A NOTE ON THE SYNTAX OF ROMANIAN ASPECTUAL VERBS: ASPECTUALS AND VOICE

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1. Introduction

The present contribution starts from challenging an empirical observation presented by Hill (2012), and deals with the behaviour of the aspectual verbs *a începe* ('begin, start') and *a continua* ('continue') when interacting with argument-structure alternations such as Voice and Diathesis (for the difference between these two phenomena, see section **2**). The goal of the paper is to provide a novel argument for the classification of Romanian aspectual verbs as subject raising verbs. The raising nature of Romanian aspectuals has wide-ranging correlations.

1.1. As an argument for the control status of aspectual verbs, Hill (2012: 271) claims that "raising versus control configurations allow for impersonal SE" and illustrates this claim with the following examples (her (16c) and (16d)):

(1) a. ***Se** începe* [*a cuteza*.]. // [*să cutezăm.*]
SE start INF dare.INF SUBJ dare.SUBJ.1PL
b. *Începem* [*a cuteza.*] // [*să cutezăm.*]
start.1PL INF dare.INF SUBJ dare.SUBJ.1PL
'We start to dare'

1.2. A cursory glance on the internet and the consultation of native speakers shows that, contrary to Hill's observation, aspectual verbs do in fact combine with the marker SE (more on SE below) when SE is a marker of the impersonal voice (with intransitive verbs) or of the passive voice (with transitive verbs):

(2) a. *ora la care* ***se** începe să **se** vină* (internet)
hour.DEF at which SE starts SUBJ SE come
'the hour when they(people) will start to come/arrive'

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*Mă număr printre cercetătorii tineri norocoşi care au avut satisfacţia de a o fi putut consulta pe doamna Maria Marin în numeroase probleme care ţin de variaţia dialectală a limbii române şi în chestiuni generale privitoare la teoria limbii. De asemenea, am fost profund impresionat de noutatea şi profunzimea articolelor şi a cărţilor Domniei Sale. Doamna Marin este un model de maestru. Felicit editorii pentru iniţiativa publicării unui volum omagial şi mă alătur tuturor colaboratorilor doamnei Marin în urări de viaţă lungă şi sănătate.

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b. *în România, **se** continuă să **se** vină tardiv la medic* (internet)
in Romania SE continues SUBJ SE come late at doctor
'in Romania, people continue to go to their doctor at a late stage'

(3) a. *la acest nivel **se** începe să **se** stabilească un sistem* (internet)
at this level SE start SUBJ SE establish a system
'at this level, a system starts to be established'

b. *unde **se** continuă să **se** facă angajări* (internet)
where SE continues SUBJ SE make engagements
'where people continue to get hired'

Interestingly, with both intransitive verbs (2) and transitive verbs (3), the presence of SE in front of the aspectual verb is optional, without differences in meaning: compare the examples in (2)/(3) with those in (4)/(5), which show that as long as the subjunctive verb is preceded by SE, the sentence remains impersonal or passive(-impersonal):

(4) a. *ora la care începe să **se** vină*
hour.DEF at which starts SUBJ SE come

b. *în România, continuă să **se** vină tardiv la medic*
in Romania continues SUBJ SE come late at doctor

(5) a. *la acest nivel începe să **se** stabilească un sistem*
at this level SE start SUBJ SE establish a system

b. *unde continuă să **se** facă angajări*
where continues SUBJ SE make engagements

The reverse distribution of SE is disallowed: when SE occurs with the aspectual verb but does not surface in the subjunctive clause, the sentence is ungrammatical:

(6) a. **ora la care **se** începe să vină*
hour.DEF at which SE starts SUBJ come

b. **în România, **se** continuă să vină tardiv la medic*
in Romania SE continues SUBJ come late at doctor

(7) a. **la acest nivel **se** începe să stabilească un sistem*
at this level SE start SUBJ establish a system

b. **unde **se** continuă să facă angajări*
where SE continues SUBJ make engagements

1.3. The empirical goal of this paper is to determine the causes of this variation in the placement of SE and to identify which type of SE can cliticise onto the aspectual verb, given that Romanian SE has multiple values (see below, **section 3**). It will appear that only the voice marker SE can combine with the aspectual verbs *începe* ('begin, start') and *continua* ('continue').

On the theoretical side, our contribution brings additional evidence for the **raising** (versus **control**) status of Romanian aspectual verbs, an idea first put forth (to our knowledge) by Gabriela Alboiu (2007) and further defended by Cotfas (2011), both working on the nature of (obligatory) control in Romanian. The special status of Romanian aspectual verbs (alongside of modals verbs) has been noticed since the seminal study of Valeria Guțu Romalo (1961), in which aspectual verbs are classified as *semiauxiliaries*.

As noticed by Dana Manea in the latest academic grammar of Romanian, the presence of an aspectual verb does not modify the syntactic-semantic pattern of the full verb, does not influence its thematic structure and does not act upon it transitive/intransitive, personal/impersonal/inherently reflexive or prepositional character (GALR 2008, I: 462). The inability of aspectual verbs to alter the syntactic characteristics

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of their subjunctive complement[2], on the one hand, and their thematic inability, on the other hand, are clear indications for considering aspectuals as being *raising* predicates.

1.4. The *raising* status of aspectual verbs has deeper implications for understanding their morphosyntactic behaviour (ellipsis, nominative case marking, the temporal dependency of an embedded predicate on the selecting predicate, etc.). The present paper has a modest goal: we believe that the behaviour of the voice marker SE in combination with aspectual verbs represents a step further in understanding the nature of these predicates. The fully worked out analysis of ellipsis with aspectual licensers is postponed to more detailed work (Nicolae 2013).

We start by looking first at the difference between two means of argument-structure alternation, **Voice** and **Diathesis** (section 2). In the analysis of voice mismatches under ellipsis, Merchant (2013) suggests this distinction, without capitalising on it. Next, it will be shown that Romanian SE is both a voice marker and a diathesis marker, besides being a full pronoun with argumental status in reflexive and reciprocal constructions and a grammatical formative of inherently reflexive verbs (section 3). Section 4 looks at the behaviour of the different types of SE in complex predicates headed by the aspectual verbs *a începe* ('begin, start') and *a continua* ('continue'). The conclusions are drawn in section 5.

1.5. Before we get started, it is necessary to mention we are working within a Minimalist Theory of syntax (Chomsky 1995 and ssq. work); the clausal structure we assume is: C > T > *v* > V, with C and *v* being phasal heads (Gallego 2010); phases interact cyclically with the sensory-motor and conceptual-intentional interfaces (Chomsky 2001, 2013). Arrays of lexical items (including lexical and functional categories) are drawn from the Lexicon to form the Numeration, which feeds Narrow Syntax.

2. On Diathesis and Voice

2.1. Merchant (2013) makes an interesting terminological difference between *diathesis* and *voice.* At first sight, both concepts cover argument alternations with no deeper correlations. Traditional grammars testify to this state of affairs: for instance, the Romanian academic grammars (GLR 1966, GALR 2008) only use the term *diathesis* (applying it to active/passive and personal/impersonal alternations – voice alternations, in fact). In analysing instances of mismatch between the antecedent and the ellipsis site, Merchant reserves the term *voice* for the active-passive alternation, while the term *diathesis* covers argument structure alternations which "involve apparently different syntactic realisations of a verb's or predicate's semantic or thematic arguments" (Merchant 2013: 96). The latter includes, on the one hand, subject/non-subject alternations such as the transitive/anticausative alternation (8) and the transitive/middle alternation (9), and, on the other hand, internal argument alternations, such as the

[2] Since we are dealing with the aspectual verbs *începe* and *continua*, whose principal complement in the current phase of Romanian is a subjunctive clause, we will restrict our discussion to the combination aspectual + subjunctive complement (see Nicolae 2013 for a comprehensive discussion). We will focus here only on the *semiauxiliary* variant of *începe* and *continua*, i.e. when they select an anaphoric subjunctive; these verbs also have a fully lexical correspondent, in which they select a noun, whose analysis is beyond the interests of this paper.

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ditransitive alternation (10) and the oblique alternation (with verbs such as *embroider, issue,* and *provide*) (11):

(8) a. *The sun melted the ice-cream.*
b. *The ice-cream melted.*
(9) a. *They sell vegetables well in the market.*
b. *Vegetables sell well in the market*.
(10) a. *They gave the boy a book.*
b. *They gave a book to the boy.*
(11) a. *The embroidered something with peace signs.* (Merchant 2013: 99)
b. *The embroidered peace signs on something.*

What is of interest for the discussion at hand is that the occurrence of *diathesis* alternations is regulated by lexical factors, while *voice* alternations are syntactic in nature. To be more precise, *diathesis* "alternations reflect distinct heads in the numeration" (Merchant 2013: 100, building on Hale and Keyser 1993, 2002, and ssq. work), while *voice* alternations reflect different featural specifications of the same Voice head.

2.2. With respect to the voice alternations, Merchant's proposal captures a long-noted intuition very well-represented in all the phases of generative grammar (except for the GB model), with different technical implementations: namely, the idea that the passive form of a sentence is derivationally related the active form of the respective sentence. In the *Syntactic Structures* model (Chomsky 1957), the active-passive relation is conceived of as a transformational rule (Chomsky 1957 [2002]: 43, rule 34):

(12) If S_1 is a grammatical sentence of the form
$NP_1 - Aux - V - NP_2$,
then the corresponding string of the form
$NP_2 - Aux + be + en - V - by + NP_1$
is also a grammatical sentence.

In the *Aspects* model (Chomsky 1965), the active-passive relation is also viewed as a transformation of the active structure into a passive one (see Pană Dindelegan 1974: 25–30, for a late implementation of the passive transformation on Romanian in the *Aspects* model).

In the *Government and Binding* era, the most influential account of the passive is Baker, Johnson, Roberts (1989), who develop and motivate a theory of passive constructions whose central claim is that the passive morpheme has the status of an argument, subject to well-formedness conditions that apply to arguments. The GB account of the passive divorces the passive form of the sentence from the active form of the sentence, diverging thus from the previous generative accounts of the phenomenon. As noticed by Collins (2005), a very unwelcomed result of the GB account is that the external argument is merged (generated in GB terms) in completely different positions in the active voice (Spec, IP) and in the passive voice (as a complement of the preposition heading the agent phrase).

In *Minimalism* (Chomsky 1995 and ssq. work), the most prominent and empirically adequate account of passives is Chris Collin's (2005) smuggling approach, also taken up in Merchant (2013). This theory assumes that active and passive sentences project the same transitive lexical phrase (no case or theta role is absorbed). In the smuggling analysis of the passive, there is a distinct Voice head, which asymmetrically

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c-commands the *v*-head that determines transitivity (/unergativity/unacussativity) and whose specifier accommodates the external argument (if present). In passive constructions, the head of the Voice Phrase is the preposition heading the agent phrase (*by* in English, *de / de către* in Romanian). The Voice head also accommodates an [Active]/[Passive] feature which yields the active or passive interpretation of the clause.

2.3. Getting back to the idea that the passive form of a sentence is derivationally related the active form of the respective sentence, we may conclude from this bird's eye view on the accounts of the passive throughout the history of generative grammar that the active and the passive clauses are alike in that they project the same transitive phrase. More precisely, while the Numerations of (corresponding) active and passive are not identical, they *do not diverge with respect to the core functional heads* responsible for voice alternations: namely, both the Numeration of an active clause and that of a corresponding passive clause possess a Voice head and $v_{\text{transitive}}$ head.

On the other hand, the diathesis alternations illustrated above represent cases of genuine variation in the Lexical Array selected by the Numeration of a certain derivation. Take the transitive/anticausative alternation (example (8), repeated below).

(13) a. *The sun melted the ice-cream.*
b. *The ice-cream melted.*

The clause in (13a) is a well-behaving transitive sentence: it has an agentive subject, and a bona fide direct object. This indicates the presence of a transitive *v*: the direct internal argument is valued accusative in the *v*P phase, and the external argument gets nominative case by Agree with T. By contrast, (13b) is an unaccusative clause: the DP *the ice cream*, projected as an internal argument, cannot get accusative case in the *v**-phase (due to the defectiveness $v_{\text{unaccusative}}$, cf. Chomsky 2001), and it is probed by the T-head, which secures nominative case by Agree. As also noticed by Gallego (2010: 37), the internal argument is matched twice (*v* and T), but Agree proper is only established with T, for only T is ϕ-complete.

What is important to notice is that in contrast to the active-passive alternation, which comes about as the effect of a **different feature value** [active / passive] on the same functional head (Voice), the anticausative alternation results from **the presence of different functional heads in the Numeration** on which the derivation is based: $v_{\text{transitive}}$ for the transitive/causative derivation and $v_{\text{unaccusative}}$ for the unaccusative/anticausative derivation.

2.4. In conclusion, Voice alternations represent alterations of the valency grid of a verb in the syntax, in other words, they are **syntactic processes**, while diathesis alternations are lexically determined: they involve the presence of different functional heads dragged from the Lexicon into the Numeration; put differently, diathesis alternation is a **lexical process**.

There is plenty of empirical evidence supporting this distinction; in the following sections, we will concentrate on the combination of voice SE with aspectual verbs, showing that SE can cliticise onto an aspectual verb only when it is a voice marker, not otherwise. See Appendix 1 for Merchant's arguments coming from the domain of ellipsis for the distinction between Voice and Diathesis.

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3. Romanian SE: contexts of occurrence and syntactic functions

Before turning to the analysis of the data presented in the introduction, it is necessary to present the distribution of the Romanian clitic SE and to determine, in each case, whether SE is an argumental element or a means of reducing the valency frame of a predicate, i.e. a voice or a diathesis marker. The following cursory presentation only scratches the surface[3,4] of the problem.

3.1. SE is a **reflexive/reciprocal pronoun**. In this instance, SE indicates the coreference of the subject with the direct object; it bears a theta-role and it can be doubled by a strong reflexive or reciprocal pronoun (14a,b); the position filled by SE is that of the direct object, as visible from the possibility of substituting SE with a non-reflexive accusative clitic (14c):

(14) a. *El **se** spală (pe sine).*
he SE washes PE self
'He washes himself'

b. *Ei **se** spală (unul pe celălalt).*
They SE wash one PE the other
'They wash one another'

c. *El îl o spală (pe el / ea).*
he CL.ACC.M.SG CL.ACC.F.SG wash PE him her
'He washes him / her'

3.2. SE may be a **formative of inherently reflexive predicates**[5]; it cannot be doubled by a strong pronoun (15b), and therefore it does not have an argumental status. The absence of SE renders the sentence ungrammatical (15c). Verbs such as *a se bosumfla* 'pout', *a se întâmpla* 'happen'*, a se mândri* 'be proud'*, a se teme* 'fear', *a se chema* 'to be named, called', etc. are inherently reflexive verbs; more rarely, the dative form of SE can also give rise to inherently reflexive verbs or expressions: *a-şi închipui* 'imagine'*, a-şi da seama* 'realise'*, a-şi bate joc* 'mock'.

(15) a. ***Se** teme de criză.*
SE fears of crisis
'(S)he fears the crisis'

b. ****Se** teme de criză pe sine.*
SE fears of crisis PE self

c. **Teme de criză.*
fears of crisis

Certain verbs, such as *gândi* 'think', have both an inherently reflexive and a non-reflexive variant (cf. (16)). When inherently reflexive (16a), the verb is intransitive, other arguments besides the subject being introduced as PPs headed by *la*. In its non-reflexive variant (16b), the verb takes a proper direct object that can even undergo passivisation (17).

[3] A lot of ink has been shed on the analysis of Romanian SE in its different guises. Of the most important recent contributions we refer the reader to Cornilescu (1998), Dobrovie-Sorin (1998), Alboiu, Barrie, Frigeni (2004), and Dragomirescu (2010).

[4] In Cornilescu and Nicolae (2013), we put forth a more minimalist account of the behaviour of SE, considering that it comes into two main guises, i.e. **reflexive** and **agentive**. In present paper, I stick to the more traditional perspective on SE, but it is to be noted that the result arrived at is implementable in the framework developed by Cornilescu and Nicolae (2013): only agentive SE can surface on the aspectual verb; anticipating, only agentive SE may enter a relation with the T-feature of the aspectual verb.

[5] See also Andra Vasilescu in GR (2013: 178) for more details.

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The reflexive/non-reflexive variation induces differences in meaning, as visible from the glosses.

(16) a. *El se gândeşte la proiect.*
he SE thinks at project
'He is thinking about the project'

b. *El gândeşte proiectul.*
he thinks project.DEF
'He conceives the project'

(17) *Proiectul este gândit de el.*
project.DEF is thought by him
'The project is conceived by him'

In order to understand the origin of SE as a formative of these inherently reflexive verbs, it is of interest to make a short historical discussion. Consider the verb *a se teme* ('to fear, to be afraid of'). Alongside of inherently reflexive *a se teme* (18a)[6], older stages of Romanian display a transitive version without SE (*a teme*) (18b) and the Thesaurus Dictionary of Romanian (DA/DLR[7]) also gives several examples from the modern language of the 19th c. with transitive *a teme* (18c), marking them at obsolete.

(18) a. *Teme-**se**-vor limbile de numele lui Dumnezău.* (Psaltirea Hurmuzaki, 84r)
fear=SE=will tongues by name.DEF GEN God
'The peoples will fear the name of God'

b. *Ştiu eu cum că temi pre Dumnezeu.* (PO 71/19)
know I that (you)fear PE God
'I know that you fear God'

c. *Tu ce nu temi furtuna şi durerea.* (Eminescu, *Opere*, IV, 108)
you who not fear storm.DEF and pain.DEF
(literal) 'You, who is not afraid of storm and pain'

Taking into account the fact that Rom. *teme* has been inherited from Lat. *timĕre* ('fear, be frightened'), which is a transitive active verb, it appears that SE has historically cliticised onto transitive verb as a means of intransitivisation. The combination became historically frozen (i.e. it lexicalised), and SE became a lexical component of the verb. With these verbs, *SE no longer reflects a voice or diathesis alternation* of the sort discussed in the sections below. The dual status of *a (se) gândi* verifies synchronically this hypothesis.

Pană Dindelegan (2006: 226) also brings into discussion the situation of reflexive / non-reflexive pairs, in which the members of the pair have a completely different meaning: *a aştepta* ('wait') */ a se aştepta* ('expect') or *a uita* ('forget') */ a se uita* ('look at'). This type of variation is classified as lexical: "the situation corresponds to a case of verbal homonymy and not to a syntactic opposition" (Pană Dindelegan 2006: 226).

3.3. Anticausative SE[8]. In this guise, SE marks the unaccusative variant of a verb (19a) which also has a transitive variant (19b). The merger of SE with the lexical

[6] The examples are taken over from the dictionary.

[7] *Dicţionarul limbii române*, serie nouă, tomul XI, partea a 2-a, Litera T, T-Tocăliţă, Bucureşti, 1982, s.v. *teme*.

[8] We put aside the middle alternation (*El vinde legume* 'He sells vegetables' / *Legumele **se** vând bine* 'Vegetables sell well'). In Romanian, it has been claimed that middle formation is a syntactic process (Cornilescu 1998) (similarly to Greek, Lekakou 2005), while in other languages (English), middle formation belongs to the lexical component (Reinhart and Siloni 2003). This is accounted for by the Lex-Syn Parameter put forth by Reinhart and Siloni (2003), according to which "UG allows thematic arity operations to apply in the lexicon and in the syntax".

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verb is lexical process (Dragomirescu 2010); from a syntactic-semantic point of view, SE performs an "arity" operation, which reduces the valency of a verbal predicate with one argument (Reinhart and Siloni 2003)

(19) a. *Înghețata **se** topește.*
ice-cream.DEF SE melts
'The ice-cream melts'
b. *Soarele topește înghețata.*
sun.DEF melts ice-cream.DEF
'The sun is melting the ice-cream'

(20) a. *Geamul **se** sparge.*
window SE breaks
'The window breaks'
b. *El sparge geamul.*
he breaks window.DEF
'He is breaking the window'

Notice (20a) in particular. Certain verbs, such as *break*, in their transitive instance, have a stronger agentive component than verbs like *melt*. Thus, a sentence like (20a) is always ambiguous between an anticausative reading (*in the long run, window breaks*) and a passive reading (*the window has to be broken in case of a fire*). A passive reading is harder to impose upon a verb like *melt* because of its semantics, but not impossible.

SE may perform the same valency-reduction (i.e. arity) operation with certain verbs of denomination such as *a (se) numi* ('to (be) name(d)'), *a (se) intitula* ('to (be) entitle(d)')[9]. The syntactic pattern [Subject + Verb + Direct Object + Predicative] turns into [Subject + Verb + SE + Predicative] with the help of SE:

(21) a. *(Ei) l-au* *numit "Secretariat".*
they CL.ACC.M.SG=have named Secretariat
'They named him *Secretariat*'
b. ***S**-a numit "Secretariat".*
SE=has named Secretariat
'He was called *Secretariat*'

This has also been argued to be a lexical process (GBRL 2010: 488), similar to the anticausativisation operation described in the above paragraph.

3.4. Conclusions so far. Importantly, as a reflexive/reciprocal pronoun, as a formative in the structure of inherently reflexive verbs, and as an arity operator, SE displays person variation (verb semantics permitting it): the verbs inflect for all six persons, and SE changes its form depending on the person of the predicate:

(22) a. *Eu **mă*** *spăl.* (reflexive SE)
I CL.ACC.1SG wash
b. *Tu **te*** *speli.*
You CL.ACC.2SG wash

(23) a. *Eu **mă*** *tem.* (formative SE)
I CL.ACC.1SG fear
b. *Tu **te*** *temi.*
You CL.ACC.2SG fear

(24) a. ***Mă*** *topesc de la soare.* (anticausative SE)
CL.ACC.1SG melt from the sun
b. ***Te*** *topești de la soare.*
CL.ACC.2SG melt from the sun

[9] See **Appendix 2** for a different path of historical change taken by the verb *a se chema*.

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(25) a. ***Mă*** *numesc "Secretariat".* (denomination SE)
CL.ACC.1SG Secretariat
b. ***Te*** *numeşti "Secretariat".*
CL.ACC.2SG Secretariat

However, only as a reflexive/reciprocal pronoun may SE be doubled, which testifies to its full argumental status (cf. (14)). Reflexive/reciprocal SE does not alter the number of arguments of a given predicate, but merely indicates co-reference of the subject with the (direct or indirect) object.

With inherently reflexive verbs (such as *a se teme* 'to fear'), SE is merely a lexical formative, and it does not create an alternation of the sort investigated in section **3.3**.

The anticausative and denomination versions of SE give rise to diathesis alternations: SE causes an alteration in the valency of the predicate, but the alteration is lexical in nature, i.e. it takes place in the pre-syntactic component.

Two more values of SE are interesting for our purpose: SE can also be a voice marker, giving rise to the active/passive alternation and to the personal/impersonal alternation. We briefly turn to this subject in the following subsection.

3.5. SE as a voice marker. While the existence of the active-passive voice opposition is uncontroversial, conceiving the opposition between the personal and impersonal form of a sentence as being a voice distinction has been rarely proposed (see, for Spanish, Ordóñez and Treviño's 2011). This solution has been taken up in the latest Romanian academic grammars (GALR 2008 and GBLR 2010), in which voice is conceived as being a system of binary oppositions (active-passive, personal-impersonal) distributed across different classes of verbs. Simply put, transitive verbs participate in the active-passive voice opposition, while intransitive verbs in the personal-impersonal opposition[10]. At this point, it is worth emphasising that there are several classes of verbs that do not enter voice oppositions: inherently reflexive verbs, inherently impersonal verbs, copulative verbs, verbs with a non-animate subject (Pană Dindelegan 2006: 333).

As a passive voice marker (26a), SE is a detransitivisation device occurring as an alternative to the copular passive (26b). In the present-day language[11], the SE passive imposes certain semantic restrictions on its subject: the subject of reflexive-passive sentences cannot be expressed by a personal pronoun or a proper name, i.e. the subject cannot be a DP which excludes a property reading (see the contrasts in (27)).

(26) a. ***S****-au* *adus* ***cămăşi****.*
SE=have brought shirts
b. *Au* *fost* *aduse* ***cămăşi****.*
have been brought shirts
'Shirts have been brought'

(27) a. ****S****-a* *adus* ***Ion*** *la judecată.*
SE-has brought John to trial

[10] Detranzitivisation and impersonalisation are different processes. This is clearly observable in Spanish where impersonal SE combines with a periphrastic BE-passive in "an aberrant formation conflating two passives" (Ordóñez and Treviño 2011: 316):

(i) *por cuestiones de papeleos* ***SE*** *me* ***fue*** *denegada* *la visa* (SE + periphrastic passive)
because issues of red tape SE to-me was denied.PASS the visa

[11] This restriction was not functional in older stages of Romanian (see Cornilescu and Nicolae 2013).

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b. ***Ion*** *a fost adus la judecată.*
Ion has been brought to trial.
'John has been brought to trial.'

Furthermore, the agent of the SE-passive sentence is typically (but not obligatorily) demoted.

As an impersonal voice maker, SE is an identifier of the subject position, and it must be characterized as [+human], given its interpretation: notice in particular the change in selectional restrictions affecting unaccusative verbs (28). That *impersonalisation* is among the functions of the clitic SE has recently been stressed by Pană Dindelegan (2006: 334-335) in analyzing impersonal intransitives in Romanian:

(28) a. ***Se*** *pleacă.* [+Personal]
SE leaves
'They are leaving'

b. *Trenul / El pleacă.* [± Personal]
train.DEF he leaves
'The train / He is leaving'

Unergative verbs retain their cognate object and behave like transitives; SE is a passive voice marker with unergatives that lexicalise their cognate object:

(29) a. ***Se*** *visează vise urâte când nu ai bani.*
SE dream dreams horrid when not you-have money
'One dreams horrid dreams when one does not have money'

b. ***Se*** *doarme un somn adânc când eşti obosit.*
SE sleeps a sleep deep when (you)are tired
'One sleeps a deep sleep when one is tired'

Summing up on the presentation of SE as a voice marker, it is important to stress its main characteristics in opposition to the previous usages of SE described in the above:

1) In opposition to reflexive/reciprocal SE, voice SE cannot be doubled;

2) In opposition to reflexive/reciprocal SE, formative SE and anticausative and denomination SE, the item used as a voice marker does not undergo person variation, being exclusively restricted to the third person singular;

3) Furthermore, as insisted above, voice SE is specified as [+human].

Summary

The investigation of the occurrences of SE has shown that this item comes in four main syntactic guises in the present-day language: 1) a reflexive/reciprocal pronoun, 2) a formative of inherently reflexive verbs, 3) a **diathesis marker** which alters the valency grid of a predicate pre-syntactic component, being therefore **a lexical device**, and 4) a **voice** marker, which produces valency alternations in the **syntactic component**.

It is now the time to turn to the goal of the paper announced in the first section, and to see what insights into the syntax of aspectual verbs are provided by the presence of SE with *începe* ('begin, start') and *continua* ('continue').

4. SE and aspectual verbs

4.1. The combination of SE with aspectual verbs reveals certain unknown characteristic of this class of verbs. A rather well-known characteristic of Romanian aspectual verbs is that they cannot undergo passivisation with the regular passive

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auxiliary *be* when they select a subjunctive complement[12] (30b); voice may be expressed only within the subjunctive component (30c):

(30) a. *Începe / continuă să construiască casa.*
starts / continues SUBJ build house.DEF
'He begins / continues to build the house'

b. **Este început / continuat să fie construită casa.*
is begun / continued SUBJ be built house

c. *Casa începe / continuă să fie construită.*
house.DEF begins continues SUBJ be built
'The house begins / continues to be built'

This behaviour goes hand in hand with the extremely deficient nature of aspectual verbs. Their deficiency is two-fold (thematic and selectional). As noticed in section **1.3.**, building on GALR (2008), aspectual verbs are deficient from a thematic point of view: they are unable to assign theta-roles to their external argument. Another facet of the deficiency of aspectual verbs is that they select a subjunctive complement that is stripped of any independent temporal capacity: as shown by Cotfas (2011), the subjunctive complement of modal and aspectual verbs is an *anaphoric subjunctive.* Temporal defectiveness is not an inherent characteristic of embedded subjunctive clauses: the example below shows that an embedded subjunctive may have a temporal specification distinct from that of the main verb:

(31) ***Astăzi** în consiliu s-a hotărât ca studenții să fie examinați săptămâna **viitoare**.*
today in council SE=has decided that students SUBJ be examined week.DEF next
'Today, in the council, it has been decided that the students be examined next week'

The temporal defectiveness of the subjunctive clause selected by an aspectual verb is apparent from (at least) the following two empirical facts: the subjunctive cannot have a temporal specification distinct from that of the selecting aspectual verb (32); the perfect subjunctive cannot be selected by aspectual verbs (33):

(32) **Azi** încep să citesc **mâine**.*
today (I)start SUBJ read tomorrow

(33) **Am început să fi citit.*
(I)have begun SUBJ be read

The contrast between (31) and (32) indicates that the temporally defective nature of the subjunctive embedded by an aspectual verb is determined by the selecting aspectual predicate. From a technical point of view, this indicates that aspectual verbs select a complementizer whose Tense (T) feature is *uninterpretable* and *unvalued*: C is [*u*T][13]. It is thus the function of the higher selecting predicate to provide a value for this feature: this ensures that the subjunctive is anaphoric to the selecting predicate, and brings about other effects bearing on the (non-)phasal nature of the embedded subjunctive (Alboiu 2007, Cotfas 2011).

At the same time, the defective nature of the selected subjunctive also accounts for the raising nature of aspectual verbs: while it is true that richness of agreement inflection suffices to license null (*pro*) subjects (Roberts 2010, Biberauer and Roberts 2010), it is equally true that nominative case-marking is ensured by the presence of

[12] Recall that these verbs also have a lexical version (fnt. 2); as lexical verbs, they are able to assign theta-roles to their subject, and can undergo passivisation.

[13] It is rather well-know and largely accepted that Complementizers have Tense features (den Besten 1983, Pesetsky and Torrego 2001, Gallego 2010).

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non-defective, valued tense features on the temporal projection of verb[14] (Pesetsky and Torrego 2004). Thus, a subjunctive embedded by an aspectual verb is capable of having a subject (even a null subject), this being determined in the *v*P phase (the subject is base generated as a specifier to *v*), but it is incapable of marking it as [Nominative] due to its defective nature. Here is the point where the selecting aspectual verb comes into play: being temporally independent, the aspectual verb can discard its [nominative] feature to the embedded subject. Notice that this does not conflict with the aspectual's syntactic requirements: since aspectuals are thematically deficient, there is no external theta-role whose case requirements need to be satisfied.

Thus, the raising nature of aspectual verbs follows from the fact that they ensure the temporal specification necessary to satisfy the embedded subject's nominative case feature.

4.2. Getting back to the combination between SE and aspectual verbs, from the internet search and from inquiring native speakers of Romanian, the following facts have resulted (for limitations of space, we will restrict to examples with *începe* 'begin, start'):

1) When SE is a reflexive pronoun, it does not surface with this value on the aspectual predicate. SE is not disallowed on the aspectual predicate, but it has the value of a passive voice marker:

(34) *Se începe să se spele copiii.*
SE start SUBJ SE wash children.DEF
'Someone starts to wash the children'
*'The children start to wash themselves'

By contrast, when SE surfaces only in the embedded predicate, it may be a voice marker (35a) or a reflexive (or reciprocal) pronoun (35b); agreement functions as a disambiguating factor.

(35) a. *Începe să se spele copiii.* (passive)
starts SUBJ SE wash children.DEF
'Someone starts to wash the children'
b. *(Copiii) încep să se spele (copiii).* (reflexive or reciprocal)
'The children start (3PL) to wash themselves / one another'

Furthermore, reflexive pronouns display person variation, which is a supplementary test to check whether the reflexive pronoun may surface on the aspectual verb. This is, as expected, disallowed:

(36) a. ***Mă** încep să **mă** spăl.*
CL.ACC.1.SG (I)start SUBJ CL.ACC.1.SG wash
b. *Încep să **mă** spăl.*
(I)start SUBJ CL.ACC.1.SG wash
'I start to wash myself'

In conclusion, only the voice marker SE can surface on the aspectual verb.

2) When SE is a lexical formative of inherently reflexive verbs, it can occur only in the embedded clause:

(37) a. ***Se** începe să **se** teamă.*
SE starts SUBJ SE fear
b. *Începe să **se** teamă.*
starts SUBJ SE fear
'He starts to fear'

[14] "The choice of nominative or accusative morphology on a nominal reflects whether the nominal entered an Agree relation with a feature of T or with a feature of v" (Pesetsky and Torrego 2011: 70).

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c. ***Mă*** *începe să* ***mă*** *tem.*
CL.ACC.1.SG (I)start SUBJ CL.ACC.1.SG fear
d. *Încep să* ***mă*** *tem.*
(I)start SUBJ CL.ACC.1.SG fear
'I am starting to be afraid'

3) With verbs entering the anticausative or denominative alternation, SE may surface on the aspectual verb, but only when it corresponds to the transitive causative version of the verb. Compare (38a) with (38b): in (a), SE on the aspectual verb indicates the presence of an agent in contrast to (b), where the sentence is anticausative:

(38) a. ***Se*** *începe să* ***se*** *topească gheața.*
SE starts SUBJ SE melt ice.DEF
'Someone starts melting the ice'
b. *Gheața începe să* ***se*** *topească.*
ice.DEF starts SUBJ SE melt
'The ice has started melting'

In conclusion, diathesis SE is barred from surfacing on the aspectual verb.

4) Finally, the following examples from the internet show that when SE is a voice marker (passive or impersonal), it may surface both in the embedded clause and on the aspectual verb[15] (diacritics have been added to the examples):

(39) a. *Sâmbăta [..] este obligatoriu a* ***se*** *începe să* ***se*** *pună*
Saturday (it)is compulsory INF SE start SUBJ SE put
masa la începutul ceasului al cincilea.
table at beginning.DEF hour.DEF.GEN the-fifth
'On Saturdays it is compulsory to start laying at the beginning of the fifth hour'
b. *de la câte luni* ***se*** *începe să* ***se*** *dea la bebeluși adăugator de mâncare*
from how-many months SE starts SUBJ SE give to babies additive of food
'since when one should start to give food additives to babies'
c. *la acest nivel* ***se*** *începe să* ***se*** *stabilească un sistem de comunicare*
at this level SE starts SUBJ SE establish a system of communication
'at this level a communication system starts getting established'
d. *deja* ***se*** *începe să* ***se*** *fugă după lucruri*
already SE starts SUBJ SE run after things
'people already looking for other things'

The examples of interest in which SE is a passive marker are much more numerous than the ones in which SE is an impersonal marker. This has a very simple explanation. As noticed in the introduction to this paper (see examples (2) to (5)), SE is, in most cases, optional with the aspectual verb (this is also the case with the immediately above examples). However, there are cases when, in order to impose a specific voice value, SE has to surface on the aspectual predicate as well. This arises when the embedded

[15] As announced, we have illustrated our discussion only with *începe* ('begin, start') in this section. Corresponding examples are also largely found with *continua* ('continue') on the internet (diacritics added):

(i) *Pe plan global situația domeniilor în care* ***se*** *continuă*
on level global situation.DEF domains.DEF.GEN in which SE continues
să ***se*** *angajeze în 2009 este asemănătoare.*
SUBJ SE hire in 2009 is similar
'Globally, the situation of the domains in which people continue to get hired is similar'
(ii) *în România,* ***se*** *continuă să* ***se*** *vină tardiv la medic*
in Romania SE continues SUBJ SE come late at doctor
'in Romania, people continue to go to their doctor at a late stage'

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clause is systematically ambiguous between a reflexive-reciprocal and a passive interpretation, i.e. when the direct object is animate and may be the agent. With common nouns, agreement of the verb indicates whether we are dealing with a reflexive-reciprocal or a passive interpretation:

(40) a. *Începe să **se** certe copiii.* (passive)
starts(3SG) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse children.DEF
'Some starts verbally abusing the children'

b. *Încep să **se** certe copiii.* (reflexive-reciprocal)
start(3PL) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse children.DEF
'The children start to verbally abuse one another'

However, singular collective nouns (*colectiv* 'team', *echipă* 'team', etc.) may give rise to truly ambiguous readings, and agreement is unable to disambiguate the reading:

(41) *Începe să **se** certe echipa.*
starts(3SG) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse team.DEF
'The (members) of the team start verbally abusing one another' (reflexive-reciprocal)
'The team begins to be verbally abused by someone (the boss, for instance)' (passive)

Here is where SE on the aspectual verb works as a disambiguation marker in the context: SE on the aspectual verb jettisons the reflexive-reciprocal reading, preserving only the passive reading:

(42) ***Se** începe să se certe echipa.*
SE starts(3SG) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse team.DEF
'The team begins to be verbally abused by someone (the boss, for instance)' (passive)

Thus, it is easy to see why SE surfaces on aspectuals as a **passive** voice marker more often than it does as an **impersonal** voice marker: SE helps disambiguating a potentially reflexive(-reciprocal) reading of the sentence. By contrast, with intransitive verbs (where SE is an impersonal voice marker), the possibility that the sentence might be reflexive(-reciprocal) is practically null. To conclude, SE with transitive verbs also has a functional correlate, and this accounts for the fact that SE occurs more often as a passive voice marker than as an impersonal voice marker.

Summary

This section has shown that SE may combine with aspectual verbs only when it is a **voice marker**. When it fulfils other functions (reflexive-reciprocal pronoun, lexical formative, diathesis marker), SE is blocked with aspectual verbs.

At the same time, recall from examples (6)-(7) that the occurrence of SE with the aspectual verb is conditioned by the presence of SE in the embedded clause. This also has a very simple explanation: since aspectual verbs are themselves unable to express voice distinctions, SE surfacing on the aspectual verb necessarily reflects a voice distinction of the embedded predicate. If absent on the embedded predicate, SE will also be necessarily absent on the aspectual verb. This is, most certainly, correlated with the fact that the aspectual verb provides the T(ense) value necessary to mark the subject of the embedded subjunctive with the nominative case. The fact that the aspectual verb entertains a special relation with the embedded predicate is also visible from the following minimal contrast with volitional verbs, which select a subjunctive clause but do not interact with the Tense specification and with the case-licensing properties of the embedded clause (their subjunctive is independent): with volitional verbs, SE on the selecting verb does not jettison one reading; the sentence below (43) is systematically ambiguous between a reflexive-reciprocal reading and the passive reading (compare with (42) above):

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(43) ***Se*** *vrea să* ***se*** *certe copiii.*
SE wants SUBJ SE verbally-abuse children
'Someone wants that the children verbally abuse one another' (reflexive-reciprocal reading)
'Someone wants that the children be verbally abused' (passive)

5. Conclusions: the relevance of combination of aspectual verbs with voice markers

This paper has started from challenging Virginia Hill's claim that "impersonal SE" cannot combine with aspectual verbs and has shown that this claim is not empirically adequate. The item SE has in Romanian a few-well established values; it may be a reflexive-reciprocal pronoun, a lexical formative, a diathesis marker and a voice marker. Our paper has shown that only when it is a voice marker can SE surface on an aspectual verb. This provides further evidence for the defective nature and raising status of the aspectual verbs. Being themselves unable to reflect voice distinctions and to possess their own external argument, but, on the other hand, being responsible for assigning nominative to the embedded external argument and for the temporal representation of the embedded clause, aspectual verbs display a bigger degree of cohesion with the selected subjunctive clause. The fact that voice markers may surface on the aspectual verb verifies this strength of cohesion: the temporal specification of the matrix aspectual predicate has an influence on the subject position of the embedded verb. In essence, both the passive voice and the impersonal voice affect the position of the subject. It is therefore natural to expect that the voice specification of the embedded predicate affects the matrix predicate given the strong degree of cohesion of these two predicates. This constitutes a further argument for their raising nature.

On the more theoretical side, our paper has shown that the distinction between *diathesis* and *voice* is syntactically active and empirically delineable. The fact that such distinctions are reflected syntactically strengthens the intuition that certain valency-reducing processes belong to the pre-syntactic, lexical component (diathesis), while others arise in the syntax (voice).

Appendix 1 – Voice vs. Diathesis. Arguments from Ellipsis

Merchant's (2003) demonstration is based on the empirical observation that certain valency-changing operations allow for mismatch under ellipsis, while others do not. To be precise, active-passive and passive-active mismatches are possible in English Verb Phrase Ellipsis (Merchant 2013; all the English examples below are taken from Merchant 2013):

(i) a. *The janitor must remove the trash whenever it is apparent that it should be.* <removed>
b. *The system can be used by anyone who wants to.* <use it>

By contrast, neither of the diathesis alternations presented above allows mismatch under Verb Phrase Ellipsis[16]:

[16] Internal argument alternations and oblique alternations are also disallowed under ellipsis; however, the only type of ellipsis against which they can be tested is Sluicing; therefore, they do not add any insight to our discussion (voice vs. diathesis) except for the fact that, of course, identity in ellipsis is calculated over syntactic structure. The examples below are taken over from Merchant (2013):
(A) internal argument alternations
(i) *They served$_1$ someone something. / They served$_2$ something to someone.*
**They served$_1$ someone the meal, but I don't know to whom <they served$_2$ the meal t>.*

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(A) transitive / anticausative alternation

(ii) *This can freeze. / Please freeze this.*
*This can freeze. *Please do.*

(B) transitive / middle alternation

(iii) *They market ethanol well in the Midwest. / Ethanol markets well in the Midwest.*
**They market ethanol well in the Midwest, but regular gas they don't.*
**Ethanol markets well in the Midwest, though they don't in the South.*

A word of caution is in order here: Merchant (2013) deals with argument alternations both for what he calls "high ellipses" (i.e. Sluicing, a type of ellipsis where the deletion point is high in the functional structure, presumably T), and "low ellipses" (i.e. Verb Phrase Ellipsis, which deletes a constituent which is lower in the structure than T and Voice). Neither type of alternation, Voice or Diathesis, is allowed with high ellipses such as sluicing: with voice alternations the diverging node is comprised in the ellipsis site and the Parallelism Condition on ellipsis cannot be satisfied; with diathesis alternations, the same Parallelism Condition cannot be satisfied, but the reason is different: the projections comprised in the ellipsis domain are different (different flavours of *v*). Alternations with high ellipses are important from two perspectives: first, they indicate that the cut-off point for these types of ellipsis is higher than the projection responsible for voice alternations; secondly, they show that identity in ellipsis is calculated over syntactic structure. Turning to low ellipses now, as apparent from the examples above (cf. (i) vs. (ii)-(iii)), voice alternations are permitted, while diathesis alternations are not. The relevant conclusions to drawn from this behaviour are the following: first, the cut-off point for low ellipses is lower than Voice (as Merchant contends, it is *v*P) and therefore, the Voice node can have diverging specifications without necessarily bearing on the establishment of Parallelism; secondly, the unavailability of diathesis alternations indicates (again) that identity in ellipsis is calculated over syntactic structure; the different nature of the projections involved in the derivation of structure with diathesis alternations prohibits the establishing of Parallelism.

Appendix 2 – *A se chema* - a historical snapshot

From a historical perspective, it is interesting to briefly look at an inherently reflexive denomination verb such as *a se chema* ('to be named / called'). In opposition to its synonym *a se numi* (see section 3.3 in the main text), *a se chema* does not have a transitive (causative) version (a correspondent of (ia) is not available with this verb, **Ei l-au chemat "Secretariat"*).

(i) a. *(Ei) l-au numit "Secretariat".* [(i) = (21) in the main text]
'They name him John'
b. *S-a numit "Secretariat".*
'He was named secretariat'

However, as shown in Pană Dindelegan (1968: 276, 286), in Old Romanian, a transitive variant is also available, corresponding to (ia): *hanul tătărăscu (carele şi Uzbec* ***îl*** *chiamă)* (PIst, 241/15) 'the Tartar khan (which they also name Uzbek)'; the transitive variant is paralleled by a SE-variant: *Această Duminecă, ea* ***se*** *cheamă şi preaglăsitoare* (Coresi, Ev. 12/r) 'This Sunday, it is called *preaglăsuitoare*[17]'. This behaviour reinforces the idea that emergence of inherently reflexive verbs comes about as the effect of an

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(B) oblique alternation

(ii) a. *The embroidered something with peace signs.*
b. *The embroidered peace signs on something.*
c. **They embroidered something with peace signs but I don't know what on* <they embroidered peaces signs t>.

[17] The word "preaglăsuitoare" (very-musical) is hard to translate. The quote is from deacon Coresi's second Homiliary (*Cazania*). From the context, we see that the respective biblical passage is from Luca (18: 10), which contains The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, read in the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican, the first Sunday of the Triodion. The Triodion comprises Lent and the period before Lent. Special hymns are sung during this period. As Emanuela Timotin (p.c.) informs me, it is most probable that this very Sunday is named "preaglăsuitoare" because more hymns are sung in comparison with the previous Sundays.

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alternation: the initially transitive version is jettisoned, and the reflexive variant is reinterpreted as a single lexical entry (gets lexicalised).

A word of caution is in order here: in the contemporary language, the verb *chema* also has a special transitive usage (*Îl cheamă Ion* 'He is called Ion'); however, this is a subjectless construction (**Ei îl cheamă Ion* '(intended): They call him'), with a static interpretation in which the presence of a 'denomination' agent is fully excluded; this unavailable for verbs entering the denominative alternation like *a se numi*: with *a se numi*, the transitive variant is compatible with a subject and is always understood as being the effect of an agent (*Îl numesc Ion* has the meaning 'They call / name him Ion'). At the same time, the transitive variant of *cheama* from Old Romanian is clearly of the same type of the present day transitive variant of *numi*: in the Old Romanian example given in the above paragraph, *hanul tătărăscu (carele şi Uzbec* ***îl*** *chiamă)* (PIst, 241/15), it is clear that someone bestows upon the Tartar Khan the name Uzbek, this therefore indicating that the agent is syntactically active.

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OBSERVATIONS SUR LA SYNTAXE DES VERBES ASPECTUELS EN ROUMAIN : LA RELATION ENTRE LES VERBES ASPECTUELS ET LA VOIX

Résumé

Cet article a comme point de départ l'observation de Virginia Hill (2013), conformément à laquelle les verbes aspectuels ne peuvent pas recevoir la marque impersonnelle SE ; l'auteur donne des arguments contre cette observation. Les verbes aspectuels peuvent seulement se combiner avec SE en tant que marqueur de voix et ils n'acceptent pas d'autres types de SE (pronom réfléchi, marqueur lexical réfléchi, marqueur de la diathèse). Les conséquences de cette distribution sont comme suit : (1) il y a une distinction nette entre *voix* et *diathèse* ; (2) les verbes aspectuels sont des verbes à montée du sujet (SE en tant que marque de voix est étroitement lié à la position du sujet de la proposition subordonnée, dans le cas des verbes transitifs aussi bien que des intransitifs).

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