

Control in Romanian and *se* constructions

Introduction: Although passive *se* constructions are found in both Spanish and Romanian, their structures appear distinct. A consequence of this difference is observed in control structures. In Romanian, *se* constructions cannot host a controlled complement (1a), whereas Spanish can (1b).

- (1) a. *S-a început [a curăța camera copiilor]. [Romanian]
 SE-has begun to clean room-the children.the. GEN Giurgea & Cotfas (2021)
 b. Se empezó [a limpiar la habitación]. [Spanish]
 SE began to clean the room.

Another contrast is found when an additional *se* is added to the embedded clause. The Romanian structure becomes grammatical (2a), while the Spanish equivalent becomes ungrammatical (2b).

- (2) a. S-a început [a se curăța camera copiilor]. [Romanian]
 SE-has begun to REFL clean room-the children.the. GEN Giurgea & Cotfas (2021)
 b. *Se empezó [a limpiarse la habitación]. [Spanish]
 SE began to clean.SE the room.

The Romanian patterns are argued in Giurgea & Cotfas (2021) to be cases of control, with a failed agreement relation in (1a) forcing the obligatory presence of *se* in the complement in (2a).

Proposal: We propose that the external argument in Romanian *se* constructions is not expected to act as controller and consequently (1a) and (2a) do not contain a controlled complement. We claim, following MacDonald and Maddox (2018), that in Spanish, *pro* in Spec, Voice saturates the argument position and may act as a controller while in Romanian, *pro* in Spec, Voice lacks a D-feature and does not saturate the argument role. Following Landau (2010), only arguments with D-features can act as controllers, which we argue results in the lack of control in the Romanian *se* constructions in (1a) and (2a).

Background on *se* constructions: We assume the structures below in (3), following the analysis in MacDonald and Maddox (2018). The crucial difference between the two languages is that in Spanish Spec, Voice is occupied by *pro*_[D] and saturates the external argument role, while in Romanian *pro* in Spec, Voice lacks a D-feature and thus does not saturate the external argument.

- (3) a. [_{VoiceP} *pro* Voice-*se* [_{VP} DP]] [Romanian]
 b. [_{VoiceP} *pro*_[D] Voice-*se* [_{VP} DP]] [Spanish]

Support for this difference in features can be observed in the behavior of *by*-phrases. Spanish *se* passives do not license a *by*-phrase, while Romanian does. MacDonald and Maddox (2018) attribute this to the presence vs absence of a D-feature on *pro*. They adopt the approach in Bruening (2013), as well as Legate (2014), where a D-feature is obligatory to saturate the argument role. In Romanian *se* constructions, a *by*-phrase can combine with Voice, therefore suggesting that *pro* lacks a D-feature and the argument position is unsaturated. We extend this difference between the features of *pro* to also explain control patterns in *se* constructions.

Romanian control data and analysis: Following Landau's (2015) theory of control as predication, control is established in a predicative complement control structure via movement of PRO from Spec, TP to Spec, FinP in the complement clause (creating an open property), and predication, between the controller and the infinitive clause (FinP). In the Romanian control structures there is expected to be a problem with *pro*—under the analysis that it is a pronoun lacking a D-feature and doesn't saturate the external argument role—saturating this FinP predicate. Landau (2010), following Longobardi (1994), assumes that a DP can only saturate a predicate if it is an argument, and to be an argument it must contain a D head. In Romanian, given that *pro* lacks a D-feature and does not fill the external argument role, *pro* in (1a) is not predicted to saturate the FinP predicate. The lack of a suitable controller prevents control in (4).

(4) [VoiceP *pro* a [VP început [FinP PRO [TP PRO a curăța camera copiilor]]]

Giurgea & Cotfas (2021) show that Romanian *se* constructions must have a second *se* in the complement clause in order for control to be grammatical (2a). However, we argue that these constructions, while grammatical, do not contain a controlled clause for the same reason as in (1a): there is no suitable controller. We propose an alternative analysis for these structures in which there is no control in (2a) and the presence of *se* in both clauses is a result of non-referential accidental co-reference. In *se* constructions there is a necessary interpretation of the external argument as human, thus, it is natural, that the same set of humans is involved. This appears not unlike the example in (5), where the set of individuals that falls within the denotation of "people" in both clauses overlaps, such that the same set is understood to be hungry and to eat.

(5) When people are hungry, people eat.

Moreover, observe that even despite the presence of a potential controller in the adjunct control structure in (6) (the subject 'Ion,' which is the only expected controller) there still appears to be no control that obtains. The subject of the non-finite clause is not controlled by/interpreted as 'Ion' but rather as an impersonal subject 'people'. Like the *se* constructions in (1a) and (2a), (6) also appears to not contain a controlled clause.

(6) Ieri Ion a plecat [înainte de a se cânta]. [Romanian]
 Yesterday John has left before of to SE sing.
 'Yesterday John left before people sang.'

Spanish control data and analysis: The Romanian data contrast with Spanish, where *pro* in the *se* constructions can act as a controller. *Pro* positioned in Spec, Voice in Spanish in (1b) meets the requirements of a proper controller, since *pro* is syntactically projected, specified with a D-feature, and saturates the external argument position. In Landau's (2010) definition, this *pro* counts as a strong implicit argument and is expected to participate in predication. Thus, control is established, just as it would be with an overt DP controller (or null referential subject).

(7) [VoiceP *pro*_[D] se [VP empezó [FinP PRO [TP PRO a limpiar la habitación]]]

In contrast, when the second *se* is added in the complement clause (2b), a control clause is no longer possible. The embedded *se* structure also comes with *pro* in Spec, Voice which, per the previous discussion, will saturate the external argument position. Following the idea that PRO and *pro* are in complimentary distribution (as in approaches like McFadden and Sundaresan 2018), both PRO and *pro* would be in competition for the same external argument role. Although the *pro* controller in the matrix clause has the right features to control, (2b) is ruled out because of the incompatibility in the complement clause of both *pro* (from the *se* construction) and PRO (present for control). This situation is not unique to "double *se*" constructions like (2b), as this analysis predicts passive or impersonal *se* to not be available in any controlled clause in Spanish (c.f. Martins and Nunes 2017). This is illustrated in adjunct control in (8).

(8) Ayer, Juan_i salió [PRO_i después de cantar/*cantarse]. [Spanish]
 Yesterday, Juan left PRO after of to.sing.SE

Selected references: Bruening, B. (2013). By phrases in passives and nominals. *Syntax*, 16(1), 1-41. Giurgea, I., & Cotfas, M. A. (2021). Agent control in passives in Romanian. *Non-canonical Control in a Cross-linguistic Perspective*, 270, 83. Landau, I. (2010). The explicit syntax of implicit arguments. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 41(3), 357-388. Landau, I. (2015). *A two-tiered theory of control* (Vol. 71). MIT Press. MacDonald, J. E., & Maddox, M. L. (2018). Passive *se* in Romanian and Spanish: A subject cycle. *Journal of Linguistics*, 54(2), 389-427.