

External Argument PPs in Romanian Nominalizations*

Gianina Iordăchioaia

University of Stuttgart

In this paper, I investigate the properties of Romanian complex event nominals (CENs, after Grimshaw 1990) with respect to the realization of the external argument. The goal of such an attempt is two-fold. On the one hand, in view of the claim in Grimshaw that the process of nominalization is similar to that of passivization – to the extent that both suppress the external argument – a comparison between the verbal and the nominal domain will provide us with a better understanding of the conditions under which external argument PPs are licensed. On the other hand, on the assumption that external arguments are licensed by a Voice projection (Kratzer 1994), we can establish whether CENs in Romanian do project Voice. From the behavior of the infinitive and that of the supine, the two most productive CENs in Romanian, I conclude that the latter obligatorily projects a VoiceP, which licenses the external argument PP. The behavior of the former is ambiguous, so the licensing conditions for the external argument PP are dependent on the nature of the verbal root within the nominalization.

1. Introduction

In Grimshaw's 1990 view, CENs inherit the argument structure of the verbs they are derived from, as is the case, for instance, with the theme *the city* in (1) below, realized as a PP within the CEN (1b):

- (1) a. The enemy destroyed *the city*.
b. the destruction *of the city*

But unlike in the case of verbs and in contrast with the internal argument, she notices that the external argument in CENs is optional. In (2a), both the internal and the external arguments are obligatory with the verb *destroy*. In the corresponding CEN structure in (2b), although the absence of the internal argument results in ungrammaticality, the absence of the external argument *enemy's* is allowed:

- (2) a. **(The enemy)* destroyed **(the city)*.
b. the *(enemy's)* destruction **(of the city)*

In order to explain this contrast, Grimshaw argues that the external argument position of CENs is suppressed, so *enemy's* in (2b) is an adjunct and not

* I would like to thank Artemis Alexiadou and Florian Schäfer for various suggestions and valuable comments, to Mihaela Marchis and Elena Soare for constructive discussions on the Romanian data, and to Cristina Ionică for proofreading the final version of this paper.

2001, Fu, Roeper & Borer 2001, Borsley & Kornfilt 2000, among others). In view of this generalization and those in Kratzer 1994 and Alexiadou et al. 2006 concerning the Voice projection and the licensing of PP external arguments in the verbal domain, an investigation of the way CENs obey these properties is well motivated. In this paper, I address the case of Romanian supine and infinitive CENs with respect to the realization of Voice and the licensing of external arguments. At the same time, I will test the generalization in Grimshaw 1990 concerning the similarity between CENs and passives and I will show that it is not entirely correct. A similar investigation has been done for English, German, and Greek nominalizations in Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2008, and I will often refer to this paper for comparison.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I present the conditions under which external argument PPs are licensed within the verbal domain in Romanian and I show that the generalizations on English hold for Romanian, too. In Section 3, I address the nominal domain and I discuss the similarities and the contrasts between supine and infinitive CENs and verbal passives with respect to external argument licensing. I will show that external argument PPs are licensed in the supine CENs only under the presence of Voice, so the structure of the supine is always like the one in (6a). Since, depending on the verbal root from which they are derived, infinitive CENs present properties shared both by a structure with Voice and without Voice, I will conclude that they are ambiguous between (6a) and (6b). In Section 4, I discuss Grimshaw's idea that nominalization is similar to passivization and I show that it makes wrong predictions for the two CENs in Romanian.

2. The verbal domain in Romanian

Like in English and German (see Jaeggli 1986, Collins 2005, Alexiadou et al. 2006 a.o.), in Romanian, transitive verbs form passive constructions and the *de* “by”-phrase re-introduces the external argument instantiating all the thematic roles: agent (7a-a'), causer (7b- b'), experiencer (7c-c'), and recipient (7d-d'):

- (7) a. *Ion a distrus cartea.* (Agent)
John has destroyed book-the
“John destroyed the book.”
- a'. *Cartea a fost distrusă de (către) Ion.*
book-the has been destroyed by John
“The book was destroyed by John.”
- b. *Vîntul a împrăștiat norii.* (Causer)
wind-the has dispersed clouds-the
“The wind dispersed the clouds.”
- b'. *Norii au fost împrăștiati de (către) vînt.*
clouds-the have been dispersed by wind
“The clouds were dispersed by the wind.”

- c. *Toți colegii îl disprețuiesc pe Ion.* (Experiencer)
 all colleagues him despise PE John
 “All his colleagues despise John.”
- c’. *Ion este disprețuit de (către) toți colegii.*
 John is despised by all colleagues
 “John is despised by all his colleagues.”
- d. *Ion a primit pachetul.* (Recipient)
 John has received package-the
 “John received the package.”
- d’. *Pachetul a fost primit de (către) Ion.*
 package-the has been received by John
 “The package was received by John.”

In view of Kratzer’s 1994 analysis, both the DPs in the active structures in (7a-d) and the PPs in the passive constructions in (7a’-d’) are licensed by the same Voice projection. According to Alexiadou et al. 2006, the [+/- agentive] feature on Voice is responsible for the licensing of agents and causers, respectively. If a Voice head is active, the thematic role is realized as a specifier; if it is passive, the thematic role is implicit (see also (4a)).² Thus, the data in (7) are all characterized by the decomposition pattern in (6a).

Anticausatives take only causers as external arguments (see (5)). In Romanian, as in English, their external argument appears with a specific preposition *de la* “from”, different from the one for agents and causers in passive structures. This preposition also shows up in the Romanian PP equivalent to the English “by itself” (see (8a)), a typical test for anticausatives (Alexiadou et al. 2006). The realization of a causer thematic role with two different prepositions, depending on the structure where it appears (active/passive vs. anticausative), reinforces the generalization in Alexiadou et al. 2006 that the causer preposition in active/passive constructions is licensed by Voice, while the one in anticausatives is licensed by CAUS. The data in (8a-b) are analyzed as instantiations of the decomposition pattern in (6b):

- (8) a. *Ușa s -a deschis de la sine/*de către sine.*
 door-the Refl-has opened from itself/by itself
 “The door opened by itself.”
- b. *Ușa s -a deschis de la vînt/*de la Ion.*
 door-the Refl-has opened from wind/from John
- c. **Ușa s -a deschis de către vînt/de către Ion.*
 door-the Refl-has opened by wind/by John
 “The door opened from the wind.”

² I assume the same for the structures with experiencer and recipient thematic roles, although I do not go into a discussion of the precise features on Voice that would license them. The important point is that Voice is present.

concern is to check the structure in (11) on CENs, that is, to see how much of the internal structure of a verb is inherited by the corresponding CEN.

(11) [n [(Voice) [vP ...]]]

3.1 Infinitive CENs

Let us start with the infinitive CEN. In Romanian, nominalizations realize their external arguments with the same prepositions that are used in the verbal domain. This makes the comparison between the two domains straightforward. A slight difference concerns the necessarily disambiguated form of the agentive preposition *de* as the complex form *de către*. This is due to the fact that, in the nominal domain in general, a *de*-PP can also act as a modifier (12a), and within eventive nominalizations in particular, it may sometimes appear with the theme argument (12b), although the latter is usually realized with the genitive case (12c):

- (12) a. cartiere *de* (**către*) *comuniști*
 quarters of communists
 “quarters where communists live”
 b. demolarea *de* cartiere vechi *de* *(*către*) *comuniști* (Agent)
 demolish-Inf-the of quarters old by communists
 c. demolarea cartierelor vechi *de către* *comuniști* (Agent)
 demolish-Inf-the quarters-Gen old by communists
 “the demolition of old quarters by the communists”

As can be observed in (13), besides the agent role exemplified in (12b-c), the infinitive CEN can realize external argument PPs instantiating all the other thematic roles that we identified in the verbal domain with passives (7b’-d’): causers, experiencers, and recipients are all grammatical:

- (13) a. împrăștierea norilor *de către* *vânt* (Causer)
 disperse-Inf-the clouds-Gen by wind
 “the dispersion of the clouds by the wind”
 b. disprețuirea maselor *de către* *clasa politică* (Exp)
 despise-Inf-the people-Gen by class political
 “the contempt of the political class towards the people”
 c. primirea pachetului *de către* *Ion* (Recipient)
 receive-Inf-the package by John
 “the receipt of the package by John”

From the data in (12b-c) and (13), infinitive CENs seem to resemble verbal passives, since they display full productivity concerning the external argument PPs. In this case, their internal structure should be the one in (6a), with a Voice projection.

But a closer look at the data indicates that this cannot be the complete answer. Infinitive CENs derived from roots that participate in the causative/anticausative alternation are ambiguous between a transitive reading with an external causer (14a) and an intransitive reading with a spontaneous interpretation (14b). The two readings can be disambiguated by an agent *de către*- or a causer *de la*-PP, respectively, like in the verbal domain ((7a'-b') vs. (8)):³

- (14) deschiderea ușii
open-Inf-the door-Gen
- a. deschiderea ușii *de către Ion*
open-Inf-the door-Gen by John
“the opening of the door by John”
- b. deschiderea ușii *de la vânt*
open-Inf-the door-Gen from wind
“the opening of the door from the wind”

In accord with the data in (14b), the infinitive can also be formed from internally caused roots which are similar to anticausatives:

- (15) ruginirea fierului / putrezirea lemnului *de la/*de către umiditate*
rust-Inf-the iron-Gen / rot-Inf-the wood-Gen from/ by humidity
“the rusting of the iron/the rotting of the wood”

Since anticausative structures have been argued in Alexiadou et al. 2006 to lack a Voice projection, the data in (14b, 15) indicate that the infinitive CEN is compatible with the structure in (6b). This idea is also supported by the test in Kratzer 1994 given above in (4), with the referential relation between the agent and the theme. Since the infinitive in (16) allows the theme to be coreferential with the agent, it means that there is no Voice projection hosting an implicit external argument and no Principle C violation occurs:

- (16) anunțarea oaspeților
announce-Inf-the guests-Gen
“the announcement of the guests”
- a. Agent = Theme: “the guests announced themselves”
- b. Agent ≠ Theme: “the guests were announced by somebody else”

In conclusion, the behavior of the Romanian infinitive CENs seems to comply both with the generalization that they have Voice and the one that they lack Voice. This may be judged as an indicator that nominalizations are insensitive to the effects of Voice, so they would inherit only the VP structure

³ This ambiguity in the nominal domain appears because nominalizations in Romanian, unlike for instance German nominalized infinitives, do not preserve the reflexive pronoun specific to anticausative verb forms.

below Voice from the root verb. However, in English, German, and Greek, Alexiadou et al. 2008 show that this is not the case. Since supine CENs in Romanian confirm the results in the other three languages, I postpone the generalization concerning the infinitive for Section 3.3.

3.2 Supine CENs

In this section, I investigate the Romanian supine and its behavior with respect to external argument PP licensing, in order to see which of the two patterns in (6) it matches. Like in the case of the infinitive, the supine CEN can license all the thematic role PPs associated with the external argument that we find in the verbal domain in (7):

- (17) a. demolatul cartierelor vechi *de către comuniști* (Agent)
demolish-Sup-the quarters-Gen old by communists
“the demolition of old quarters by the communists”
- b. împrăștiatul norilor *de către vânt/*de la vânt* (Causer)
disperse-Sup-the clouds-Gen by wind/*from wind
“the dispersion of the clouds by the wind”
- c. ?disprețuitul maselor *de către clasa politică* (Exp)
despise-Sup-the people-Gen by class political
“the contempt of the political class towards the people”
- d. primitul pachetelor *de către secretară* (Recipient)
receive-Sup-the packages-Gen by secretary
“the receipt of packages by the secretary”

The degraded acceptability of the example in (17c) with an experiencer PP has to do with the conflict between the aspectual properties of the supine CEN and the unbounded character (see Jackendoff 1991) of the event suggested by the verb *despise*. As argued in Iordăchioaia & Soare 2008, the supine CEN selects bounded events and pluralizes them. For this reason, the supine rejects individual-level predicates (see Kratzer 1995) which are always unbounded, since they cannot be located in space or time. (18) illustrates two such examples:

- (18) a. **cunoscutul* limbilor străine
know-Sup-the languages-Gen foreign
“the knowledge of foreign languages”
- b. **descinsul* omului din maimuță
descend-Sup-the man-Gen from monkey
“the descent of the man from the monkey”

Since most subject-experiencer verbs are individual-level predicates, they are expected to disallow the supine form.⁴ In accord with this generalization, the example in (17c) is acceptable only with a forced stage-level interpretation of the verb *despise*. This is possible, if we think of several situations in which a certain “political class” despises “the people”. As a consequence, experiencer verbs which can be more easily understood as bounded events are considerably better in the supine and the experiencer PP is successfully licensed:⁵

- (19) a. *admiratul* mașinilor de pe stradă *de către Ion*
admire-Sup-the cars-Gen from street by John
“John’s (habit of) admiring the cars in the street”
b. *uitatul* temelor acasă *de către Ion*
forget-Sup-the homeworks home by John
“John’s (habit of) forgetting his homeworks at home”

Thus, the supine CEN licenses all the external role PPs. But unlike the infinitive CEN and similarly to the verbal passive, the supine disallows causer PPs which are licensed in the absence of Voice. As shown in (8), *de la* is the typical preposition for causers licensed by CAUS. The data in (20) indicate that *de la*-PPs cannot occur within supine CENs, as they cannot appear as realizing the external argument of the passive:

- (20) a. *împrăștiatul* norilor *de către*/de la vânt*
disperse-Sup-the clouds-Gen by /from wind
“the dispersion of the clouds by the wind”
b. *Norii* au fost *împrăștiați de către*/de la vânt*.
clouds-the have been dispersed by/from wind
“The clouds were dispersed by the wind.”

The conclusion to draw from these data is that the supine always realizes a Voice head and thus, only licenses PPs which have to do with Voice, like in the case of the verbal passive. As a confirmation, note that the supine is excluded with internally-caused verbs, because they lack Voice (21). At the same time, the supine requires disjoint reference between the agent and the theme of roots freely undergoing the causative/anticausative alternation. In accord with Kratzer 1994 (see also (4)), the structure in (22) indicates that the supine has a Voice projection hosting an implicit argument whose presence blocks the reflexive reading (22a):

- (21) **ruginitul fierului / *putrezitul lemnului*
rust-Sup-the iron-Gen / rot-Sup-the wood-Gen

⁴ See also Pyllkänen 2000, who shows that stative subject experiencer verbs in Finnish are individual-level predicates.

⁵ For details on the habitual interpretation of the supine (which is apparent in the English translation in (19)) and its source, see Soare 2006 and Iordăchioaia & Soare 2008.

- (22) anunțatul oaspeților
 announce-Sup-the guests-Gen
 a. #Agent = Theme: “the guests announced themselves”
 b. Agent ≠ Theme: “the guests were announced by somebody else”

3.3 The Voice within the infinitive CEN

The data in (20) – (22) clearly distinguish the supine from the infinitive with respect to the internal functional structure. The supine has a Voice projection, while for the infinitive the evidence is not conclusive either for the presence or the absence of Voice.

In Section 3.1., after analyzing the behavior of the infinitive with respect to external argument PPs, I formulated the hypothesis that nominalizations might be insensitive to Voice. As shown by Alexiadou et al. 2008, this does not hold at least for the three languages they analyze and, as indicated by my discussion of the supine, it does not hold for Romanian either. Moreover, even for the infinitive CEN, I will show below that there is strong evidence that it can have Voice.

First, the infinitive licenses manner adverbs which are related to Voice: *atent* “carefully” and *intenționat* “intentionally” are naturally allowed in infinitival nominalizations:

- (23) a. distrugerea documentelor *atît de atent*
 destroy-Inf-the documents-Gen so carefully
 “destroying the documents so carefully”
 b. spargerea geamului *intenționat*
 break-Inf-the window-Gen intentionally
 “breaking the window intentionally”

Second, like Greek nominalizations, the infinitive CEN from de-adjectival verbs can license agent PPs. Since there is nothing in the semantics of these roots that could license an agent, the PP in (24) must be structurally licensed by Voice:

- (24) golirea coșului *de către femeia de serviciu*
 empty-Inf-the basket by woman of duty
 “the emptying of the basket by the cleaning woman”

As a consequence of these facts and of the ones in (12) - (16) above, I propose that the infinitive nominalization of verbs undergoing the causative/anticausative alternation is ambiguous between a structure in which it projects Voice and another one in which it does not project Voice. The source of this ambiguity is actually the ambivalent nature of these verbs. As a confirmation of this ambiguity, note that the adjective *spontan* “spontaneous” gives both a passive and an anticausative reading with alternating verbs (25a), but it has an unambiguous passive reading with causative verbs (25b), and an anticausative

External Argument PPs in Romanian Nominalizations

reading with internally caused verbs (25c). The availability of one reading or the other or both in (25) has to do with the decomposition pattern that characterizes the verbal root:

- (25) a. *deschiderea spontană* a uşii (passive/anticausative)
 open-Inf-the spontaneous door-Gen
 “the spontaneous opening of the door”
- b. *distrugerea spontană* a actelor (passive/*anticausative)
 destroy-Inf-the spontaneous documents-Gen
 “the spontaneous destruction of the documents”
- c. *putrezirea spontană* a frunzelor (*passive/anticausative)
 rot-Inf-the spontaneous leaves-Gen
 “the spontaneous rotting of the leaves”

In conclusion, the infinitive in (25a) is ambiguous between the structural patterns in (6a) and (6b), with and without Voice, respectively: the one in (25b) projects Voice, so it is decomposed as in (6a), and the infinitive in (25c) receives the internal structure in (6b) without Voice.

The generalization I draw with respect to the infinitive does not come as a surprise, from a crosslinguistic point of view. Alexiadou et al. 2008 bring evidence for a similar analysis in the case of Greek nominalizations which — like the Romanian infinitives — are compatible with all the verbal roots (see (12) - (16)) and exhibit properties specific to Voice equivalent to the ones exemplified in (23) - (24) for Romanian. Moreover, unlike in Romanian, Greek speakers tend to distinguish between the adjectives *sudden* and *spontaneous* to the extent that the latter is exclusively associated with a passive interpretation, and thus with the presence of Voice (26b), while the former is ambiguous, just like *spontan* in Romanian (26a). Thus, the Greek *ksafniko* “sudden” in (27a) allows an anticausative interpretation with an internally caused verb (like the Romanian *spontan* in (25c)), while the Greek *afhormito* “spontaneous” is ungrammatical with the same verb (27b):

- (26) a. to *ksafniko* anigma tis portas (passive/anticausative)
 the sudden opening the door-Gen
- b. to *ksafniko* anigma tis portas (passive/*anticausative)
 the spontaneous opening the door-Gen
- (27) a. to *ksafniko* sapisma ton filon (*passive/anticausative)
 the sudden rotting the leaves-Gen
- b. *to *afhormito* sapisma ton filon (*passive/*anticausative)
 the spontaneous rotting the leaves-Gen (Alexiadou et al. 2008, p. 12)

In this respect, *afthormito* behaves like the Romanian supine in requiring Voice, but since it can appear with a nominalization which does not reject anticausatives (see (27a)), this indicates that nominalizations can be ambiguous between the presence and the absence of a Voice projection in their functional structure. Greek nominalizations and Romanian infinitives are clear instantiations of this case.

4. Final considerations

Let us briefly return to Grimshaw's generalization according to which the process of nominalization is similar to that of passivization to the extent that both suppress the external argument. This claim actually involves two separated claims: first, that the external argument is suppressed in passive structures and second, that nominalizations should behave similarly to verbal passives with respect to external argument (non-)realization.

The first claim has been argued in Alexiadou et al. 2006 to make wrong crosslinguistic predictions with respect to the relation between active and passive constructions. Since in Greek, passive structures systematically disallow causers which are normally fine in the active, Alexiadou et al. conclude that there cannot be a derivational relation between the passive and the active to the extent that we can speak of a process of passivization which “suppresses” the external argument. They argue that the passive meaning is rather the effect of the interaction between certain portions of structure and the Voice specification.

Concerning the second claim at the basis of Grimshaw's generalization, the data I discussed with respect to Romanian indicate that it cannot be right either. If “nominalization” were a process by which all nominals derived from verbs came to exhibit the same properties with respect to external arguments, we would expect all the CENs to behave similarly. In Romanian, I showed that, although they both accept external argument PPs, the infinitive and the supine CEN behave differently with respect to the way they license these PPs. This leads to the conclusion that the latter always has Voice, while the former realizes Voice depending on the properties of the root. In a way, the supine in Romanian is a nominalization that resembles the verbal passive, but this confirms Grimshaw's claim only to the extent that the supine and the passive are similar in the sense that they both project Voice and meet Kratzer's 1994 predictions with respect to this projection and the way it interacts with the rest of the functional structure.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I investigated the properties of Romanian nominalizations with respect to Voice realization and external argument PP licensing. In particular, I argued that the supine must be analyzed as consistently hosting Voice, a property which results in incompatibility with external arguments that are licensed in the absence of Voice and with verbal roots that lack Voice. In the case of the infinitive, although the possibility to project Voice is unquestionable, I showed

that a structure without Voice is also available, since the infinitive felicitously combines with roots that do not project Voice and allows causer PPs which are licensed by CAUS. Alexiadou et al. 2008 distinguished crosslinguistically between three possibilities of external argument PP licensing. English nominalizations were shown to lack Voice, so the external role of actor is assigned by the preposition itself. German nominalized infinitives were argued to project Voice, while Greek nominalizations were analyzed as ambiguous. Within this picture, the Romanian supine and infinitive CENs instantiate the latter two patterns, respectively (cf. Alexiadou et al. 2008).

References

- Alexiadou, A. 2001. *Functional Structure in Nominals: Nominalization and Ergativity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Alexiadou, A., E. Anagnostopoulou & F. Schäfer. 2006. The properties of anticausatives crosslinguistically. In *Phases of Interpretation*, ed. M. Frascarelli, 187-212, Berlin: Mouton.
- Alexiadou, A., E. Anagnostopoulou & F. Schäfer. 2008. PP licensing in nominalizations. *Proceedings of NELS 38*.
- Borsley, R. & J. Kornfilt. 2000. Mixed extended projections. In *Syntax and Semantics, Volume 32*, 101-131, ed. R. Borsley, New York, NY: Academic Press.
- Collins, C. 2005. A smuggling approach to the passive in English. In *Syntax*, 8.2: 81-120.
- Cornilescu, A. 2001. Romanian nominalizations: Case and aspectual structure. In *Journal of Linguistics*, 37: 467-501.
- Fu, J., T. Roeper & H. Borer. 2001. The VP within nominalizations: Evidence from adverbs and the VP anaphor do-so. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 19: 549-582.
- Grimshaw, J. 1990. *Argument Structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Iordăchioaia, G. & E. Soare. 2008. Two kinds of event plurals: Evidence from Romanian nominalizations. To appear in *Empirical Issues in Syntax and Semantics 7*, eds. O. Bonami & P. Cabredo-Hofherr, ISSN1769-7158.
- Jackendoff, R. 1991. Parts and boundaries. *Cognition* 41. 9-45.
- Jaeggli, O. 1986. Passive. *Linguistic Inquiry* 17: 587-663.
- Kratzer, A. 1994. *The Event Argument and the Semantics of Voice*. Ms., University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Kratzer, A. 1995. Stage-level and individual-level predicates. In *The Generic Book*, eds. G. N. Carlson & F. J. Pelletier, 125-175. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Pylkkänen, L. 2000. On Stativity and Causation. In *Events as Grammatical Objects: The Converging Perspectives of Lexical Semantics and Syntax*, eds. C. Tenny & J. Pustejovsky, 417-444. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Gianina Iordăchioaia

Soare, E. 2006. Why smoking is a (bad) habit. Paper presented at the International Workshop on Nominal and Verbal Plurality, Paris, October 2006.

Soare, E. 2007. Nouveaux points de vue sur les déverbaux en roumain. In Hommage à Sanda Reinheimer-Rîpeanu, University of Bucharest.

Gianina Iordăchioaia
Department of English Linguistics
University of Stuttgart
Heilbronner Str. 7
70174 Stuttgart

gianina@ifla.uni-stuttgart.de