

The Romanian subjunctive: a delayed onset
Virginia Hill – University of New Brunswick-SJ (mota@unb.ca)

Data. The replacement of infinitives with subjunctives (see 3) has a late start in Romanian - i.e., in 16th – 17th c., versus, e.g., ≈10th c in Bulgarian; 7th c. in Greek (Joseph 1980) - so it is well attested in Early Modern Romanian (EMR) texts. The unquestioned assumption in Balkan linguistics (Sandfeld 1930 a.o.) is that the trigger for this replacement is the same for all the languages involved (a Balkan Sprachbund property; Tomić 2006 a.o.) and that it arises from the nominalization of infinitives (i.e., a categorial feature switch from [V] to [N]), which further triggers a feature switch from [-] to [+finite] in complements with unvalued [tense] (Joseph 1983; Roussou 2009). However, a closer look at the EMR data indicates a different situation: nominalized long infinitives (e.g., *ieșire* ‘to exit’) are replaced with short infinitives (e.g., *a ieși* ‘to guard’) (see 1), and with *de*-indicatives (see 2), long before the *să* subjunctive emerges (see 3) (Frâncu 1969). Long infinitives are archaic in EMR (Frâncu 2009) and are always preceded by *a* ‘to’ (otherwise, they count as nouns).

- (4) *cît să nu hie apucat [a ieși un bulucă de nemți]*
as SUBJM not be.SUBJ3 got INFM exit.INF a group of Germans
‘enough so that a group of Germans did not get to exit’ (18th c.; Costin 1979: 55)
- (5) *Pușcilor apucase cazacii [de le stricase roatele]*
guns.the.DAT get.PAST3PL Cosacks.the DE CL.DAT ruin.PAST3 wheels.the
‘The Cosacks got to ruin the wheels of the guns...’ (18th c.; Costin 1979: 54)
- (6) *nu am apucat [să-ți dzicū]*
not have.1SG got SUBJM-CL.DAT tell.1SG
‘I didn’t get to tell you’ (18th c.; Costin 1979: 65)

Question. If the nominalization of long infinitives triggered the replacements in (1) and (2) early in the emerging Romanian (presumably around 10th century, as in Old Bulgarian), why is it still the case: (i) that the *să*-subjunctive arises and replaces the replacements of the nominalized infinitive (i.e., (3) replaces both (1) and (2)); and (ii) that it happened so late?

Thesis. This paper argues that the switch to subjunctives in EMR is triggered by a need to better mark the *irrealis* in the CP with unselected operators (e.g., conditional operator; [directive] operator in imperatives) and in CPs selected by control verbs. This need arises from the weakening of the existing *irrealis* markers around the 16th c., and involves a change in the list of complementizers. Hence, the delayed onset of the subjunctive replacement in EMR follows from the type of trigger, which is different from what has been proposed for the Balkan Sprachbund (Rohlf’s 1933 a.o.), and which stems from the idiosyncratic properties of EMR grammar (e.g., the lexical inventory for spelling out the features of C).

Framework. Rizzi’s (1997) articulation of the CP field provides the system for sorting out EMR complementizers and the functional features they spell out: [+/-qu]/[Op] in Force; [+/-finite], [+/-realis] in Fin. Roberts’ (2010) formalization of gradience in feature distinction and gradualness of change allows me to propose that the change consists in the dissociated mapping of the features of Fin when its *irrealis* feature is valued, as [mode] (i.e., wishes/beliefs versus underspecified non(counter)-factuality). In those contexts, [+finite] is mapped to Fin and it is spelled out as *de* or *ca*; [mode] is mapped to Mood and it is spelled out as *să*. Grammatical [mood] is mapped to T, as a subjunctive or indicative verb form.

Observations. On the basis of corpus search and philological information, I establish the assessments given in *italics*.

- EMR inherited, from Latin, subjunctive verb forms (Fischer 1985) that occur in imperative and conditional clauses, but never as subjunctive clauses. So, *although the subjunctive forms display [mood] morphology, they lack the properties needed to generate a subjunctive clause.*
- Short infinitives display a pre-verbal infinitive mood marker *a* ‘to’, and replaced the long infinitive in most contexts in pre-EMR (Frâncu 2009). *Notably, a ‘to’ infinitives precede să subjunctives by centuries and preserve the [V] feature of the infinitive.*

- The subjunctive clause arises after the re-analysis of the conditional complementizer *să* as a subjunctive mood marker (Frîncu 1969). *Să* is in complementary distribution with *de* as conditional complementizers before the time of re-analysis.
- Statistics show that, by the end of the 18th c., ‘want’ verbs and injunctive ‘order’ verbs adopted the subjunctive complement (90%), whereas aspectuals were resistant to the switch (2.4%) (Frîncu 1969). *The subjunctive arises and thrives in clauses selected by control verbs with irrealis modality; it competes with de-indicatives and a ‘to’- short infinitives, as in (1),(2),(3).*

Analysis. (i) In pre-EMR, *să* in Force spells out the conditional operator, which has an intrinsic *irrealis* modality. Change occurs as a gradient distinction in features, whereby *să* lost the operator feature, but kept the irrealis modality: it has been re-analyzed in Fin versus Force. Evidence: (a) Topic and focus constituents follow conditional *să* but precede subjunctive *să*; (b) Verb mood forms and finiteness are unrestricted with conditional *să* (indicative, conditional, infinitive, subjunctive), but restricted with subjunctive *să*. Hence, the irrealis feature of Fin is checked but unvalued with the former versus valued with the latter. Valuation of irrealis (as [mode]) triggers restriction on the type of [mood] in T, which has to agree with [mode]. (ii) Grammatical [mood] is associated with T: subjunctive verb roots occur in conditional or imperative clauses before the re-analysis of *să* in Fin (unrestricted for type of irrealis). (iii) *de* is a wild card for EMR CPs, occurring as a Force operator (in reduced relatives, conditionals), or in Fin, with no predictable values for finiteness or irrealis (e.g., it heads infinitives or indicatives, in both [+/- irrealis] contexts). Modern Romanian has eliminated *de* from most constructions, and replaced it with less ambiguous complementizers. (iv) There is a short-lived transitional construction displaying the sequence *de să* in subjunctive complements. Word order indicates that both items are in Fin, i.e., above the Neg > T sequence, but lower than FocP. Hence, Fin has been split, with Fin *de* marking [+finite], and Mood *să* marking [mode] as a subset of *irrealis*. The split being a marked option in grammar, spell out is obligatory for [mode] – i.e., the marked value - but not for finiteness. Thus, *de* is dropped, and later (17th c.) it is replaced with *ca* ‘that’ (optional). On the other hand, *de* becomes the default conditional complementizer, replacing *să*. (v) Subjunctive *să* and infinitive *a* ‘to’ clauses are analyzed as structurally equivalent (i.e. Force/FinP), as they freely alternate as finite sentential complements. Evidence: contexts where the infinitive does not qualify as Force/FinP do not undergo the replacement (e.g., *putea* ‘can’+ bare short infinitives). The weakening of [tense] in selected infinitives (i.e., less evidence for Nominative subjects in these clauses) leads to their replacement with the subjunctive (which maintains the finite value).

Summary. In pre-EMR grammar, *de* spells out Fin syncretically ([+/- finite], [+/-realis]), the values for these features being established contextually. At the same time, grammatical [mood] is associated with T, and is unrelated to the feature mapping under Fin. *De* and *să* alternate as conditional complementizers; eventually, *de* becomes the preferred option as conditional Force, while *să* is re-analyzed in Fin, checking (but not valuing) both [+/-finite] and [+/-realis]. Gradually, *să* is re-analyzed as a certain type of Fin outside the conditionals, and the new subjunctive clause replaces *de*-indicative complements. The replacement extends to the structurally equivalent infinitive complements, which were losing their finiteness. This re-analysis of *să*, and the spread of the subjunctive clause, is not an isolated event, but it occurs in the wider context of replacement and/or specialization of *de* in CPs in general, a drift that starts around the 16th c.

Conclusion. The nominalization of infinitives – a drift that started presumably in a bi-lingual, language contact situation in the Dacic-Slavic population of the 9th -11th c. – evolved on a different path in old Romanian, compared to Bulgarian and other Balkan Slavic languages, due to the Latin factor (i.e., the re-analysis of Lat. *ad*). The emergence of *să*-subjunctives is a late consequence of this idiosyncratic path of change, and involves switches in the mapping and the spell out of features within the CP. The particular change involved concerns the separate mapping of the features of Fin. As a result, this analysis supports a clause hierarchy that involves a separate MoodP in Rom (i.e., Fin > Mood_{*să/a*} > T versus Fin > T in Italian dialects; D’Alessandro & Ledgeway 2010), but defines MoodP as part of the CP field, rather than of the TP field (Alboiu 2002, Cornilescu 2000).