte/rataceasca/)

c. A vrut să fie fashion, dar
has wanted SBJV be.3SG fashion but
a reuşit *să* *cadă* *în ridicol*.
has managed SBJV fall.3SG into ridicule
'She wanted to pass off as a fashionist, but only managed to lend herself to ridicule'
(http://www.mtv.ro/stiri/gossip/a-vrut-sa-fie-fashion-dar-a-reusit-sa-cada-in-ridicol-uite-ce-vedeta-a-starnit-hohote-de-ras-cu-tinuta-sa-a-foto)

(21) a. *Intenționat* am încercat s-o enervez.
intentionally have.1SG tried SBJV-her.ACC annoy.1SG
'I tried to annoy her on purpose'

a'. A încercat o rețetă grea *ca să-l* *impresioneze pe*
hastried a recipe difficult that SBJV-him.ACC impress.3SG DOM
noul ei *logodnic*.
new.the hers fiance
'She tried a difficult recipe so as to impress her new fiance'

b. ?? Echipa a reuşit *intenționat* un rezultat foarte bun.
team.the has managed intentionally a result very good.MASC.SG

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

'The team managed a very good result on purpose'

b'. ?? Echipa a reuşit un rezultat bun
team.the has managed a result good.MASC.SG
ca să *se califice* *în semifinale.*
that SBJV REFL qualify.3SG in semifinals
'The team managed a good result so as to make the semi-finals'

Another difference lies in the type of external argument that the two verbs can select: *aîncerca* 'try' exclusively accepts nominative subjects (22a), *a reuși* 'manage' is compatible with both nominative as well as dative/ quirky subjects[7] (22b-d). The same is true for 'manage' in German, which, according to Landau (1999), also takes dative controllers.

(22) a. *Mi-a încercat dieta / (Eu) am încercat dieta.
me.**DAT** has tried diet.the / (I.NOM) have.1SG tried diet.the

b. Băsescu: Nu prea **mi**-a reuşit grozav medierea
Băsescu: not really me.**DAT** has managed greatly mediation.the
'Băsescu: I didn't quite succeed the mediation'
(http://www.wall-street.ro/articol/Legal-Business/156956/basescu-medierea.html)

c. **mi**-a reușit maioneza făcută
me.**DAT**has succeeded mayonnaise.the made.FEM.SG
după instrucțiunile din filmuleț
after instructions.the from video
'I managed (to do) the mayonnaise by following the instructions in the video'
(http://gabrielacara.blogspot.ro/2009/03/maioneza-clasica-rapida.html)

d. Politicieni**lor** **le**-a reuşit de minune
politicians**.DAT** them.**DAT** has succeeded wonderfully
planul de păcalire a populației.
plan.the of fooling population.GEN
'Politicians truly succeeded in their plan to take the people for fools'

Dative experiencer constructions (with psych verbs or with *a fi* 'be'(+ psych noun)) and the so-called dative unaccusative constructions (DUCs) (with derived unaccusative predicates of the 'break'-type and the unaccusative '*se*' marker) are very productive in Romanian (see (23a, b, c''). Syntactically, the (psych or inchoative) verb agrees with the inanimate DP appearing to its right and takes as a second argument (to its left) a clitic-doubled dative DP.

In light of the evidence discussed above, the constructions under (22) above with *a reuși*'manage' pattern with dative unaccusativeconstructions of the type in (23c''), with one noteworthy difference: there is no 'se' with our 'manage' constructions.

[7] Since it is not the topic of our paper to discuss the syntactic status of these quirky arguments, we will refrain from calling them "quirky subjects" . We do not presently commit as to their subjecthood properties, which should make the topic of a different paper altogehter.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

(23) a. **Lui** Ion **îi** e foame / sete.
Ion.**DAT** him.**DAT** be.3SG hunger / thirst
'Ion is hungry / thirsty'

b. Mari**ei** **îi** plac fructele.
Maria**.DAT** her.**DAT** like.3PL fruits.the
'Maria likes fruits'

c. Ion a spart fereastra.
Ion has broken window.the
'Ion broke the window'

c'. Fereastra **s**-a spart.
window.the SE-has broken
'The window broke'

c''. **Lui** Ion **i** **s**-a spart fereastra.
Ion.**DAT** him.**DAT** SE has broken window.the
'John's window broke' / 'The window broke on John'[8]

Dative arguments of constructions like the one in (23c'') – manifest cross-linguistically not only in Balkan languages like Greek (where they are genitive), Bulgarian, Albanian, but also in Spanish and German – have been labeled 'oblique causers' and their interpretation has been generally described as 'unintended causation'. Discussing German and Greek, Schäfer (2012: 11) and Kallulli (2006: 278–279) argue that – in these languages – the non-intentional causer readings are more salient than (but do not exclude) the affected reading (i.e., the quirky arguments interpreted as affected participants) or the possessor reading[9].

For Romanian, the dative argument in sentences like (23c'') and (24a) – in the absence of larger context – would most likely be analyzed as possessor, possibly also affected participant (see translation). As for unintended causation (without excluding the Affectee reading or rather actually enforcing it), this interpretation could be obtained in Romanian if the nominative DP has its own possessor (see (24b, c) and their translation: the Dative argument is no longer the possessor of the inanimate DP, but rather an affected

[8] The Romanian example in (23 c'') first and foremost favours a reading whereby *Ion* is the possessor of the post-verbal inanimate DP (here, the window), i.e., *John's window broke*. However, there is another possible interpretation for (23c''), even though less obvious (due to the lack of context), namely that according to which Ion unintentionally caused the window to become broken and is thus affected (negatively). This interpretation is hinted at in the translation: *John's (or someone else's window) broke on him/John*. See below for a brief discussion of the possible interpretations of the dative argument.

[9] As far as unintended causation or, as he puts it, the "reduced intentionality" of these Dative DPs is concerned, Schäfer (2012) argues that "the syntax and the semantics of oblique causers argue against the view that these are simply canonical external arguments of reduced intentionality" (2012: 16). That is, briefly put, he argues that 1) syntactically, nominative and quirky arguments are licensed in different positions (Spec, VoiceP/v_{cause} for canonical nominative causers vs.Spec,ApplP for oblique causers) and that 2) semantically, oblique marking does NOT necessarily reflect reduced intentionality. Supporting evidence for 2) comes from the fact that oblique causers, unlike canonical subjects, show "interpretive underspecification", i.e., besides unintentional causer (also available to Nominative arguments) they also allow interpretations such as "facilitator" or "intentional (but unexpected) causer", cf. Ganenkov *et al.* (2008), in Schäfer (2012) – see fn.11 below).

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

entity (here, maleficiary) who accidentally causes or contributes to bringing about the breaking event):

(24) a. Mari**ei** **i** s-a spart vaza.
Maria.**DAT** her.**DAT** SE has broken vase.the
'Maria's vase broke *(on her)*'

b. [Maria a pus florile în **vaza** **mamei**
Maria has put flowers.the in vase.the mother.GEN
și în timp ce schimba apa]…
and while change.IMPF.3SG water.the
(Mari**ei)** **i** s-a spart **vaza** **(mamei)**
(Maria.DAT) her.DAT SE-has broken vase.the (mother.GEN)
[Maria put the flowers in mother's vase and as she was changing the water]… 'The (mother's) vase broke on her'

c. [**Statueta** **lui Mihai** s-a crăpat și Ion
figurine.the Mihai.GEN SE has cracked and Ion
s-a oferit să o ducă la reparat.
REFL has offered SBJV it.ACC take.3SG to repairing
Pe drum Ion s-a împiedicat și]...
On road Ion REFL has tripped and...
(**Lui** Ion) **i** s-a spart **statueta** **(lui Mihai)**
(Ion.DAT) him.DAT SE has cracked figurine.the (Mihai.GEN)
în bucăți.
to pieces
[Mihai's figurine cracked and Ion offered to have it mended. On the way, Ion tripped and....] 'The (Mihai's) figurine broke (to pieces) on him'

Coming back to our constructions featuring *a reuși* 'manage' with quirky arguments (22), they behave like DUCs in that they also primarily favour the possessor reading (25a).As discussed for the latter (see (24b, c)), the possessor reading could be played down if the Nominative (post-verbal) argument appears with its own possessor (25b, c). In these sentences, the (necessarily animate) quirky arguments are intentional entities consciously involved in bringing about a positive outcome. As such, they are affected entities – beneficiaries, this time.

(25) a. Matei e bucuros, **i**-a reușit planul!
Matei be.3SG happy.MASC.SG him.DAT has succeeded plan.the
'Matei is happy, **his plan** succeeded!'[10]

[10] As far as the 'manage' class is concerned in English, there seems to be a distinct difference between 'manage' and 'succeed' in that the former seems to be more subject-oriented than the latter, i.e., to be less felicitous with non-agentive subjects and in anticausative constructions and hence more appropriate with agentive subjects and in transitive structures. Besides, 'succeed' is as a rule followed by a prepositional gerund rather than a direct object infinitive. 'Manage' thus seems to be closer in meaning to 'make arrangements'.

(i) a. John managed (to handle) the discussion well. / The footballer managed a great corner-kick.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

b. **Mi**-a reuşit şi mie **reţeta ta**
me.DAT has suceeded and me.DAT recipe.the your
de murături.
for pickles
'I managed quite well your pickle recipe!'

c. **Mi**-a reuşit de minune **planul tău**
me.DAT has succeeded wonderfully plan.the your
cu cina romantică!
with dinner.the romantic.FEM.SG
'Your plan suggesting a romantic dinner worked wonders for me!'

Though it is not our main purpose here to discuss the syntax of these quirky arguments – either in DUCs or in the constructions under analysis with 'manage' – if they were analyzed as being licensed in a High Applicative head (cf. Pylkkänen 2002), their interpretation as Affectees would follow naturally, since these heads denote "a thematic relation between an *individual* and the event described by the verb"[11] (2002: 16). See also Schäfer's (2012) proposal that (what he calls) oblique causers have a distinct syntax from canonical external arguments, i.e., that the former are licensed not by Voice (see (36) below, in section 2.2.), but "introduced in the specifier of an applicative phrase where they are assigned inherent (oblique) case" (2012: 19). We refrain at present from discussing the merits or otherwise shortcomings of this approach, since this would take us too far afield.

What about the unintended causer interpretation? Can constructions of the type in (25b, c) ever allow such readings (in appropriate contexts)? Above we have stated that such quirky participants are conscious, intentional agents of the event described (*via* the subjunctive complement or hinted at by the direct object DP), positively affected by its outcome. However, the question is legitimate, since Nominative (animate) arguments need not be [+ intentional] with 'manage' (see (26a, b) below – (26b) a naturally occurring example featuring the adverb *involuntar* 'unwillingly' – as well as (20) above).

(26) a. (*Fără să vrea / Deşi nu se aştepta*), Fotbalistul a
(without meaning to/though he hadn't expcted it) footballer.the has
reuşit (să dea) o pasă decisivă.
managed (SBJVgive.3SG) a kick decissive

b. * The discussion managed very well. / * The corner kick managed.
c. The corner kick succeeded. / The plan succeeded.
d. The discussion succeeded in annoying everyone/ ? The discussion managed to annoy everyone.

An interesting line of analysis would be to what extent this difference between the two verbs in English is similar to the uses of the two synonymous predicates in Romanian: *a reuşi* and *a izbuti*.

[11] Emphasis mine. As observed in the concluding section, there seems to be an animacy restriction on Dative arguments in our constructions with 'manage'

The arguments licensed by Applicative Heads are non-core arguments, i.e., those other than the subject or the direct object. When the (animate) external argument is conceptualized as an Agent (or mere (unintentional) Cause), it will surface in the Nominative, arguably introduced in Spec,VoiceP (see (36)); when it is an affected (and intentional) entity it will appear in the Dative – licensed in Spec, ApplP – if Schäfer's (2012) assumptions are on the right track.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

'(Without meaning/expecting to,) The footballer managed a crucial kick'

b. O femeie, care se afla într-o excursie în Islanda,
a woman who REFL find.IMPF.3SG in a trip in Iceland
a reuşit, *involuntar*, să participe
has managed *involuntarily* SBJV participate.3SG
la propria sa căutare.
at own.FEM.SG her search
'A woman, who was on a trip in Iceland, involuntarily managed to take part in the search action looking for herself'
(http://jurnalul.ro/fun/intamplare-reala-cum-sa-te-cauti-si-sa-nu-te-gasesti-694679.html).

Quirky arguments do no seem to preclude such readings either – provided the context makes them explicit (27). Examples like (27) should, however, be taken with a pinch of salt as far as 'unintended causation' is concerned. Let us bear in mind that *a reuși* 'manage' is telic, i.e., its meaning consists of an activity plus a result/outcome. In the sentences below, lack of intention refers not to the process itself, but rather to the (type of) outcome. That is, the player in (27) clearly intends/wants to kick the ball; what is unintended (or unexpected) is that the strike should turn out the way it does (i.e., "very good" or "extraordinary"). Thus, 'unintended' qualifies the result rather than the event leading up to it[12].Therefore, as argued for oblique arguments in DUCs (for German, mostly, cf. Schäfer 2012, Ganenokov *et al.* 2008, in Schäfer 2012), these dative arguments are more readily interpreted as intentional than their nominative counterparts. Importantly, the Affectee interpretation ismaintained in all the examples below:

(27) a. Jucătorului i-a reușit această / o pasă
player.DAT him.DAT has succeeded this / a kick
extraordinară (*din(tr-o) pură întâmplare*) /
extraordinary.FEM.SG (out of pure accident) /
(deși nu se aștepta)
(though not REFL expected.IMPF3SG
'The player managed a great strike *(by sheer accident)*/ (*though he wasn't expecting it*)'

b. (S-a văzut clar că *a șutat la întâmplare*),
(was seen clearly that has kicked at random)
dar i-a reușit o pasă foarte bună!
but him.DAT has succeeded a strike very good.FEM.SG
'(It was clear that he kicked the ball aimlessly/randomly), but he did manage a very good strike!'

[12] Discussing DUC constructions (with inchoatives) in German, Ganenkov *et al.* (2008), quoted in Schäfer (2012: 18), list two other interpretations for the quirky argument, besides that of *unintentional causer* – namely, *involuntary facilitator* or *unexpected, but intentionally acting causer*. We leave open the question of whether – and which of - these would make more appropriate labels for the Dative participants in constructions such as (27). However, evidence points out that – at least for our constructions with 'manage' – intention has to be factored in. Affectedness then follows naturally.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

Returning to the differences between *a reuși* 'manage' and *a încerca* 'try' in Romanian, one last and very important distinction lies in the availability of anticausativity or causative alternation structures.[13] As an atelic transitive, 'try' can passivize (both the *be*-passive (28b) and the *se*-passive (medio-passive – (28c)), but its transitive counterpart never allows the derivation of inchoative or anticausative structures (here, without *se* – see fn.12) (28d). In spite of the fact that more often than not Romanian uses 'se' for anticausativization, the sentence in (28c) can only have the passive reading: it is ungrammatical with *de la sine* 'by itself' but freely allows a by-phrase, introducing the agent (28c'). Notice also the agent-oriented adverb *insistent* 'insistently' in the nanturally-occuring (28c''), equally featuring a *se*-passive.

(28) a. Multe femei încearcă tot felul
many women try.PRES.3SG all sorts
de coafuri împletite.
of hairdos plaited
'Many women try all sorts of plaited hairdos'

b. Coafura cu împletituri **a fost** **încercată**
hairdo.the with plaits has been tried.PART.FEM.SG
de multe femei.
by many women
'Plaited hairdos have been tried by many generations of women'
(http://www.korina.ro/mireasa/coafuri_mireasa/art.php?articol=Coafuri-de-mireasa-cu-impletituri)

c. În ultimul timp **se încearcă** tot mai des coafura
in last.the time SE try.PRES.3SG all more often hairdo.the
cu împletituri.
with braids

[13] Koonz-Garboden (2009) takes 'anticausativization' to be the phenomenon whereby the inchoative from is derived from the causative (the reverse being 'causativization') and uses the term strictly to refer to the morphologically-marked process at work in languages other than English, where there is no morphological change from the causative to the inchoative variants (i.e., a verb like 'break' in English receives no distinct (reflexive) morphology), as compared to languages like Spanish, for example, where the inchoative variant is always marked by the marker 'se' (which the author takes to be a reflexive, since he analyses anticausative structures in terms of reflexivization).
We do not commit ourselves here as to whether English has or doesn't have anticausativization or whether, conversely, it has causativization (or whether it has neither). For the purposes of our discussion, let us observe that Romanian seems to have both derivation mechanisms at its disposal. That is, (what look like) anticausative structures in Romanian seem to come both in the morphologically-marked variant (*a sparge – a **se** sparge; a rupe – a **se** rupe, etc.*), but also with no marking at all, on the model of English 'break'. This seems to be the very case of *a reuși* 'manage' (alongside other verbs which display unaccusative valences such as *a înceta* 'cease'):

(i) Copii au încetat gălăgia. /Gălăgia a încetat. / *Gălăgia s-a încetat.
The kids have ceased the noise. / The noise ceased.' / The noise SE ceased.

Which the underlying mechanisms of the two types of inchoative constructions are would make the subject-matter of a whole new study altogether. For the purposes of the remaining discussion, we will use the term "anticauzativization" or "causative alternation" to refer to the inchoative/intranstitive variant of transitive structures with *a reuși*,manage'.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

'The plaited hairdo has been tried quite often lately'

c'. În ultimul timp, coafura cu împletituri **se încearcă**
in last.the time hairdo.the with braids SE try.PRES.3SG
tot mai des *de la sine / de multe domnișoare care
all more often from self / by many young.ladies who
vor ceva mai deosebit.
want.PRES.3PL something more special
'The plaited hairdo has been tried quite often lately *by itself/by many young ladies who want (to try) something a bit more special'

c''. [Guvernatorul Găgăuziei, Mihail Formuzal, a declarat
governor.the Găgăuzia.GEN Mihai Formuzal has declared
că] **s-a încercat** *insistent* fraudarea alegerilor
that SE has tried insistently rigging.the elections.GEN
din Găgăuzia.
from Găgăuzia
'M.F., the governor of Găgăuzia, has declared that vote rigging has been insistently tried/attempted in the elections in Găgăuzia'
(http://www.evzmd.md/politica/268-politic/17036-mihail-formuzal-s-a-incercat-fraudarea-alegerilor-prin-listele-electorale.html)

d. *Coafuri(le) împletite încearcă/ au încercat mereu.
hairdos.(the) braided try.PRES.3PL./ have.3PL tried always
'Plaited hairdos always try/have always tried'

Conversely, *a reuși* 'manage', a transitive causative verb, can freely appear not only in passive constructions (both with'to be' and with 'se'), but also in causative alternation structures (unmarked, i.e., without *se* – see again fn.12). Compare, to this end, (28d) above to (29c) below. While (29b), with 'manage' marked for passive allows both a by-phrase and a purpose clause whose empty subject is controlled by the (suppressed or demoted) agent argument, the anticausative in (29c) disallows both – a fact which clearly signifies that the only argument left is the former theme direct object. The same is true for the other examples in (30b,c).

(29) a. Teroriştii au reuşit deturnarea avionului.
terrorists.the have.3PL managed hijacking.the plane.GEN
'The terrorists managed the hijacking of the plane'

b. Detrunarea avionului **a fost** **reusită /**
hijacking.the plane.GEN has been managed.FEM.SG /
s-a **reusit** şi în alte rânduri de către…. /
SE has managed and in other instances by /
ca să ceară recompensă.
that SBJV ask.3SG/PL ransom
'The hijacking of the plane has been/was succeeded before by x_i…. / so as PRO_i to ask for ransom'

c. Deturnarea avionului a reuşit. / le-a reuşit*
hijacking.the plane.GEN has managed / them.DAT has managed

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

de către…/ *ca să ceară recompensă.
* by / *that SBJV ask.3SG/PL ransom
'The hijacking of the plane succeeded (*by……/ * so as to ask for ransom)'

(30) a. Un mijlocaș de la Malaga a reușit o execuție de vis! […]
a quarterback from Malaga has managed a strike of dream
Cel mai frumos gol **a fost reușit** de Sergi Darder
the most beautiful goal has been managed.MASC.SG by Sergi Darder
'A quarterback from Malaga has managed an awesome kick! The most stunning goal has been managed by Sergi Darder'
(http://sportnews.libertatea.ro/executie-de-exceptie-golul-etapei-spania-169966.html)

b. Golul (i-)a reușit de minune!
goal.the (him.DAT) has managed wonderfully
'The/His goal was awesome! / He managed the goal wonderfully!'

c. Operația a reușit, dar pacientul România
surgery.the has managed but patient.the Romania
s-ar putea să moară.
may SBJV die.3SG
'The surgery succeeded but Romania, as a patient, might die'
(http://2blackjack1.wordpress.com/romania/doctorul-fmi-operatia-a-reusit-dar-pacientul-romania-s-ar-putea-sa-moara/)

2.2. Taking stock: Agent versus Causer or Effector and (under)specified arguments

Based on all the evidence above in (15)–(30), it becomes clear that 'try' verbs differ from 'manage' verbs with respect to their lexical semantic representation and consequently the type of external argument that each allows. This has consequences on their syntactic behaviour in simple sentences (i.e., on the type of auxiliary selected in past periphrastic constructions, the availability of anticausative constructions and/or of non-nominative arguments) and, possibly, in complex clauses, i.e., when they select Restricted subjunctive complements – viz., the different extent to which they allow control obviation in Romanian.

In terms of decompositional lexical semantics, change of state verbs have meanings that can be decomposed using operators like CAUSE and BECOME, with the former describing a relation between events and responsible for causative semantics and the latter depicting a relation between an event and a state and responsible for the change of state.

While some verbs are highly specified and only take agentive external arguments, others are underspecified and can take agents, instruments or natural forces. Following Koonz- Garboden (2009), this underspecified theta-role can be conceived of as bearing the label of EFFECTOR, a kind of generalized thematic role (in choosing this for verbs like 'break' the author follows Van Valin and Wilkins (1996), in Koonz-Garboden (2009: 82)). Example (31) illustrates this for the Spanish 'romper', where *x* is the Theme participant, *y* the participant in the causing event (the Effector) and *v* stands for eventualities, whichcome

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

in two varieties, events *e* and statess. What (31) spells out is that there is a causing event(uality) of some (underspecified) participant (the effector) which operates a certain change of state on the thematic argument such that the latter comes to be in a certain state (in the case at hand, that of be(com)ing broken or be(com)ing not whole):

(31) [[*romper*]] =
λxλyλsλe [∃*v*[*CAUSE(v, e)* ∧ *EFFECTOR(v, y)* ∧ *BECOME(e, s)* ∧ *THEME(s, x)* ∧ *not-whole(s)*]] (Koonz-Garboden 2009: 85)

If *a reuși* 'manage' can be analyzed as a causative, its lexical semantic representation would be similar to (31), as shown in (32). The only difference would lie in the nature of the result state: it is no longer that of be(com)ing not whole, but, conversely, in a way, that of be(com)ing accomplished or effected.

(32) [[a*reuși*]] =
λxλyλsλe [∃*v*[*CAUSE(v, e)* ∧ *EFFECTOR(v, y)* ∧ *BECOME(e, s)* ∧ *THEME(s, x)* ∧ *accomplished/effected(s)*]]

Thus, it must be the case that *a încerca* 'try' takes Agent external arguments which are by necessity [+ human]/[+ animate] *and* [+ intentional], whereas *a reuși* 'manage' takes underspecified external arguments which are [+/- animate] and [+/- intention]. Moreover, when causative alternation is at work, the remaining argument (Theme) is always [- animate]; [- intention], in accordance with the verbs' unaccusative behaviour.

Discussing the argument structure of causative/anticausative verbs, Martin and Schäfer (2014) note the (already known) fact that anticausative verbs are prototypical instances of unaccusatives in that their subject is actually an underlying object. They show that although all causative verbs have a passive counterpart ((33b)–(35b), the causative alternation is restricted to a subset of them (compare (33d) and (34d) to (35c)). The availability of anticausative structures has been shown to be related to the thematic characterization of the (causative) verb's external argument. Capitalizing on this, the two authors label this restriction *the underspecified external argument condition* (Martin and Schäfer 2014: 3), according to which transitive verbs that cannot form anti-causatives restrict their subjects to agents (or instruments) and disallow causers – the case of the verbs in (33) and (34), while transitive verbs which enter causative alternation structures have thematically underspecified external arguments, i.e. take either agent, instrument or causer subjects (e.g., *break* in (35)), (cf. Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1995, Reinhart 2002 – in Martin and Schäfer 2014).

(33) a. The terrorist **assassinated/murdered** the senator.
b. The senator was assassinated/murdered (by the terrorist).
c. *The explosion/*the bomb assassinated/murdered the senator.
d. *The senator assassinated/murdered.
(34) a. John **removed** the sand from the rocks.
b. The sand was removed from the rocks (by John).
c. *The wind/*the shovel removed the sand from the rocks.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

d. *The sand removed (from the rocks).
(35) a. The vandals/The storm/The rock **broke** the window.
b. The window was broken (by the vandals/the storm/the rock)
c. The window broke. (Martin and Schäfer 2014: 4)

There are three exceptions to the above-discussed restriction that the authors acknowledge. Firstly, verbs of 'killing' and 'destruction' allow both agent and causer subjects, yet reject causative alternation structures, contrary to what the condition predicts. Secondly, there is causative alternation with verbs which only accept agentive subjects in their transitive use, such as some manner of motion verbs (*roll, move*). Finally, some "verbs expressing meteorological events" (e.g., *wash ashore*) do have anticausative counterparts, though they only allow causer subjects.

Such exceptions notwithstanding, for our present purposes the condition discussed by Martin and Schäfer (2014) nicely captures the distinct behaviour of our two verbs in Romanian, which has been thoroughly documented in the previous section. Namely, in accordance with the restriction, since 'try' only accepts agentive subjects (described as sentient/animate, intentional entities), it has no anticausative counterpart. 'Manage', on the other hand, allows a whole range of subjects, both +/ - human and +/- intentional and this underspecification allows it to have anticausative counterparts.

In a similar vein, Reinhart and Siloni (2005) claim that a verb lexically specifies the thematic role of its external argument to be either underspecified for agentivity and as such characterized by the underspecified causer role [+ c] or else specified for agentivity and characterized with the role of a mentally involved causer [+ c, + m]). Obviously, the former describes the case of *a reuși* 'manage' and the latter that of *a încerca* 'try'. Importantly, a Lexical Reduction operation would only be allowed in the former case: only 'manage' can delete its external argument and derive an anticausative lexical entry[14].

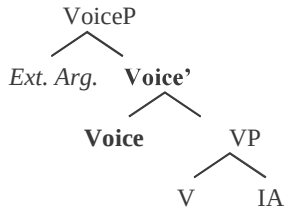
When the external argument is merged with the VP, it will/will not be specified for agentivity according to the semantic restrictions of the V head. According to the *Voice-hypothesis* (Kratzer 1996), which the authors adopt, canonical external arguments are introduced by a (semi-)functional head *Voice* on top of the VP. The argument merges in Spec,VoiceP and the head Voice assigns a theta-role to it:

[14] Koonz-Garboden actually argues against the classical analysis of anticausativization as an operation that deletes CAUSE and thus suppresses the (in his framework) Effector participant in the lexical semantic representation. He claims that CAUSE should be kept by analyzing (morphologically marked) anticausative/inchoative structures via reflexivization. Whether an analysis via reflexivization is on the right track for Romanian remains to be seen. At first sight, this would appear somewhat problematic for structures with *a reuși* 'manage', since these verbs clearly allow inchoative-type structures but disallow the typical (Romance) marker 'se'. More precisely, when 'se' does appear, it marks the passive and hence is not a marker of anticausativity (as it is for ***a se sparge***, for example).

(i) **S-a reușit** obținerea de celule cerebrale in laborator [de către cercetători]
SE succeeded obtaining of cells cerebral in laboratory by researchers
'Obtaining brain cells in the laboratory has been succeeded/a success // They managed to…'
http://www.sfatulmedicului.ro/Educatie-pentru-sanatate/s-a-reusit-obtinerea-de-celule-cerebrale-in-laborator_1995

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

(36)



Following the line of reasoning in Reinhart &Siloni (2005), when the verb is 'try', its EA will be specified as [+ c; + m] and this will make Lexical Reduction operations impossible (in passives, the Agent argument is not projected in syntax (or it is projected as an oblique argument), but it is implicit, i.e., semantically active or present)[15]. When the verb is 'manage', its EA will be underspecified ([+ c]) and as such will be liable to Lexical Reduction, whereby the only argument left will be the theme, which comes to be in a state of being accomplished or effected (= succeeded)).

Alternatively, according to Folli and Harley (2005), the event structure of verbs is syntactically composed by a combination of the verb and different functional projections on top of it (a residue of lexical specification is kept). It is this functional structure that determines the event role of the EA. The authors suggest two different flavours of light verbs: causative v_{CAUSE} and agentive v_{DO}, which place different restrictions on their subjects as well as on their complements, such thatv_{DO} needs an animate agent subject and takes a nominal (an Incremental Theme) as its complement, whereas v_{CAUSE} merely requires that the subject be a possible causer and (in their analysis) selects a stative Small-Clause complement, creating a resultative structure. In their understanding, a possible causer can be either [+human] or [-human], so v_{DO} allows a subset of the subjects that v_{CAUSE} allows[16].

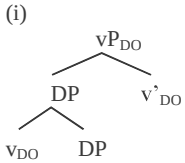
---

[15] "… the passive, like the active, has two distinct arguments in its LSR, one the undergoer of the COS event, the other the causer. These are both projected to the argument structure, with the passive operation suppressing the external argument, so that its appearance is only optional, and as an oblique when it does appear. Nevertheless, even if the external argument is not overtly present, it is semantically present as an argument distinct from the undergoer argument" (Koonz Garboden 2009: 98).

[16] As for how the lexical verb enters the structure, Folli& Harley propose that lexical verbs (such as *eat*, for example) either modify v_{DO} or v_{CAUSE} or that these project a further process vP below v_{DO} or v_{CAUSE}.

A consumption verb like *eat* can enter both structures: with v_{DO} the EA will be agentive and the direct object DP an incremental theme (i); when it modifies v_{CAUSE}, there will be a SC in the complement position, introducing the resultant state and consequently the EA will be allowed to be a causer (ii). This is an argument against the idea that the thematic role of a verb's EA is strictly coded in its lexical entry – i.e., it is the event-configurational context that determines whether a verb can or cannot have causer subjects. For 'try' this should not be a problem, since its combination with a paticle does not change its situation-type aspect (see note 6 above).

(i)



BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

One shortcoming of this proposal is an apparent overgeneralization as far as activity predicates are concerned: it seems to advance the idea that activities cannot have inanimate subjects – if pure causers, banned with activities (v_{DO}) are by necessity [- animate].

However, as Schäfer (2012: 4) points out, a formal definition for concepts such as "agent" and "causer" has been "notoriously difficult to make". More often than not agents are analyzed as [+ human, + intention], whereas causers as [- human]. Schäfer (2012) points out that recent literature has shed some doubt on the necessity of agents to be conceived of as intentionally acting humans, showing instead that "non-animate entities acting as canonical external argument are not necessarily causers but can also, in specific contexts, behave grammatically as agents" (Schäfer 2012: 4). Relevant examples are given under (37) below (quoted in footnote 5 in the author's work)

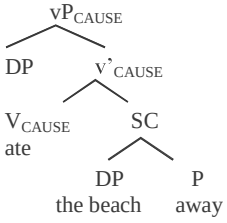
(37) a. The train whistled. (non-animate agent as subject of an unergative verb)
b. The jukebox played a famous jazz song. (non-animate agent as subject of a transitive verb)

Without committing ourselves to whether the correlation between V_{DO} and agentivity is on the right track, for the purposes of the present study, in the framework proposed by Folley&Harley (2005), 'manage' would combine with v_{Cause} and 'try' with v_{Do}

---

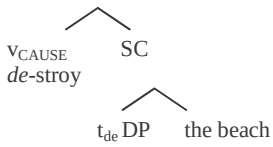
ate the apple

(ii)



(ii) is meant to also account for verbs that lexically express a change of state, such as *destroy* or *break*, only in this case the resultant state is projected by a bound not by a free morpheme, which moves and incorporates into v_{CAUSE}. (e.g., for *redden*, *red* incorporates into a v_{CAUSE} phonologically realized as *–en*; for *destroy*, the particle *de* incorporates into vCAUSE–*story)*:

(iii)



BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

and take not only nominal complements, but also clausal ones, i.e., Restricted Subjunctive CPs with their own nominal projections (since control can be obviated)).

3. CONCLUSION AND POINTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

What the previous sections have shown is that although both *a reuși*'manage' and *a încerca*'try' appear in transitive structures (with nominal or clausal complements and can obviate control with the latter type of complement), they differ significantly in the type of external argument that they require, such that only *a încerca* 'try' restricts its EA to volitional /intentional/ sentient Agent subjects, while *a reuşi*'manage' is less restrictive in this respect: it (also) allows non-animate, non-intentional/non-volitional subjects, it accepts quirky subjects ('oblique causers') and it can appear in causative alternation structures. All these properties bring it closer to control predicates at the right-hand end of the control continuum in (1) and/or (3) above, repeated below for convenience:

(38) … a-(şi) dori > a vrea **> *a încerca* > *a reuşi*** > a începe > a putea...
… wish > want > **try** **> manage** > begin > be able/possible…

Just like '*manage*', aspectual predicates allow non-agentive subjects (instrument, natural force, cause) and enter causative alternation structures (39). In Cotfas (2012), we have argued that aspectual predicates (and root modals) which select clausal complements behave like unaccusatives in that the subject DP which appears in the main clause is not actually their (external) argument, but the argument of the embedded predicate. As such, it does not need to raise to the main clause but can establish agreement with the main clause predicate via Long Distance Agree.

(39) a. Studenții au început distracția. /
students.the have.3PL begun fun.the /
Actorii au început spectacolul.
actors.the have.3PL begun show.the
'The students began the party'/ 'The actors began/started the show'
b. Distracția a început. / Spectacolul a început.
fun.the has begun show.the has begun
'The party has started/began'/ 'The show (has) begun/started'

As for *a încerca*, it shares properties with predicates to its left: it specifies its external argument as sentient and volitional and it disallows anticausativization configurations as well as non-nominative external arguments. Actually, *a încerca* 'try' seems to be at the borderline between intensional and extensional predicates. Given its semantics (see (12b), (13) above), it is neither fully intensional, nor fully extensional. Sharvit (2003) very nicely observes the obligatory existential reading of 'try': unlike *want*, it has an 'extensional action' component. As the author puts it:

> "Intuitively, it seems that try differs from its cousinswant, expect, etc. in that it doesn't simply express an attitude of some individual toward some 'proposition', but that it also

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

expresses some activity . . . This required 'action' is extensional, in the sense that it has to go on in the actual world for the sentence to be judged true." (Sharvit 2003: 407).

Proof of this component of 'try' can be seen in (40): indefinite NPs in its scope must have an existential reading:

(40) a. John wanted to cut a tomato, but there were no tomatoes to cut.
b. John tried to cut a tomato, ##but there were no tomatoes to cut.
(Sharvit 2003: 405)

But besides its extensional action component, 'try' also has an attitudinal component: it quantifies over the subject's 'success' worlds (where 'successful' means 'preferable to the subject). As such, 'try' is sensitive to outcome likelihood and hence exhibits a high(er) tolerance for unrealistic outcomes (as compared, for example, to the predicates to its right, which, as shown in (41) below, trigger veridicality entailments).

Thus, whereas 'want' (and volitional predicates more generally) introduce a set of possible worlds, 'try' merely introduces an alternative/future world, whereas 'manage' and the others introduce no such worlds. As such, 'try' patters with the former rather than the latter and it consequently should be freer in its ability to obviate control readings, which is exactly what our earlier findings have revealed (see note 3).

(41) below sums up these differences, reminding, nonetheless, (via the square brackets) that the two predicates are to be considered together as the class of triggers of Restricted Subjunctive complements (in control contexts, see (6) above)

(41) Independent Subjunctive triggers > Restricted Subjunctive triggers > Anaphoric Subjunctive triggers

a spera; a vrea	> [***a încerca*** > ***a reuşi***] >	a începe; a înceta … ….
Subject-oriented intensional predicates no actuality entailment world-creating predicates (freely escape Obligatory Control)		**not subject-oriented extensional predicates actuality entailment predicates which impose Obligatory Control)**

As in any analysis, here, too, there are worthy leads for further research. For example, we have not addressed the issue of the so-called 'animacy restriction' as far as oblique arguments are concerned. That is, the question of why these arguments are always [+ human /+ animate] (cf. (42)) and how such a restriction can be accounted for.

(42) a. **Lui Ion** i-a reuşit surpriza.
Ion.DAT him.DAT has succeeded surprise.the
'John's surprise was a success'
b. ?? **Ploii/Apei** i-a reuşit distrugerea /
rain.DAT/water.DAT it.DAT has managed distruction.the /
să distrugă...
SBJV destroy.3SG

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

'??The rain's destruction (of …) was a success'

Secondly, why [- animate] subjects are odd when *a reuşi* 'manage' takes a nominal complement. That is, why is it that such arguments have a clear preference for clausal rather than nominal direct objects (43). The fact that such arguments are more felicitous with subjunctive complements (which introduce their own event variable) may be taken as (further) evidence for the fact that 'manage' can also exhibit raising behaviour: in such contexts as (43), the [-animate] DP is actually the EA of the event denoted by the embedded subjunctive verb, and 'manage' merely brings in a tinge of circumstantial modality (it was possible for X to do/perform Y):

(43) a. Ploaia a reuşit ?distrugerea… / să distrugă ….
rain.the has managed destruction.the of … / SBJV destroy.3SG
'The rain managed the destruction of… / to destroy…'

b. Apa a reuşit ??infiltrarea în.../ ??inundarea… //
water.the has managed infiltration.the into / fooding.the //
să se infiltreze în…
SBJV REFL infiltrate.3SG into…
'The water managed ??the infiltration into…/ ??the flooding-over of.. // to infiltrate…'

Last but not least, a more thorough investigation of the syntax and semantics of oblique causers is in order, with an excursion into the syntax of morphologically-marked anticausative / inchoative constructions in Romanian (via the same *se* morpheme which appears in other Romance languages). We leave these for future investigation.

REFERENCES

Alboiu, G., 2007, "Moving Forward with Romanian Backward Control and Raising", in: W. Davies and S. Dubinsky (eds), *New Horizons in the Analysis of Control and Raising*, Dordrecht, Springer, 187–211.

Cinque, G., 2006, *Restructuring and Functional Heads*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Cotfas, M.A., 2012, *The Syntax of the Romanian Subjunctive: Control and Obviation*, doctoral dissertation, University of Bucharest.

Cotfas, M.A., 2014, "On the possibility of actuality entailment in Romanian beyond ability modals", in: A. Radu (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference "Constructions of Identity (VII)"*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, 109–123.

Folli, R., H. Harley, 2005, "Flavours of v: consuming results in Italian and English", in: P. Kempchinsky, R. Slabakova (eds), *Aspectual Inquiries*, Dordrecht, Springer, 95–120.

Grano, T., 2011, "Mental action & event structure in the semantics of *try*", *Proceedings of SALT*, 21, 426–443.

Kallulli, D., 2006, "Unaccusatives with dative causers and experiencers: a unified account", in: D. Hole *et al*. (eds), *Datives and Other Cases*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 271–301.

Kartunnen, L., 2012, "Simple and Phrasal Implicatives", in the *Proceedings of *SEM: The First Joint Conference on Lexical and Computational Semantics*, Montréal, Canada, June 7-8, 2012, 124–131.

Landau, I., 1999, *Elements of Control*. MIT dissertation.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)

Landau, I., 2004a, "The scale of finiteness and the calculus of control", *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, *22*: 811–877.
Landau, I., 2013, *Control in Generative Grammar: A Research Companion*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
Koonz-Garboden, A., 2009, "Anticausativization", *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 27, 77–138.
Kratzer, A., 1996, "Severing the external argument from its verb", in: J. Rooryck, L. Zaring (eds), *Phrase Structure and the Lexicon*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 109–137.
Martin, F., F. Schäfer, 2014/to appear,"Causation at the Syntax-Semantics Interface", in: B. Copley, F. Martin (eds), *Causation in Grammatical Structures*, Oxford University Press, available online at: http://ifla.uni-stuttgart.de/institut/mitarbeiter/florian/
Pylkkänen, L., 2002, *Introducing Arguments*, doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press.
Pustejovsky, J., 1991, "The Generative Lexicon", *Computational Linguistics*, 17, 4, 409–441.
Reinhart, T., T. Siloni, 2005, "The lexicon-syntax parameter: reflexivization and other polarity operations", *Linguistic Inquiry*, 36, 389–436.
Schäfer, F., 2012, "Two types of external argument licensing. The case of causers", *Studia Linguistica*, 66, 2, 1–53.
Sharvit, Y., 2003, "Trying to be progressive: the extensionality of try", *Journal of Semantics*, 20, 403–445.

BDD-A23896 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:52 UTC)