INFINITIVAL RELATIVE CLAUSES

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Abstract. This article deals with the syntactic description of constructions such as: (Rom.) 'N-am ce face' / (Engl.) 'I've got nothing to do', which in the Romanian literature are usually named 'infinitival relative clauses'. They do not correspond to what is currently considered an 'infinitival relative clause' in other languages (i.e. reduced relative clauses of the type 'This novel is a book to read'). On the basis of their syntactic and semantic properties, I intend to show that in spite of the fact that such constructions exhibit features that are common to both relatives and interrogatives, infinitival relatives can be described as a distinct type of subordinate clause.

Key-words: Relative clauses, Indirect Interrogatives, Infinitive.

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper is a small-scale investigation of an archaic relative construction in Romanian – the infinitival relative clause (IRC)[2], from the perspective of its mechanism of formation and construction features.

In contemporary Romanian[3], the use of the above-mentioned construction is almost exclusively limited to the spoken language. IRCs occur in a small number of contexts: in direct object position of the [+personal] verb *a avea* (Engl. *to have*) (1a−d) and in subject position of the impersonal verbs *a avea* (1e−g) and *a fi* (Engl. *to be*) (1hj):

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[2] In respect to the results of several recent studies concerning constructions of this type (Simik 2011, Pomian 2009) some previous remarks (Gheorghe 2004: 237−242; GALR II 2008: 228−229) are reconsidered here, in order to find a place for this syntactic pattern among relative-interrogative constructions in Romanian.

[3] The early evidence of this construction in Romanian go back to the XVI-th century (Diaconescu 1967; 1977). A wh-word associated with an infinitive occurs in old Romanian in syntactic patterns similar to the ones employed in contemporary Romanian, in subject or direct object positions of the verbs *have* (*a avea*) or *be* (*a fi*). According to Diaconescu (1977: 152−155), in old Romanian, the relative pronoun *ce* (Engl. *what*) has the highest frequency of occurence in IRCs, followed by *unde* (Engl. *where*). Later, the pattern is extended to other wh-words: *cine* (Engl. *who*), *cum* (Engl. *how*), *când* (Engl. *when*). For further discussions and references concerning the origin of IRCs in Romanian, see Pomian (2009: 196). For the hypothesis according to which the infinitive employed in indirect relative-interrogative constructions in Romance originates in the Latin imperfective subjunctive, see Scida (2004: 89).

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(1) a. N-am ce face
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ what do$_{INF}$
'I can't do anything (about it)'
b. Fata asta n-are la cine merge
girl-the this not-has to who go$_{INF}$
'This girl has nobody to go to'
c. Am unde merge.
have$_{IND1SG}$ where go$_{INF}$
'I have a place to go to'
d. Ei n-au cum câştiga
they not-have how win$_{INF}$
'They have no chance to win'
e. N-are ce se-ntâmpla.
not-has$_{IMPERS}$ what REFL-happen$_{INF}$
'There is nothing to happen'
f. N-are cine-l ajuta
not-has$_{IMPERS}$ who-CL$_{ACC}$ help$_{INF}$
'There is nobody to help him'
g. N-are unde/cum/când se petrece aşa ceva
not-has$_{IMPERS}$ where/how/when REFL-happen$_{INF}$ such thing
'There is no place/ no way/ no time that such thing could happen'
h. Nu-i cine-l ajuta.
not-is$_{IMPERS}$ who-CL$_{ACC}$ help$_{INF}$
'There is nobody to help him'
i. Nu-i ce se-ntâmpla.
not-is$_{IMPERS}$ what REFL-happen$_{INF}$
'There is nothing to happen'
j. Nu-i când termina treaba
not-is$_{IMPERS}$ when finish$_{INF}$ job-the
'There is no time to finish the job'

Given the fact that in IRCs a *wh*-word is associated to a non-finite verbal form – the short infinitive, without the mobile marker *a* – the interest of Romanian linguists focused on the difficulty of a clear cut framing of these constructions in the category of relative clauses. IRCs were interpreted either as complex subjects/direct objects or as a special type of relative clauses[4].

[4] The construction is mentioned in Cipariu's grammar (1869: 284, 1877: 239), but no much consideration on its syntactic status is made. Since then, it has appeared at almost every author or academic grammar. For the interpretation of IRC as a *complement clause,* see Diaconescu 1967: 146; 1989: 94−95; 223−224; GALR 2008: 228−229), and for the interpretation as a *complex syntactic structure* or as a *reduced structure* equivalent to a DO or Subject, see Avram 1978: 263 and 1997: 455, 456, Draşoveanu 1997: 245, and Neamţu 1989/1999).

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Even though the paper relies on the findings concerning the status of the subordinate clause of this construction[5] described in Gheorghe (2004) and in GALR (2008), it provides a more detailed investigation of the syntactic nature of relationship of the subordinate clause to the matrix/main clause and of the selection and distribution of the connectors with the aim of/in view of refining the idea of the marked *opacity*[6] of this pattern.

2. IRCs COMPARED TO THE PROTOTYPICAL PATTERNS

2.1. IRCs vs integrated free relative clauses

The surface features of IRCs, i.e. the syntactic position subcategorized by the center of a VP in the matrix clause and the presence of a relative connector (pronoun / adjective / adverb), could justify their affinity to free relative clauses (integrated relative clauses, with empty antecedent, cf. GALR II 2008: 221, 225).

(2) a. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ e_j [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ ceri pro_k]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro what ask$_{IND2SG}$
'I don't have what you ask'

b. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ e_j [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ cere PRO_i]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro what ask$_{INF}$ PRO
'I don't have anything to ask'

c. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ e_j [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ să cer PRO_i]].
not-nhave$_{IND1SG}$ pro what SĂ ask$_{SBJV1SG}$ PRO
'I don't have anything to ask'

[5] Not only the presence of a relative-interrogative connector, but also the placement of the entire construction in a position dependent on a constituent belonging to another clause is regarded as sufficient to allow the idea that IRC is a subordinate clause. The statement above is valid in spite of the non-finite form of the verb, which is unable to entirely fulfill the conditions of actualization as a predicate of the utterance (for the concept of predicate of utterance, see GALR II 2008: 241-266). Among the non-finite verbal forms in Romanian, the infinitive has the most verbal features: it allows clitics (both pronominal and adverbial), it allows overt or empty subject (PRO interpreted as anaphoric or arbitrary and controlled by the subject of the matrix clause), and it is in free variation with a subjunctive in many contexts. In IRCs, the infinitive can always be replaced with a subjunctive, thus the infinitive and the subjunctive constructions are contextual variants. The speaker's option for one of the pattern is always available. The use of the infinitive is the expression of a rigid structure. See Grosu and Landman, 1998, for a non-distinctive semantic analysis of free relative clauses with the infinitive and the subjunctive.

[6] In an early paper (Gheorghe, 2004), the IRCs are included in the category of the most opaque free relative clauses, admitting their resemblance to indirect interrogative wh-clauses. The arguments for this framing were: (i) the strong relationship between IRC and the matrix and (ii) the hypothesis that the wh-operator modifies a [+ virtual] empty constituent.

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Apparently, the constructions under (2) have identical structures, except for the difference between (2a), on one hand and (2b, c) on the other hand, concerning the referential relationship between the subjects of the matrix clauses and the ones in the subordinate clauses. In the past two examples, the subject of the relative clause (PRO) is controlled by the matrix subject, whereas in the prototypical free relative clause, the referential coincidence of the two subjects is optional.

Prototypical free relative clauses are hosted by an empty DP (see the symbol *e* in examples (2)). The DP can freely be overt (either by lexicalization of its complement, as in (3a) or its head, as in (3b), or by lexicalization of all components - D and NP, as in (3c):

(3) a. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ $lucrul_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$-mi_i ceri pro_k]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro thing-the what-CL_{DAT} ask$_{IND2SG}$ pro
'I don't have the thing that you ask from me'

b. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ $ceea_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$-mi_i ceri pro_k]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro that what-CL_{DAT} ask$_{IND2SG}$ pro
'I don't have what you ask'

c. N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ acele trei [$_{GN}$ $lucruri_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ mi_i (le_j) ceri pro_k]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro those three things what CL_{DAT} (CL_{ACC}) ask$_{IND2SG}$ pro
'I don't have the three things that you are asking to me'

If the representation of an IRC as in (2b) is correct, then the lexicalization of at least one of the components of the host should be possible:

(4) a. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ $lucrul_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ face PRO_i]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro thing-the what do$_{INF}$ PRO

b. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ acele trei [$_{NP}$ $lucruri_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ face PRO_i]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro those three things what do$_{INF}$ PRO

c. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ $ceea_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ face PRO_i]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro that what do$_{INF}$ PRO

The infinitive may not be responsible for the fact that (4a-c) are ruled out, because the subjunctive counterpart is also ruled out under the circumstances of the lexicalization of the DP:

(5) a. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ [$_{NP}$ $lucrul_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ să fac PRO_i]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro thing-the what SĂ do$_{SBJV}$ PRO

b. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ acele trei [$_{NP}$ $lucruri_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ să fac PRO_i]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro those three things what SĂ do$_{SBJV}$ PRO

c. *N-am pro_i [$_{DP}$ $ceea_j$ [$_{CP}$ **ce**$_j$ să fac PRO_i]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro that what SĂ do$_{SBJV}$ PRO

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The ungrammaticality of (4) and (5) shows that the sequence introduced by the relative pronoun does not modify the DP in the matrix, but it occupies the position of the DP for which the verb in the matrix is subcategorized. In other words, the IRC does not have the organization of a relative clause, because no mechanism of relativization is involved in its formation.

2.2. IRCs vs indirect interrogatives

If the mechanism of an IRC is not relativization, one may suppose that IRCs are closer to the indirect interrogatives (which are subordinate clauses introduced by a relative-interrogative pronoun or adverb). Thus, a representation similar to the one of indirect interrogatives might be more adequate than the representation as a free relative clause. Compare the two types of interrogative clauses under (6) to (7), where the interrogative structure is replaced by an IRC (7a) and by its subjunctive counterpart (7b). The syntactic configuration introduced by a relative pronoun is invested with the status of a clausal DP:

(6) a. Nu ştiu pro_i [$_{GD}$ [**ce**$_j$ să facPRO_i]].
not know$_{IND1SG}$ pro what SĂ do$_{SBJV}$ PRO
'I don't know what to do'

b. Nu ştiu pro_i [$_{GD}$ [**dacă** o să fac pro_i asta]].
not know$_{IND1SG}$ pro if will do$_{IND1SG}$ pro this
'I don't know if I'll do this'

(7) a. N-am pro_i [$_{GD}$ [**ce**$_j$ face PRO_i]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro what do$_{INF}$ PRO
'I've got nothing to do'

b. N-am pro_i [$_{GD}$ [**ce**$_j$ să fac PRO_i]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro what SĂ do$_{SBJV}$ PRO
'I've got nothing to do'

In spite of the resemblance of the syntactic organization of (6) and (7), there is a major difference between the two patterns, concerning the inventory of the verbs in the matrix clause. The only verbs allowed in IRCs − *a avea* (to have) and *a fi* (to be) – are not *verba dicendi* or *interogandi*, thus they do not qualify in any context as hosts for indirect relative-interrogative clauses. For that reason, a description of IRCs as indirect interrogative constructions is not convenient.

The comparison of IRCs to free relative clauses and to indirect interrogative relative clauses from the point of view of their syntactic organization reveals common elements and differences. A first conclusion drawn out of this comparison is the idea that IRCs are hybrid constructions. They are similar to indirect interrogative relative clauses with respect of their nature as pure clauses (van Riemsdijk 2006: 340): DPs in position of subject or object of a VP in the

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matrix clause. The difference concerns in the nature of the VP, which may never belong to the class of *verba dicendi* or *interogandi*.

3. THE INVENTORY OF CONNECTORS

In Romanian, indirect relative-interrogative clauses and relative clauses share most of the inventory of connectors. Except the adverbial group *de ce* (Engl. *why*), the entire range of wh-words that are used in relative-interrogative clauses can be employed with relative clauses as well. On the other hand, *ceea ce, de* and some compound indefinite pronouns (*oricine, orice, oricât*) occur only in relative clauses and are disallowed in relative-interrogatives.

As far as the IRCs are concerned, their inventory of connectors overlaps with the range of wh-words used in indirect interrogative constructions[7], including the specific *de ce* (8e):

(8) a. N-are **ce** face / **de ce** se teme / **cu ce** vopsi gardul
not-has$_{IND1SG}$ what do$_{INF}$ / of what REFL fear$_{INF}$ / with what paint$_{INF}$ fence-the
'He has nothing to do / to be afraid of / to paint the fence with'
b. N-are **cu cine** vorbi / **cui** spune o vorbă
not-has$_{IND1SG}$ to whom talk$_{INF}$ / to whom tell$_{INF}$ a word
'He has no one to talk to / no one to tell a word'
c. Deşi are doi fii, n-are **pe care**-l alege moştenitor
even though has$_{IND3SG}$ two sons not-has$_{IND3SG}$ which-CL$_{ACC}$ choose$_{INF}$ heir
'Even though he has two sons, he has no one to choose as his heir'
d. N-are **unde** parca maşina / **când / cum** termina lucrarea
not-has$_{IND1SG}$ where park$_{INF}$ car-the / when / how finish$_{INF}$ paper-the
'He has nowhere to park the car / no time / no way to finish the paper'
e. N-are **de ce** se supăra pe tine
not-has$_{IND1SG}$ why REFL be angry$_{INF}$ on you
'He has no reason to be angry with you'

In conclusion, there are many elements of construction that make the IRCs seem closer to questions than to the free relative clauses. In spite of their similarity with indirect interrogatives in terms of construction, IRCs are not reported

[7] A short comment needs to be made here, regarding the use of the wh-pronoun *care* in IRCs: in previous descriptions of IRCs (Gheorghe 2004: 259; GALR 2008: 228−229), I excluded *care* from the range of IRC connectors, considering that minimal configurations like *Nu-i care veni* ('There is no one to come') or *N-are care şti* ('There is no one to know') are awkward in Romanian. Pomian (2008: 202) shows that the use of *care* is possible in extended configurations, under the circumstances of a partitive anaphoric relationship with the antecedent: *S-au întors şi Ion$_i$, şi Petre$_j$. N-ai [**de care$_{i/j}$** te teme **t_i / t_j**], că amândoi sunt serioşi* ('Both Ion and Petre are back. You shouldn't fear any of them, because they are both reliable') or in contexts in which the wh-group contains a coreferential pronoun: *Nu am [**la care din ei**] apela* ('I can't ask for help from any of them').

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questions, i.e. the verbs in the matrix clauses are never *dicendi* or *interogandi* verbs. The negative IRCs resemble more the rhetorical questions. They exhibit the reverse polarity phenomenon and some linguistic markers of orientation towards the speaker (see Şerbănescu 2002: 125). Compare (9a), an IRC (with its subjunctive variant) and (9b), a question in rhetoric reading:

(9) a. N-am **ce** face / să fac.
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ what do$_{INF}$ SĂ do$_{SBJV}$
'I can't do anything'.
b. **Ce** să fac?
what SĂ do$_{SBJV1SG}$?
'What should I do?'

Among the category of rhetorical questions, Şerbănescu (2002: 133) mentions a class of 'reflexive questions' (10a), with an indefinite 2nd person subject and a neutral dative clitic. The same markers of indefiniteness can occur in IRCs (10b).

(10) a. **Ce** să-i faci?
what SĂ-CL$_{DAT\ NEUTRAL}$ do$_{SBJV2SG}$?
'There is nothing to do'
b. N-ai **ce**-i face / să-i faci
Not-have$_{IND2SG}$ what-CL$_{DAT\ NEUTRAL}$ do$_{INF}$ SĂ-CL$_{DAT\ NEUTRAL}$ do$_{SBJV}$
'One has nothing to do'

4. THE SEMANTIC NATURE OF THE MATRIX VERB

The similar behaviour of IRCs, irrespective of the verbal mood (infinitive or subjunctive), suggests the idea that the answer for the interpretation of this kind of construction is not to be looked for in the domain of the subordinate clause, but in the junction area. Grosu and Landman (1998) consider that in the Romanian IRCs, the operator does not take its reference from an element belonging to the matrix clause, as in the restrictive relative clauses. Grosu and Landman presume the existence of an internal head, which is associated to an *irealis* verb. From a syntactic point of view, this fact has the consequence of placing the construction towards the periphery of the matrix clause. Normally, the matrix of a peripheral relative clause has a certain autonomy, but obviously, this is not the case of the IRCs:

(11) a. N-am ce face
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ what do$_{INF}$
'I have nothing to do'

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b. *N-am
Not-have$_{IND1SG}$

The example (11b) is ruled out because the verb *a avea* functions here as a catenative verb[8], with a modal meaning, different from its lexical meaning of verb of possession. Besides, in all the instances in which *a avea* is the matrix verb of an IRC (with both personal and impersonal reading), it involves a modal component. The reason why an IRC with an overt host in the matrix is ungrammatical (see 12) is the fact that it would activate the meaning of possession for the verb *a avea* and that would determine the relative clause to modify the host, but that would be in conflict with its interrogative-type organization (the variable bound by an operator can never be a predictable topic).

(12) *N-am pro$_i$ [$_{GD}$ [$_{GN}$ lucrul$_j$ [$_{GC}$ **ce**$_j$ face PRO$_i$]]].
not-have$_{IND1SG}$ pro thing-the what do$_{INF}$ PRO

The strong link between the matrix and the IRC is determined by the semantic nature of the two matrix verbs - *a fi* and *a avea*. The matrix clause is 'eclipsed' by the subordinate clause[9], which explains the fact that its subject is often indetermined (up to the highest stage, where the IRC itself is in subject position).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the properties of IRCs described so far, the conclusion that can be drawn is that in spite of the similarities with both free relative clauses and indirect relative-interrogative constructions, they are a distinct type of wh-constructions. Syntactically, they can not be accounted for either as relativized structures, or as reported questions.

Recently, constructions of this type have been described as *modal existential constructions* (MEC) (see Grosu 2004 and Šimík 2011). They belong to a semantic-syntactic pattern with non-indicative verb, which can be found in many Romance and Balkan languages[10]. The main property of these constructions is the fact that they are embedded under existential predicates which involve a modal interpretation.

[8] For the concept of *catenative* verb, used with an infinitive, see Huddlestone, Pullum (2002: 111).

[9] Although the matrix is intonationally marked, semantically it is less prominent than the IRC.

[10] In many languages, the infinitive is the primary MEC mood, but there are languages in which the verb in the MEC is always a subjunctive, while in others the only option is the infinitive (Šimík 2004: 45). Romanian allows both types: infinitive-MEC and subjunctive-MEC.

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In Romanian, IRCs are an old pattern, with strong idiomatic properties, but the cluster of features that enabled their interpretation as 'hybrid' constructions relies not on their peripheral status in language, but on the semantic nature of the main predicate. IRCs are a distinct class of wh-constructions, embedded under a modal-existential verb, which is responsible for the non-indicative instantiation of the verb in the subordinate. Thus, the features of IRCs in Romanian (selection of wh-words, clitic placement and lexicalization of the subject) derive from the properties of the infinitive and the subjunctive.

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