INFINITIVAL SENTENCES – APPARENT CORRESPONDENCES IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN

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Abstract: *The paper analyses the structure of Infinitival Sentences in point of the categorization of the infinitival particle as inflective or complementizer constituent, both in Romanian and in English.*

Keywords*: infinitive, complementizer, inflection, particle, verb movement.*

The structure of Infinitival Sentences

Romanian grammar generally distinguishes three forms of infinitive: infinitivul „lung" (Long Infinitive) ending in *'-re'*, which has become a noun in modern Romanian (*o dată cu sosirea lui*); infinitivul „scurt" (Short Infinitive) with two different forms: either preceded by the particle *'a'* or without it (Bare Infinitive).

In modern grammar (Dobrovie-Sorin, 2000: 50) such examples as (a) *Ei nu-l vor (*a) saluta* and (b) *Ei nu l-ar (*a) saluta* contain auxiliary verbs which take as objects constituents of *GComp* (Complementizer Group) type; since in surface structure the complementizer position is occupied by the prepositive inflective verb, the obligatory absence of *'a'* can be explained if one considers that this particle occupies the complementizer position normally. However, one has to make a distinction between the infinitive without particle in the above-mentioned examples and the infinitive after the verb *a putea* in the following sentence: *Îl pot vedea.* The distribution of clitics is one of the arguments that this short infinitive is not a complementizer group, but an object of verbal group type.

From the structural point of view, the infinitival particle *'a'* presents a systematic ambiguity between the status of inflective and complementizer, respectively. This ambiguity can be easily demonstrated by showing that *'a'* is comparable to the English *'to'* and, at the same time, to *'de / di'* in French and Italian, being analysed as inflective and complementizer, respectively (Kayne, 1984: 109). The Romanian particle seems not to fall into this dichotomy, which, in some linguists' opinion (Dobrovie-Sorin, 2000: 108), arises the following syntactical issue: what abstract characteristic of Romanian language results in the existence of an ambiguous complementizer/inflective element of this type (this applies also in the case of the conjunctive particle *'să'*) which is absent in English and also in the other Romance languages?

The hypothesis that *'a'* might be an **inflective** element is supported by the following argument: the Romanan infinitives do not present a specific morphological inflection (as we hahe already mentioned, they have become nominal forms) analysable as a realization of the inflection node: *'-a'*, *'-i'* or *'-e'* in *a lucra, a povesti, a pune* belong to the lexical root of these verbs (see *voi lucr**a**ți, voi povest**i**ți, voi pun**e**ți*). Therefore, one might consider that the absence of a verbal infinitival inflection is compensated by a different implementation of the inflection node, namely the particle *'a'*. Originally a preposition (deriving from the Latin *ad*), it is a mark of the infinitive in contemporary language. Thus, the Romanian infinitive is comparable to the English

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infinitive, which presents an inflective prepositional element, *'to'*, correlated with the absence of the inflective morphological marks over the verb.

The analogy between the infinitives with *'a'* and those with *'to'* is also supported by certain aspects related to their distribution; they can be preceded by certain aspectual (semi)auxiliaries or be used in subject clauses:

(c) 1. *De-abia a început a munci.*
He has just started to work.
2. *A citi e o bucurie.*
To read is a joy.

These examples show that the infinitives preceded by *'a'*, as well as those preceded by *'to'*, are sentence projections with argumental positions. They are to be compared with the bare infinitives which, both in English and Romanian, do not have an argumental status, but are only verbal projections; therefore, they can appear as objects of auxiliary verbs. Saying that the *'a'* infinitives are sentence projections does not allow one to settle the particle's status: it might be generated either under the inflection node, like *'to'* in English, or under the complementizer node, like *'de'* in French. The first hypothesis is sustained by the following observation: unlike *'de'* and just like *'to'*, the Romanian particle obligatorily accompanies the infinitives in the above-mentioned examples. If one considered
'to' generated under the complementizer node, one should expect it to be absent (just as *'de'* is in French), as the complementizer positions in infinitives are usually empty in this type of contexts. On the other hand, the inflection nodes are not empty (Dobrovie-Sorin, 2000: 109).

Another possible argument in favour of the inflective status of *'a'* is related to the moving structures. Kayne (1984) analysed the fact that *'de'* cannot appear in the French example which follows as a consequence of its complementizer status, the projection of which is the regent category of the subject in the clause; therefore, a Nominl Group which occupies this position cannot be bound by the moved subject, as the A Condition of binding theory requires:

(d) *John happened to be there.*
*Jean s'est trouvé (*d') être là-bas.*
Ion s-a întâmplat a fi acolo.

In the English variant, *'to'* is permitted, which is predictable within the hypothesis that *'to'* is under the inflection position: the infinitival inflection does not govern the subject Nominal Group, which is therefore governed in the main clause. Consequently, one might be tempted to adopt the same analysis for the following Romanian example which contrasts with the previous one and seems parallel to the English gloss:

(e) *Ei s-au nimerit a fi acolo.*
They happened to be there.

The cohesion between *'a'* and the verb is probably the most direct argument in favour of its inflective status. The only elements that can appear between them are the adverbial, pronominal or negation clitic elements. No other is permitted, as we can see in the following example:

(f) *A nu o mai ajuta ar fi o prostie.*
Not to help her would be a foolish.

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The theory applied to this case implies two principles: a) the incorporation of an affix is determined by the morphological subcategorization (Lieber, 1980: 111); b) cliticization is based on a reanalysis mechanism which affects the adjacent functional alements which have different syntactical positions in surface structure. Thus, the Romanian particle *'a'* cannot be analysed as an affix; in other words, it does not present a subcategorized morphological position to which the verb can move.

Certainly, one might consier that there are two inflective positions, one for *'a'*, other for the moved verb. This solution would imply an explanation of the fact that Romanian disposes of two inflection nodes, unlike English. These issues might be resolved if one considers that *'a'* is dominated not by inflection, but by complementizer; thus, the inflection is available for the verb movement.

In the examples: (g) 1. *a nu vorbi / *to not speak*

2. **nu a vorbi / not to speak,*

In Romanian *'nu'* appears obligatorily between *'a'* and the verb; it cannot be positioned in front of *'a'*. This distribution is another argument in favour of its **complementizer** status: the agrammaticality of (g)2. can be understood if one adopts the analysis according to which the projection which has *'a'* as center constitutes a barrier for the relation between the negative center and the variable it binds in the Inflection Group. We know that it is not a barrier for this relation: *'nu'* normally precedes the elements generated under the inflection. On the other hand, it is a barrier for the relation which is at the basis of negative quantification:

(h) **Ştiu nu că a sosit.*

[I] do not know that [he] has arrived.

If one is of the opinion that *'a'* is under complementizer, the agrammaticality of the previous example is comparable to that of (h). This way, we reach the conclusion that *'a'* is not the center of an Inflection Group projection, but of a Complementizer Group one.the position of *'not'* in the English sentence is not completely clear (if *'to'* were generated under inflection, in the same position as the modals, one might expect to have the form **to not go* – parallel to *not to go* – but this example is not grammatically correct), but whichever analysis one adopted, one cannot take *'to'* under the complementizer node.

Another interesting contrast between Romanian and English concerns sentence (i):

(i) *A plecat fără a spune o vorbă.*

**[He] left without to say a word.*

One can think that the incorrect English variant is due to the violation of the Case Resistance Principle (Stowell, l98l): long infinitives are Inflection Group constituents of verbal type, therefore, they can not be used in a position which receives a case (required by the preposition). The correctness of the Romanian variant can be understood if one considers that the infinitives with *'a'* are Complementizer Group constituents which can receive this way a nominal status.

The hypothesis that *'a'* places under Complementizer is also sustained by the data offered by example (j); in this case one can invoke a violation of the doubly filled Comp filter, which forbids the coexistence of *'–wh'* elements (interrogative and relative pronouns) with Comp [-wh] elements (subordinating conjunctions):

(j) 1. **Are cu cine a se amuza.*

2. **Nu ştiu unde a pleca.*

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The following English examples are grammatically correct, due to the fact that *'to'* is an inflection-type element:

(k) 1. *I don't know with whom to send her to the sea-side.*
2. *I am looking for a girl with whom to go to the sea-side.*

The doubly filled Comp filter operates in Romanian as the impossibility of the following examples demonstrates:

(l) 1. **Nu mi-ai spus **că** unde ai fost ieri.*
2. **Nu mi-ai spus unde **că** ai fost ieri.*
3. **Nu mi-ai spus **ca** unde Maria să plece.*
4. **Nu mi-ai spus unde **ca** Maria să plece.*
5. **Caut o fată **ca** cu care Maria să plece la mare.*
6. **Caut o fată cu care **ca** Maria să plece la mare.*

These examples become correct if we omit the subordinating conjunctions:

(m) 1./2. *Nu mi-ai spus unde ai fost ieri.*
3./4. *Caut o fata cu care Maria să plece la mare.*

Likewise, the examples in (j) are grammatically correct if *'a'* is omitted:

(n) 1. *Are cu cine se amuza.*
2. *Nu ştiu unde pleca.*

These arguments demonstrate rather clearly that model (j) should be anal ysed as a case of violation of the doubly filled Comp filter. Therefore, the structure of these constructions cannot be (j)1. where *'a'* is in complementizer.

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