

Romanian *Tough*- Constructions and multi-headed constituents

Ion Giurgea

(The “Iorgu Iordan - Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics, Bucharest)

Romanian is unique among Romance languages in that it disallows agreement on the adjective in *tough*-constructions (in the standard variety; some non-standard varieties do allow agreement); the adjective appears in the masculine singular form (see (1)a-b), which is a default form – it is also used when the adjective is the predicate of a sentence without a nominal subject (see (2)); the verb has a special non-finite form, the so-called “supine”:

- (1) a. teorie greu de înțeles
theory(F) hard.MSG SUP understand.SUP
b. Aceste teorii sunt greu de înțeles
these theories(F) are hard.MSG SUP understand.SUP
- (2) E greu { să înțelegem teoria / de rezolvat atâtea probleme }
is hard.MSG SUBJ understand.1PL theory-the SUP solve.SUP so-many problems

The **previous analyses** of this construction are all problematic: (i) Based on the fact that the masculine singular form of most Romanian adjectives, including *tough*- adjectives, is also used as an adverb, Soare (2002), Soare and Dobrovie-Sorin (2002), Giurgea and Soare (2010) analyze the *tough*-adjective as an adverb occupying a specifier position in the extended projection of the verb (SpecMood in Giurgea & Soare 2010); *greu de înțeles* would be equivalent to *difficultly intelligible*. This analysis is problematic because it assumes that in TCs the non-finite clause is no longer a complement of the adjective, in spite of the fact that *tough*- adjectives can take clausal arguments (see (2)); moreover, it cannot explain why we do not find TCs built with adverbs in languages where adverbs do have distinct morphology (constructions which would correspond to Fr. **livres facilement à lire* or Engl. **books easily to read* do not appear to be attested). (ii) Dye (2006), assuming that in non-agreeing TCs, like in agreeing TCs, the adjective is the predicate and the supine is its complement, proposes that the object passes through SpecAP in the agreeing TC, undergoing A-movement, whereas in the non-agreeing TC the object is a null operator undergoing A-bar movement inside the complement clause and the subject is base-generated in a SpecPrP above the AP and coindexed with the null operator. This analysis faces several problems: first, it is unclear how the external argument is thematically interpreted; Dye assumes that it is somehow linked (“by some notion of predication coindexation”) to the null operator in the adjective’s complement; but this interpretative property can only be contributed by the *tough*- adjective, which implies that the subject must be argumentally related to the adjective; but then we expect agreement, like for any external argument of an adjective. Moreover, it is assumed that a DP in SpecPr does not trigger agreement on a predicative adjective, although Pr(edicate)Phrases have been introduced precisely for hosting the base (thematic) position of the external argument of adjectives in general (see Bowers 1993, Baker 2003), and predicative adjectives in Romanian do agree, like in the other Romance languages. Finally, there is no evidence in favor of A-bar movement in non-agreeing TCs: unlike in English, long distance dependencies are totally ungrammatical (see (3)); moreover, agent PPs are allowed (see (4)), which shows that the supine is passive and thus cannot assign case to an object null operator:

- (3) a. * Această carte e greu de convins copiii s(-o) citească
this book is hard SUP convince.SUP children-the SUBJ(-CL.ACC) read.3PL
b. This book is hard to convince children to read
- (4) cărți greu de înțeles de către copii
books hard SUP understand.SUP by children

I propose a **novel analysis** which is supported by comparative data and has some interesting theoretical consequences: non-agreeing TCs are multi-headed constituents, similar to some of those analyzed by van Riemsdijk (2006) as “grafting” (e.g. [*a [[far from obvious] matter]*, or numerals introduced by Ps: Rom. *cele [[peste zece] zile]* ‘the above ten days’ = “the more than ten days”): the adjective is the *internal head*, selecting the supine, but the supine (more precisely, the functional head which heads it, which I will call Mood) acts as an *external head*. Note indeed that supines can appear by themselves in the same environments as TCs, as passive modal reduced relatives:

- (5) a. cărți de citit
book SUP read

- ‘book to (be) read’
 b. Cărțile sunt de citit până mâine
 books-the are SUP read.SUP until tomorrow
 ‘The books are to be read until tomorrow’

This analysis is strongly supported by German, where a TC ending in the verb can appear prenominal, in which case the infinitive receives the agreement morpheme (see (6); I analyze the *-d-* inserted between the infinitive and the agreement morpheme as an allomorph of the infinitive inflection used before agreement morphemes; since in German, prenominal modifiers must end in a lexical head, the infinitive is certainly the head of the TC. The head status is also indicated by the fact that it receives agreement (since adjectival/participial agreement is restricted to the prenominal position, we cannot test the headedness of postnominal and predicative TCs). Moreover, like in Romanian, infinitives can appear by themselves as modal reduced relatives (see (7)).

- (6) ein [schwer zu lesen-d-es] Buch
 a hard to read.INF-*d*-NSG.NOM/ACC book(N)
 (7) a. ein [zu lesen-d-es] Buch
 a to read.INF-*d*-NSG.NOM/ACC book(N)
 b. Das Buch ist zu lesen
 the book is to read.INF

This analysis solves all the problems noticed above: the adjective keeps its selectional pattern, rather than being an adverb, but it fails to agree because it is the verb which is the external head, and agreement is an external relation of the [A+Supine] constituent.

Technical implementation: In view of the various problems of the grafting analysis noticed by Grosu (2010), I propose to formalize multi-headedness by using flexibility of label projection (as proposed by Larson 1998, Donati 2006, a.o., for free relatives); Citko (2008) argues that a variety of constructions can be accounted for if we abandon the assumption that a constituent formed by merging a selector labeled α with a selected phrase labeled β is necessarily labeled α , and we allow it to receive its label from the selectee (β) or from both ($\alpha+\beta$). In this system, multi-headed constituents can be analyzed as instances of inheritance of the label of the complement. In non-agreeing TCs, the non-finite verbal constituent projects its label. The [Adjective+Supine/Inf.] constituent thus obtained has the distribution of supine/infinitival reduced relatives (see (5) and (7), compared to (1) and (6)).

As this type of label projection is rather unusual, I assume that it is triggered by a feature of the selector head, which I call *exceptional label projection* – ELP.

A constraint on ELP in TCs: there seems to be a correlation between the widespread lack of distinct adverbial morphology (which characterizes both German and Romanian) and non-agreeing TCs (the other Romance languages, where adverbs with corresponding adjectives are normally marked by an adverbial suffix, don’t have non-agreeing TCs). I conclude that ELP in TCs requires that the adjective should be compatible with the verbal syntactic environment created by the projection of the complement’s label. I analyze the open class of adjectives which lack a special morphology for the adverbial use as items lexically underspecified between adjectives and adverbs (an ‘archicategory’ α , not to be confused with the totally uncategorized Marantzian roots).

References: Baker, M. 2003. *Lexical categories*. Cambridge Univ. Press; Bowers, J. 1993. The syntax of predication. *Linguistic Inquiry* 24: 591-656; Citko, B. 2008. Missing labels. *Lingua* 118: 907-944; Donati, V. 2006. On wh-head movement. In L. Cheng & N. Corver (eds.), *Wh-Movement. Moving On*. MIT Press, 21–46; Dye, C. 2006. A- and \bar{A} -movement in Romanian Supine Constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37(4): 665-674; Giurgea, I. and E. Soare, 2010. Predication and the Nature of Non-Finite Relatives in Romance. In A. M. Di Sciullo and V. Hill (eds.), *Edges, Heads and Projections: Interface Properties*, John Benjamins, 313-353; Grosu, A. 2010. On the pre-theoretical notion phrasal head. In A.M. Di Sciullo & V. Hill (eds.), *Edges, Heads and Projections*, John Benjamins, 151-190; Larson, R.K., 1998. Free relative clauses and missing P’s: reply to Grosu. Ms., Stony Brook University; van Riemsdijk, H. 2006. Grafts follow from Merge. In M. Frascarelli (eds.), *Phases of Interpretation*, de Gruyter, 17-44; Soare, E. 2002. *Le supin roumain et la théorie des catégories mixtes*. PhD dissertation, University of Paris 7; Soare, E. and C. Dobrovie-Sorin. 2002. The Romanian Supine and Adjectival Complementation. *Tough Constructions. Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics* 4,1: 75-87.