DPs in Adjectival Small Clauses in Romanian: A Diachronic Perspective

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This paper focuses on Romanian diachronic data with adjectival predicates under intensional verbs (consider-Adj. types). Due to their salient diachronic stability w.r.t important structural properties, these constructions are relevant to the research on small clauses and to the investigations on Romanian DPs and DOM strategies. It is proposed that a complex predicate analysis employing a Multiple Agreement Mechanism is able to derive the strong/specific readings of the shared arguments under discussion; the variation in the DOM marking of pronouns is correlated to a plausibly more recent development of the definiteness scale for differential marking in Romanian, complementary to the animacy scale.

1 Introduction

Constructions involving adjectival predicates embedded under intensional predicates like consider, see, want, and so on, although less studied as compared to other non-verbal counterparts, pose numerous conceptual challenges. One the one hand, their syntactic structure is still an open issue, theoretical accounts alternating between small clause structures (Stowell 1981, 1991, a.o.) or complex predicate configurations (Chomsky 1975, a.o.). On the other hand, these constructions are highly relevant for understanding the nature of DPs functioning as shared arguments, as well as for nominal syntax in general. These two aspects are interconnected as the special morphosyntactic and interpretive properties of these DPs in turn provide crucial hints into the structure of such non-finite embedded projections. This paper discusses adjectival predicate data from 16th century Romanian, as compared to modern Romanian, illustrating both interpretative stability as well as variation in the morphological marking of the shared argument. The diachronic picture confirms the configurational distinctions, as well as the interpretive restrictions of the shared DPs, allowing us to better refine this explanatory domain.
1.1 *Specific Shared DPs*

As initially noticed in Williams’ (1983) seminal paper, and subsequently confirmed by various cross-linguistic data (see Irimia 2011 for an overview), shared arguments with adjectival embedded predicates can normally only be interpreted as *specific*. Hence the morphological indefinite in (1) is felicitously interpreted as a specific indefinite (de Houp 1996; Heim 1982).

\begin{english}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{I considered a student sick.}
\item I considered a specific student sick. (*student* is salient in the context, and known to the speaker, if not the wider audience)
\item I considered some student or other sick.
\end{enumerate}
\end{english}

Note that this restriction holds not only with individual-level adjectives (as argued for in Basilico 2003), but also with stage-level ones; e.g., in (1) sickness is not understood as an immutable characteristic of the student.

As expected, this specificity requirement also applies in Modern Romanian. Moreover, as in many other languages, object (human) morphological indefinites in these contexts are generally *overtly marked* as differential objects introduced by the marker *pe*, and clitic-doubled (register-dependent), as shown in (2).

\begin{english}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textit{(L)- am considerat *\textit{(pe) un student bolnav.} }
\item him= have.1.SG= considered DOM a.M.SG student sick.M.SG
\item ‘I considered a student sick.’
\end{enumerate}
\end{english}

The diachronic picture is nevertheless more complex in Romanian. Although in Old Romanian such arguments normally carry *strong/specificity* readings, as predictable, their morphological marking is not as strict as in Modern Romanian, in that the DOM material can be omitted in some instances in which it would be obligatory in Modern Romanian. The most important question posed by this paper is how semantic stability (i.e., immutable restriction to specificity) can be reconciled with a non-systematic morphological marking of some classes of shared DPs. The answer has non trivial consequences regarding the syntactic configurations adjectival predicates project, as explained below in 1.2.

1.2 *Specific DPs and the Small Clause/Complex Predicate Debate*

As is well known from the extensive literature on scope, canonical specific (indefinite) DPs are generally analyzed as taking wide-scope with respect to