Exceptive Phrases in Romanian. A Fragment-based Analysis

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The present paper discusses the main aspects of Exceptive Phrases (EPs) in Romanian. Some examples are given below. EPs are individualised thanks to the exceptive connector (in bold):

(1) a. Ion a mâncat tot, *în afară de prăjitură*. 'John ate everything **apart from** *the cookie*'
     b. Ion a mâncat tot, *cu excepția prăjiturii*. 'John ate everything **except for** *the cookie*'
     c. Ion a mâncat tot, *mai puțin/minus prăjitura*. 'John ate everything **less** *the cookie*'
     d. Ion nu a mâncat (nimic altceva) *decât prăjitura*. 'John ate nothing **but** *the cookie*'

In the past 25 years EPs have been paid particular attention, thanks to the pioneering studies of Jacob Hoeksema (for instance, Hoeksema 1987). Presently, we already dispose of in-depth studies about the semantics of EPs (Moltmann 1995, Lappin 1996, Garcia Álvarez 2008). As for grammatical aspects of EPs, they came under focus more recently. A peculiar direction of research stimulated by the papers of Jason Merchant on ellipsis tends to assimilate the incomplete character of EPs to structural ellipsis (Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén 2012).

The present paper also addresses grammatical aspects of EPs. By taking Romanian as the case study, we make a critical evaluation of the arguments employed to support the ellipsis approach to EPs. The discussion ends with the conclusion that Romanian EPs cannot be seen as elliptical structures. We argue instead that the incomplete constituency of EPs may be explained through the concept of fragment, put forward as a distinct linguistic entity in the HPSG theory. The conclusion holds for other languages, as well.

The structure of the paper is as follows. We begin with some current notions involved in the analysis of EPs in general. We then review the arguments adduced in favour of the ellipsis status of EPs and show that they do not have the relevance they are expected to have. In alternative, we argue that a non-derivational analysis is preferable and we show that, due to the concept of fragment, the incomplete constituency of EPs may be well accommodated with their full propositional semantics.

Basic notions in the analysis of EPs

In the analysis of EPs one usually distinguishes (i) *an exception marker* (the prepositions *în afară de,* 'apart from ', *cu excepția* 'except for', and the adverbs *mai puțin* 'less', *minus* 'minus', *decât* 'no ...but'); (ii) *a complement* of the exception marker, called the *exception complement* (*prăjitura*, 'the cookie' in (1)); and (iii) *the associate* of the exception complement (in (1a-c), the quantifier *tot* 'everything' ranging over a contextually determined class of edible things). In the case of EPs with *decât*, the associate may be unexpressed.

A chief property of EPs and a possible consequence: EPs as elliptical clauses

EPs in Romanian manifest a certain asymmetry, which, cross-linguistically, is well-known. It is the asymmetry in the relationship between constituency and semantics. The content of an EP is invariably propositional (Garcia Álvarez 2008: 77-90), because an EP entails a statement related to the statement expressed by the verb of the sentence. For example, if the sentence *Șeful i-a felicitat pe toți angajații, mai puțin pe Ion* ('The boss congratulated every employee, less John') is true, then so is the sentence *Șeful nu l-a felicitat pe Ion* ('The boss did not congratulate John'). Nevertheless, the statement expressed by the EP *mai puțin pe Ion* ('less John'), although part of the content of the whole sentence, does not have the expected syntactic form, because the EP lacks the head verb.

This asymmetry gave birth to the hypothesis that EPs are *elliptical clauses*. The hypothesis is illustrated in the recent analysis of Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén (2012) for Spanish free EPs (that is, EPs with mobility inside the sentence). According to this hypothesis, the exception complement is *a remnant*, that is, the visible part of an ellipsis. The *missing material* is recovered by

reconstruction, and what is thus obtained is a full clause meant to be the base of the surface incomplete clause. One constituent in this reconstructed clause is obligatorily moved to the left periphery. This is the constituent which is to appear later on, as the remnant of the elliptical clause. Finally, the missing material is obtained by a deletion operation, which eliminates the phonological form of the complement of the C^0 node (marked with the deletion symbol E - from ellipsis: $C^0[E]$). Deletion is obligatory, too. The whole approach defines a classic derivational account of ellipsis.

Problems with the reconstruction

The first step in this approach is reconstruction. By reconstruction, a full (hidden) clause is obtained, which represents the origin of the elliptical clause. Reconstruction, though, has two problematic aspects.

The first problem appears in the case of EPs in which the complement of the exception marker is a subjunctive VP and the verb of the main clause is the light verb *a face* ('do') (both in italics, below):

(2)   Ion *face* orice/de toate la bucătărie, mai puţin/minus *să spele vase*.
        'John *does* everything in the kitchen, less *washing* the dishes'

Examples of this type cannot be derived from full reconstructed clauses, because, actually, the verb *a face* cannot have a subjunctive VP complement. Hence reconstruction is not possible, and for situations of this type, the derivational account has to devise a special explanation:

(3) Ion *face* orice/de toate la bucătărie, mai puţin/minus **face să spele vase*.

The other problem concerns the combination between the result of the reconstruction (i.e. the underlying full clause) and the exception connector. The problem, this time, is that the combination itself between the reconstructed clause and the exception marker is invariably illicit, because no exception marker is actually allowed to combine with a clause resulted from reconstruction. Thus, in (4a) below we have a sentence with an EP marked in italics, in (4b), we have the reconstructed clausal complement of the exception marker, while in (4c) we have the combination between the exception marker and the reconstructed clause (again in italics). The combination in (4c) is ill-formed, even if the reconstructed clause in (4b) is fine:

(4)   a.   Ion i-a invitat pe toţi la cină, *mai puţin pe Ioana*.
                'John invited everybody at the dinner except for Joan.'
        b.   Ion a invitat-o la cină pe Ioana.
                'John invited Joan at the dinner.'
        c.   Ion i-a invitat pe toţi la cină, **mai puţin* [*Ion a invitat-o la cină pe Ioana*].
                'John invited everybody at the dinner except [John invited Joan].'

This is a general situation. The derivational account recognises the problem and postulates that elliptical EPs are obtained by means of obligatory movement and deletion, whereas other elliptical constructions (for example, gapping) require that these operations be optional (Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén 2012: 592-593). However, obligatory deletion is obviously an *ad-hoc* solution, because it is uniquely meant to cover the ill-formedness effect of the reconstruction.

Other arguments for ellipsis

The derivational account defends the elliptical status of EPs with other arguments, as well. These arguments come from the results of some tests applied to EPs. The tests in question are the occurrence in EPs of the temporal adverbs, the occurrence of the propositional adverbs and the binding of the anaphoric reflexives. A fourth argument, the result of the interaction between islands and EPs, is meant to show that the complement of the exception marker is an extracted constituent (Pérez-Jiménez and Moreno-Quibén 2012: 597-602).

In the full version of the paper we show that when applied to Romanian none of these tests has the relevance they are expected to have. In other words, they do not actually prove that EPs are elided structures. For reasons of space, we comment below only one argument: the occurrence of the propositional adverbs.

EPs in Romanian may host propositional adverbs:

(5)   Au venit toți, *mai puțin, **fireşte**, Ion.*
        'They came all, except, *of course*, John'

According to the derivational perspective on EPs, the occurrence of propositional adverbs proves that EPs have a covert but active complementizer phrase (CP). This CP is said to be inherited in fact from the hidden clause.

The conclusion, though, is hasty. There are two arguments which contradict it: in the first place, in the literature of EPs there merely exists a much more cautious claim about propositional adverbs: that their occurrence show that EPs have *a propositional content* (Garcia Álvarez 2008: 77-90). Having a propositional content, though, is less than having a CP clausal structure.

In the second place, it is already known that there are also *verbless* constructions containing propositional adverbs. By definition, no CP may be present in these constructions. In addition, such verbless constructions are known to be *non-elliptical*. Thus, Culicover and Jackendoff (2005): 236-237 and Merchant (2006): 2-3 list a rich inventory of messages which are *both non-elliptical and verbless*, hence in no connection with CP and ellipsis. The inventory contains telegrams, titles, headlines, weather reports, recipes, instructions, short directives, labels etc. At least some of these verbless non-elliptical messages may host propositional adverbs:

(6)   Speaker A: "Next exit?"
        Speaker B: "*Next exit, Chicago, of course.*"

What holds for examples in English also holds for Romanian:

(7)   Medicul a zis că *nici vorbă, bineînțeles, de cancer*.
        'The doctor said that no way, of course, of cancer.'

Intermediary conclusion
The previous remarks give then support to the statement that within the derivational framework, the elliptical status of EPs is unconvincingly defended. The alternative is treating the asymmetry propositional semantics/non-clausal constituency as such. This amounts to approach EPs (more precisely, the exception complement in EPs) by means of the concept of *fragment*.

Fragments
The concept of fragment has recently received a precise meaning in the linguistic theory, thanks to researches developed within the HPSG framework. Fragments in HPSG are units, whose content does not correlate with a corresponding syntactic structure. This means that the internal structure of a fragment is not like the structure of an ordinary phrase. More precisely, this structure is incomplete.

From a semantic point of view, a fragment is characterized by the fact that it expresses more than its syntactic structure allows it to express. In HPSG, the additional content of a fragment is explained by the linguistic context in which the fragment occurs. A fragment, then, has to have a source phrase (usually, a clause), which it relies on. The additional content of the fragment is recovered by (semantic) reconstruction.

EPs in Romanian contain fragments, not ellipsis
The features of the fragments mentioned above may be easily identified in the case of the exception complements in Romanian. The properties of these complements are just the properties that define

fragments. Thus, exception complements have the content of a clause (that is, a propositional content), but their structure is not apt to fully express this content. This is the asymmetry specific to fragments.

From a syntactic point of view, exception complements in Romanian behave like a clause. Nevertheless, this clause is special, because what is (apparently) missing in it is just the verb that should head the phrase.

As previously seen, even if the missing verb can be reconstructed, the combination between the exception marker and the reconstructed clause is invariably illicit. This demonstrates that the syntactic reconstruction is not only unnecessary, but plainly impossible.

Semantic reconstruction, instead, is required. Examine in this respect the sentence *Au venit toţi, mai puţin Ion* ('They came all, less John'). One cannot get the whole interpretation of the EP *mai puţin Ion* ('less John') without using the three interpretative factors specific to the content of the fragment complement *Ion* 'John' (Bîlbîie 2011), namely: (i) the source clause *Au venit toţi*, 'come. PAST.3PLURAL all' (that supplies the unexpressed predication of the EP); (ii) the literal content of the complement phrase itself *Ion,* and (iii) the type of the reconstructed content. Thanks to the source clause, the denotation of the verb in the source clause (*au venit,* 'come. PAST.3PLURAL') becomes part of the meaning of the EP. This denotation offers what is (apparently) missing in the exception complement. At the same time, the source clause determines the interpretation of the exception complement *Ion*, as one of the semantic arguments of the predication *a venit'* (PAST.3SING). As the complement *Ion* comes into the structure with its own meaning, this meaning will also participate in the semantic scenario introduced by the reconstructed predication. This leads to the proposition which combines with the meaning of the exception marker: *mai puţin'(a venit' (ion')), 'less (came (john))'.*

HPSG representation of EPs[1]

As exception complements are phrases, their properties in HPSG are determined by the place they occupy within the hierarchy (independently) established for phrases. In the following representation underlined phrasal types compose the path from the top of the hierarchy (i.e. the highest type dominating exception complements) to its bottom (the exception complement itself):

(Ph)
1. *ph: hd-ph* (endocentric phrase), *nhd-ph* (exocentric phrase)
2. *hd-ph: hd-only-ph* (phrase with a single daughter), *hd-subj-ph* (phrase with head and subject), *hd-comp-ph, hd-adj-ph, ...*
3. *hd-only-ph: hd-frag-ph* (phrase with a fragment),...
4. *hd-frag-ph : sluicing-ph, stripping-ph, pseudo-stripping-ph, exc-frag-ph,...*
5. *exc-frag-ph: exc-frag-ph$_1$,..., exc-frag-ph$_4$*

At the same time, as exception complements in HPSG are also clauses, their properties are determined by their place within the hierarchy of clauses. What is relevant here is that exception complements are declarative clauses:

(Cl)
1. *cl: decl-cl, ndecl-cl*

Fragments, as we saw, are contextually dependent on a previous phrase – in the present case, the source clause to which the EP is connected. In HPSG, their contextual dependence is captured by means of two features, MAX(imal)-Q(uestion)U(nder)D(iscussion) and SAL(ient)-UTT(erance) (Ginzburg and Sag 2000:304). MAX-QUD has as value the content of the source clause. One may reformulate MAX-QUD as MAX-Me(ssage)UD, which results in the possibility of having as value the semantic type needed in the case of an exception complement, a proposition.

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[1] This section owes much to the three anonymous reviewers.

As for the feature SAL-UTT, it identifies in the source clause the associate of the exception complement.

The constraint on *hd-frag-ph* which account for the above mentioned dependencies looks as follows ('H' denotes the head-daughter of the phrase; *hd-frag-ph* is the immediate super-type of the exception complement):

$$(8) \quad \begin{bmatrix} hd-frag-ph \\ HEAD : v \\ CTXT : \begin{bmatrix} MAX-MeUD : proposition \\ SAL-UTT : \{synsem[CONT|IND : \fbox{1}]\} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow H \begin{bmatrix} CONT|IND : \fbox{1} \end{bmatrix}$$

The constraint mainly says that in a fragment that depends on a clause which denotes a proposition the referential index of the fragment (here above, the one tagged $\fbox{1}$) must be identical with the referential index of the salient utterance in the source clause. Notice that in the case of exception complements the salient utterance in the source clause coincides with the associate of that exception complement, (e.g. **Every American investor** *withdrew from Cuba, except General Motors*, where *General Motors* is the exception fragment and *every American investor* is its associate phrase and at the same time the salient utterance).

As we saw from the hierarchy of clauses, exception complements in HPSG are also clauses, because they express a message. More precisely, they express a subtype of message, a *proposition*. In HPSG, a clause expressing a proposition is a declarative clause (*decl-cl,* Ginzburg and Sag 2000:42). What appears below is the constraint on the type *decl-cl* which says that if the content of a declarative clause is a proposition or an outcome, then, if no other more specific constraint intervenes, the head-daughter of the clause has the same value for the feature SOA as the mother phrase. The value *austinian* for the feature CONT ('content') in the representation below means a proposition or an outcome. SOA means 'state of affairs':

$$(9) \quad \begin{bmatrix} decl-cl \\ CONT : austinian[SOA : /\fbox{1}] \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow H \begin{bmatrix} CONT : /\fbox{1} \end{bmatrix}$$

Due to the inheritance relationship between types and their subtypes, fragments are now defined as both headed fragment phrases and declarative clauses. This means that they inherit the defining properties of these two super-types. The subtype itself of these super-types is the type *decl-frag-cl*.

There are several types of declarative fragment clauses identified in HPSG: sluicing (Ginzburg and Sag 2000), stripping (Abeillé 2006), gapping (Bîlbîie 2011) etc. Exception complements are just one type of these fragments. We denote them by means of the type *decl-exc-frag-cl* and we characterize this type through the following constraint:

$$(10) \quad \begin{bmatrix} decl-exc-frag-cl \\ HEAD : v[IC : -] \\ CTXT : \begin{bmatrix} MAX-MeUD : proposition \\ SAL-UTT : ... \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow H \begin{bmatrix} CAT|HEAD : ... \end{bmatrix}$$

This constraint specifies that an exception complement cannot be an independent clause ([IC: -]. Also, the HEAD value of its head-daughter must be underspecified (H[HEAD: ...]. This yields the possibility of having several subtypes of exception fragments, according to different values of the HEAD feature.

We now need a constraint that accounts for the way the meaning of the exception complement is composed from (i) the meaning of its head-daughter and (ii) that part of the proposition expressed by the source clause which combines with the content of the fragment's head-daughter. To be more specific, we need a device which justifies that in the case of a clause, say,

(11) Au venit toţi membrii companiei, mai puţin **directorul**.
 'All the members of the company came, less the principal'

the full content of the fragment *directorul* is in fact a proposition that asserts that the principal came.

To this purpose, we propose the following semantic constraint on the type *decl-exc-frag-cl*:

(12)

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
decl - exc - frag - cl \\
CONT : ... \\
CTXT : \begin{bmatrix}
MAX - MeUD : proposition \left\langle |1| \begin{bmatrix} RELN : |2| \\ SEM - ARG : ..., |3|, ... \end{bmatrix}, |4| \begin{bmatrix} RELN : |5| \\ SEM - ARG : |3| \end{bmatrix} \right\rangle \\
SAL - UTT : synsem \begin{bmatrix} CONT : |4| \end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix} \\
HD - DTR : synsem \begin{bmatrix} CONT : |6| \begin{bmatrix} RELN : |7| \\ SEM - ARG : |3| \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} CONT : \langle |1|, |6| \rangle \end{bmatrix}
$$

This constraint says in essence that if an exceptive fragment contextually depends on a predicate *P* (having a semantic argument *x*) in the source clause and if the (only) daughter of the exceptive fragment has a certain content *y*, then the content of the entire exceptive fragment has to be *Py*.

The two above constraints (10), (12) apply to any exception fragment. There are, however, four subtypes of such fragments. They differ from each other from the point of view of the HEAD value of the head-daughter:

(i) The first subtype consists in a fragment, whose head-daughter HEAD value is a genitive NP ([HEAD: NP[CASE:*gen*])

(ii) The second one has the following possible HEAD values: accusative NP, AdjP, infinitive VP, temporal AdvP.

(iii) The third subtype has all the HEAD values the second one has, plus subjunctive VP, PP and CP. If its HEAD value is a NP, the NP may have any case.

(iv) Finally, the fourth subtype has as HEAD values a PP headed by the preposition *de* 'of' or an infinitive/subjunctive VP.

Each of these subtypes is selected by a certain exception marker (and, therefore, each has to correspondingly be mentioned in the subcategorization frame of a certain exception marker): the first one is subcategorized for by the preposition *cu excepţia* ('except for'), the second by the preposition *în afară de,* ('besides', 'apart from'), the third subtype by the adverbs *mai puţin* ('less'), *minus* and *decât* ('but'), and the fourth by the adverbial locution *în afară*. EPs headed by *cu excepţia* and *în afară de* are sentence adjuncts. EPs headed by *decât, mai puţin* 'less' and *minus* are NP adjuncts.

Conclusions

The HPSG representation of EPs essentially pleads for the non-elliptical status of EPs and avoids the drawbacks mentioned above in the case of the derivational approach. Sentences with EPs and the light verb *a face* ('to do') in the source clause raise no problem for this approach, because the subjunctive VP fragment complement is simply selected by certain exception markers (i. e. *mai puţin* 'less', *minus* and *decât* '...but'); also, there is no problem of reconstruction in this approach, because, due to their subcategorization frames, exception markers are not allowed to select (root) clauses and no hidden level of representation is posited. Finally, the occurrence of propositional adverbs in EPs is taken to be a piece of evidence for the propositional content of these phrases.

In the full version of the paper we put forward an outline of typology of EPs built on the features retained in the HPSG approach.

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