

VOICE RESTRUCTURING IN ITALIAN (AND ROMANCE) TOUGH-CONSTRUCTIONS

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1 Introduction

1.1 English *tough*-constructions

English *tough*-constructions (TCs) are a long-standing puzzle in generative syntax:

(1) *[These books]_i are easy to read t_i.*

The non-thematic matrix subject establishes a dependency with the internal argument of the embedded clause, as shown by the semantic equivalence of (1) with:

(2) *It is easy to read [these books].*

English TCs have proven notoriously difficult to derive for both GB theory (Chomsky 1981, Massam 1987) and Minimalism (Rezac 2006, Hicks 2009), due to the fact that the embedded internal argument (IA) seems to undergo *improper movement*, i.e. A-A'-A movement:

(3) *[These books]_i are easy [_{CP} t_i to convince a kid to read t_i].*

Various solutions involving A'-null operators have been proposed to accommodate this:

- (4) a. [_{TP} [These books]_i are easy [_{CP} OP_i [_{TP} PRO_{arb} to read t_i]]] (Chomsky 1981)
b. [_{TP} [These books]_i are easy [_{CP} [t_i + OP_i]_j [_{TP} PRO_{arb} to read t_j]]] (Hicks 2009)

I will show that for Romance we need nothing of this sort.

1.2 Romance *tough*-constructions

The canonical *tough*-construction (TC) in Italian, French and Spanish looks like the following:

- (5) a. *Questi problemi sono facili da risolvere.*
these problems be.3PL easy.PL DA solve.INF
'These problems are easy to solve'.
b. *Ces problèmes sont faciles à résoudre.*
these problems be.3PL easy.PL À solve.INF
'These problems are easy to solve'. (Fr.)
c. *Estos problemas son fáciles de solucionar.*
these problems be.3PL easy.PL DE solve.INF
'These problems are easy to solve'. (Sp.)

Moreover, there are also TCs with no overt adjective and a modal interpretation, but having the same distribution and constraints (Giurgea & Soare 2010a):

- (6) a. *L'ottima organizzazione è da apprezzare.*
 the=excellent organisation be.3SG DA to.appreciate
 'The excellent organisation is to be appreciated'.
- b. *L'organisation excellente est à saluer.*
 the=organisation excellent be.3SG À to.appreciate
 'The excellent organisation is to be appreciated' (Fr.)
- c. *La organizaciòn excelente es de agradecer.*
 the organisation excellent be.3SG DE to.appreciate
 'The excellent organisation is to be appreciated'. (Sp.)

Notice, finally, that since TCs are headed by adjectives, they can be found in predicative and attributive positions as well (Giurgea & Soare 2007):

- (7) a. *Ritengo questo libro facile da leggere.*
 consider.1SG this book easy.SG DA to.read
 'I consider this book to be easy to read'.
- b. *Ho trovato un libro facile da leggere.*
 have.1SG found a book easy.SG DA to.read
 'I found an easy to read book'.

In this presentation, I will:

- Outline what syntactic issues are raised by Italian TCs;
- Show that embedded clauses in Italian TCs do not qualify as full CPs but only project a (partial) TP;
- Show that Italian TCs establish an A-dependency closely resembling a (long) passive;
- Propose that Romance TCs are an instance of Voice restructuring, building on Bryant et al. (2023).

2 Syntactic problems

- (8) *[Questi libri]_i sono facili da leggere t_i.*
 these books be.3PL easy.PL DA to.read
 'These books are easy to read'.

Why are TCs like (8) problematic for syntactic theory?

- (9) a. The IA escapes accusative assignment in the embedded clause (potential Case theory violation);
 b. The IA crosses the implicit external argument (ImpEA) of the embedded verb (potential Relativised Minimality violation);
 c. The IA surfaces in the matrix subject position, receiving nominative Case and triggering agreement with the matrix predicate (potential Subjacency/Phase Impenetrability Condition violation).

Moreover, differently from English, Italian TCs involve an introductory element (*da*), while their impersonal counterparts do not:

- (10) a. *Questi libri sono facili *(da) leggere.*
 these books be.3PL easy.PL DA to.read
 b. *È facile *(da) leggere questi libri.*
 be.3SG easy.SG DA to.read these books

The main proposal of this account is that *da* selects a reduced embedded clause with underspecified Voice, allowing for A-movement of the embedded object to the matrix clause, thus explaining the similarity with long passives.

- (11) *[Questi libri]_i sono stati finiti di leggere t_i.*
 these books be.3PL be.PPRT.MPL finish.PPRT.MPL DI read.INF
 ‘These books finished being read’.

3 Data

3.1 Tough-constructions involve an A-dependency

TCs are subject to strict locality conditions in Italian, unlike in English. First, they do not admit unbounded dependencies (Rizzi 1982):

- (12) a. **Questo libro è facile da convincere un bambino a leggere.*
 this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.convince a kid A to.read
 b. **Questo violino è facile da promettere di comprare.*
 this violin be.3SG easy.SG DA to.promise to buy

- (13) a. *This book is easy to convince a kid to read.*
 b. *This violin is easy to promise to buy.*

Furthermore, Italian TCs do not license parasitic gaps (however parasitic gaps might be bad in Romance in the first place):

- (14) a. *Questo libro è facile da apprezzare senza leggere.
 this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.appreciate without to.read
 b. *This book is easy to appreciate without reading.*
- (15) a. ?Quale libro hai recensito senza leggere?
 what book have.2SG review.PSTPRT without read.INF
 b. *What book did you review without reading?*

So, we can exclude an A'-movement step for Italian TCs.

3.2 Tough-constructions do not have an embedded left periphery

Topicalisations and focalisations cannot occur but *in situ* or -more marginally - in sentence initial position by exploiting the matrix CP (cf. Giurgea & Soare 2010b, Cinque & Benincà 2018: 78):

- (16) a. Questo libro è facile da regalar(gli) a Mario.
 this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.give=CL.3SG.M.DAT to Mario
 b. *Questo libro è facile (a Mario) da (a Mario) regalar(gli).
 this book be.3SG easy.SG to Mario DA to Mario to.give=CL.3SG.M.DAT
 c. ?A Mario, questo libro è facile da regalar(gli).
 to Mario this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.give=CL.3SG.M.DAT
 'Mario, this book is easy to give to him'.
- (17) a. Questo libro è facile da regalare A MARIO (non a Luigi).
 this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.give to Mario not to Luigi
 b. *Questo libro è facile (A MARIO) da (A MARIO) regalare (non a Luigi).
 this book be.3SG easy.SG to Mario DA to Mario to.give not to Luigi
 c. A MARIO questo libro è facile da regalare (non a Luigi).
 to Mario this book be.3SG easy.SG DA to.give not to Luigi
 'This book is easy to give to MARIO (not to Luigi)'.

This suggests that the embedded CP layer may be absent altogether. This would be consistent with the impossibility of stranding the *da*-clause via clefting (Cinque 2004):

- (18) *È da leggere che questo libro è facile.
 be.3SG DA to.read that this book be.3SG easy.SG
 'This book is easy to read, not something else'.

If we accept this conjecture (I will also provide more evidence for it), then we don't have to worry about *improper movement* and/or the PIC, as the infinitival clause is not a CP-phase (see also Giurgea & Soare 2010b, Bosque & Gallego 2011 for similar claims in the Romance family).

3.3 *Da-* versus *a-* infinitival clauses

Let us now compare *da*-clauses to a better known class of infinitivals, which can also be introduced by adjectives:

- (19) *Mario_i è pronto [a PRO_i mangiare la pasta].*
 Mario be.3SG ready.M.SG A to.eat the pasta
 ‘Mario is ready to eat the pasta dish’.

This looks like a standard control configuration, where a PRO in the infinitival subject position is controlled by an appropriate antecedent (*Mario*) in the main clause.

Here, control/promotion of the embedded IA like in TCs is disallowed:

- (20) **Questa pasta è pronta a mangiare.*
 this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG A to.eat
 ‘This pasta dish is ready to eat’.

This is not surprising, as A-dependencies normally target the highest argument of the embedded clause (Landau 2015). Such a constraint can only be circumvented if the IA is moved across the EA by an independent mechanism (i.e. passivisation):

- (21) [*Questa pasta*]_{*i*} è pronta [a PRO_{*i*} essere mangiata t_{*i*}].
 this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG A to.be eat.PPRT.FSG
 ‘This pasta dish is ready to be eaten’.

In *da*-clauses (even when the adjective stays the same), we find the opposite pattern: the dependency always targets the IA, and passivisation is unacceptable.

- (22) a. **Mario_i è pronto [da PRO_i mangiare la pasta].*
 Mario be.3SG ready.M.SG DA to.eat the pasta
 ‘Mario is ready to eat the pasta dish’.
- b. *Questa pasta è pronta da mangiare.*
 this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG DA to.eat
 ‘This pasta dish is ready to eat’.
- c. **[Questa pasta]_i è pronta [da PRO_i essere mangiata t_i].*
 this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG DA to.be eat.PPRT.FSG
 ‘This pasta dish is ready to be eaten’.

It is clear that *da*-clauses behave very differently from raising or control complements, so *da* probably should not be analysed as a standard non-finite complementiser such as *a* (realising Fin, as in Rizzi 1997).

Moreover, unaccusative verbs are okay in *a*-clauses but not in *da*-clauses:

- (23) *Questo cibo è pronto a /*da scadere.*
 this food be.3SG ready.M.SG A DA to.expire
 ‘This food is about to expire’.

The clefting test (as already mentioned) also points to a different syntactic status of *da* versus *a*:

- (24) a. È a essere mangiata che questa pasta è pronta.
 be.3SG A to.be eat.PPRT.FSG that this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG
- b. *È da mangiare che questa pasta è pronta.
 be.3SG DA to.eat that this pasta be.3SG ready.F.SG
 ‘This pasta dish is ready to be eaten, not something else’.

3.4 Tough-constructions and restructuring verbs

Cinque & Benincà (2018) show that some but not all restructuring verbs are acceptable in bare *da*-clauses. The situation seems to be the same in TCs with overt adjectives, thus showing that the highest projections in Cinque’s (2006) hierarchy are unavailable:

- (25) a. *Questi libri sono rari da sembrare apprezzare.
 these books be.3PL rare DA to.seem to.appreciate
- b. *La politica estera è difficile da soler seguire.
 the policy foreign be.3SG tough DA to.use to.follow
- c. *Quest’errore è facile da tendere a fare.
 this=mistake be.3SG easy DA to.tend A to.make
- d. *Quest’abitudine è facile da finire per abbandonare.
 this=habit be.3SG easy DA to.end-up PER to.abandon
- e. *Questi libri sono impossibili da voler /intendere /desiderare (di) leggere.
 these books be.3PL impossible DA to.want to.intend to.desire DI to.read
- f. ?*Questo errore è facile da smettere di fare.
 this mistake be.3SG easy DA to.stop DI to.make

Restructuring verbs lower than the modal heads hosting *dovere/potere*, on the other hand, are not as bad, again consistently with Cinque & Benincà (2018).

- (26) a. ??Questa situazione è difficile da dover gestire.
 this situation be.3SG tough DA to.need to.manage
- b. ??Questi libri sono importanti da poter leggere.
 these books be.3PL important DA to.can to.read
- c. Quest’opera è difficile da saper apprezzare.
 this=artwork be.3SG tough DA to.know to.appreciate
- d. Questo problema è impossibile da riuscire a risolvere subito.
 this problem be.3SG impossible DA to.manage A to.solve immediately
- e. Questo libro è difficile da far leggere a un bambino.
 this book be.3SG tough DA to.make to.read to a child
- f. Questa partita è impossibile da provare a vincere.
 this match be.3SG impossible DA to.try A to.win

- g. *Questo argomento è facile da continuare a studiare da soli.*
 this topic be.3SG easy DA to.continue A to.study on one's own
- h. *Questo libro è impossibile da finire di leggere.*
 this book be.3SG impossible DA to.finish DI to.read
- i. *Questa casa è impossibile da iniziare /cominciare a costruire domani.*
 this house be.3SG impossible DA to.begin to.start A to.build tomorrow
- j. *I bambini sono difficili da passare a prendere ogni giorno.*
 the kids be.3PL tough DA to.go A to.pick-up every day

Da-clauses then do not project the whole TP layer, possibly extending up to a Mod head in Cinque's (2006) split TP. In fact, *da* conveys a modal interpretation ambiguous between possibility and necessity (mostly depending on the adjective), which becomes particularly evident when the adjective is null:

- (27) *Queste bacche sono da mangiare.*
 these berries be.3PL DA to.eat
 'These berries are edible/should be eaten'.

3.5 The implicit argument in *tough*-constructions

Some common tests suggest that the ImpEA in TCs is syntactically active:

- (28) a. *Questa decisione è (stata) impossibile da prendere volontariamente.*
 this decision be.3SG be.PPRT.FSG impossible DA to.make voluntarily
 'This decision is/has been impossible to make voluntarily'.
- b. *Questi libri sono (stati) facili da leggere per imparare l'inglese.*
 these books be.3PL be.PPRT.FSG easy DA to.read for to.learn the=English
 'These books are/have been easy to read to learn English'.
- c. *Questa partita_i è (stata) facile da giocare scalzi_j.*
 this match be.3SG be.PPRT.FSG easy DA to.play barefoot
 'This match is/has been easy to play barefoot'.
- d. *L'educazione_i è (stata) facile da insegnare ai propri_j figli.*
 the=politeness be.3SG be.PPRT.FSG easy DA to.teach to=the own children
 'Politeness is/has been easy to teach to one's children'.
- e. *Alcuni segreti_i sono impossibili da tenere per sé_j.*
 Some secrets be.3PL impossible DA to.keep for self
 'Some secrets are impossible to keep to oneself'.

The ImpEA of copular passives passes such tests as well (cf. Collins 2023 a.m.o.). Moreover, the possible interpretations of the ImpEA are also the same as in canonical passives.

- (29) Quasi-existential reading (event-bounded, perfective aspect)

- a. *Oggi a casa di Marco, la cena è stata facile da preparare.*
 today at home of Marco the dinner be.3SG be.PPRT.FSG easy DA to.make
 ‘Dinner has been easy to make today at Marco’s’.
- b. *Oggi a casa di Marco, la cena è stata preparata facilmente.*
 today at home of Marco the dinner be.3SG be.PPRT.FSG make.PPRT.FSG easily
 ‘Dinner has been made easily today at Marco’s’.

(30) Quasi-universal reading (non-event-bounded, imperfective aspect)¹

- a. *Di solito, la matematica è facile da imparare.*
 of usual the Maths be.3SG easy DA to.learn
 ‘Maths is usually easy to learn’.
- b. *Di solito, la matematica viene imparata facilmente.*
 of usual the Maths come.3SG learn.PPRT.FSG easily
 ‘Maths is usually learnt easily’.

The EA can be made explicit by a *per*-phrase, which could be either directly licensed within the embedded clause or the matrix clause: as suggested by Hoekstra & Roberts 1993, the experiencer role of the matrix clause and the agent role of the embedded clause must be coreferential.

- (31) a. *L'inglese è difficile (per gli italiani) da imparare (per gli italiani).*
 the=English be.3SG tough.SG for the Italians DA learn.INF for the Italians
 ‘English is hard for Italians to learn’.

This PP c-commands other argumental PPs, which suggests it is a genuine argument (following Angelopoulos et al. 2020):

- (32) *L'educazione è stata facile (per Maria_i) da insegnare ai propri figli (per*
 the=politeness be.3SG been easy.SG for Mary DA to.teach to=the own children for
Maria_i).
 Mary
 ‘Politeness has been easy for Maria to teach to her children’.

Moreover, for some speakers this argument can alternatively be realised as a dative clitic attaching to the copula, which suggests it is a matrix argument:

- (33) a.(?) *Questa decisione mi è difficile da accettare.*
 this decision me.DATCL be.3SG tough.SG DA accept.INF
 ‘This decision is hard for me to accept’.

1. The auxiliary *venire* is preferred to *essere* in (30b) for independent reasons that are not relevant here: see Squartini (1999)

3.6 Interim summary

For now, the data I have shown suggests that:

- (34) a. TCs are A-dependencies rather than A'-dependencies;
b. the *da*-clause does not project a whole CP (no left periphery, cannot be clefted);
c. the *da*-clause projects up to a modal head of the split TP (higher restructuring verbs are unacceptable);
d. there is an implicit argument similar to that of a passive in TCs, and only transitive verbs are acceptable in TCs;
e. overt passive morphology is unacceptable in TCs.

4 Analysis

4.1 Assumptions on predication and the initial position of the matrix subject

As opposed to most approaches to English TCs (e.g. Chomsky 1981, Hicks 2009), Giurgea & Soare (2010a,b) argue that, in Romance, participial structures, non-finite relatives and TCs always involve syntactic predication via A-movement. In the case of TCs, then, the DP surfacing as the matrix subject has to raise from the embedded IA position.

I would like to offer a few more arguments that this is a correct assumption, at least for TCs.

First, when the matrix predicate has perfective aspect, the TC has an obligatory *realis* non-stative interpretation:

- (35) *Questi libri sono stati facili da leggere.*
These books be.3PL been easy DA to.read
'These books have been easy to read' (=they have been read).

In other words, (35) implies that the books have easily been read by someone. From a semantic point of view, this is compatible with a mono-eventive analysis and excludes that an abstract operator is merged in the IA position and then coindexed with the matrix subject at LF (vs. adjectival passives as in Bruening 2014).

Secondly, TCs seem to pass the *ne*-test (Belletti & Rizzi 1981), patterning like copular passives and unlike adjectival passives (Burzio 1986, Cinque 1990):

- (36) a. *È facile da trovarne una?*
be.3SG easy DA to.find=NE one
'Is a house for lease easy to find?'
b. *Sono impossibili da reperirne due.*
be.3PL almost impossible DA to.retrieve=NE
'Second-hand cars are almost impossible to retrieve'.

- (37) a. **Ne sono sconosciute molte (delle sue opere).*
 NE be.3PL unknown many (of their works)
 ‘Many of their works are unknown’.
- b. *Ne sono stati letti due (di libri).*
 NE be.3PL been read two (of books)
 ‘Two of the books have been read’.

Thirdly, the quantifier *tutti* (‘all’) can be stranded in the embedded IA position (and in other intermediate positions, but sometimes more marginally), like in copular passives:

- (38) a. *Questi libri sono (tutti) stati (tutti) facili (?tutti) da vendere (tutti).*
 these books be.3PL all been all easy all DA to.sell all
 ‘These books have all been easy to sell’.
- b. *Questi libri sono (tutti) stati (tutti) venduti (tutti).*
 these books be.3PL all been all sold all
 ‘These books have all been sold’.

So, I will follow Giurgea & Soare (2010a,b) in proposing an A-movement analysis.

However, they also stipulate that the ImpEA is - quite exceptionally - first merged in the highest available TP projection (MoodP in their analysis), where it receives its θ -role:

- (39) [Questi libri]_i sono [_{AP} difficili [_{MoodP} ImpEA da [_{TP} leggere_j [_{vP} t_j t_i]]]] (adapted from Giurgea & Soare 2010a: 87)

It is thus unclear how the IA can move to the matrix clause if there is a c-commanding EA in the structure (cf. the locality problem in 9b).

I believe that the A-movement analysis can still be rescued by employing the Voice restructuring theory recently proposed by Bryant et al. (2023), building on much previous work (Wurmbrand 2001, Wurmbrand & Shimamura 2017, Kovač et al. 2020).

In particular, this could explain why we find passive-like object promotion to the matrix clause but no passive morphology.

- (40) **Questi libri sono facili da essere letti.*
 These books be.3PL suitable DA to.be read
 ‘these books are suitable to be read’.

4.2 Voice restructuring

This theory was mainly developed to account for cases of cross-clausal A-dependencies that seem to -but cannot- involve actual control (raising + control at the same time!).

The relevant example for Romance would be a long passive like (41) (Wurmbrand 2001, Cinque 2004).

- (41) *La chiesa è stata finita di costruire.*
 the church be.3SG be.PSTPRT.FSG finish.PSTPRT.FSG DI build.INF
 ‘They finished building the church’.

Here, passive morphology is found on the matrix verb, but not on the infinitive, whose IA is promoted to subject. At the same time, the (implicit) agent (ImpEA) of the main verb “controls” the ImpEA of the embedded verb.

- (42) DP ImpEA_i V(matrix):PASS [ImpEA_i V(embedded) <DP>] (adapted from Bryant et al. 2023: 1)

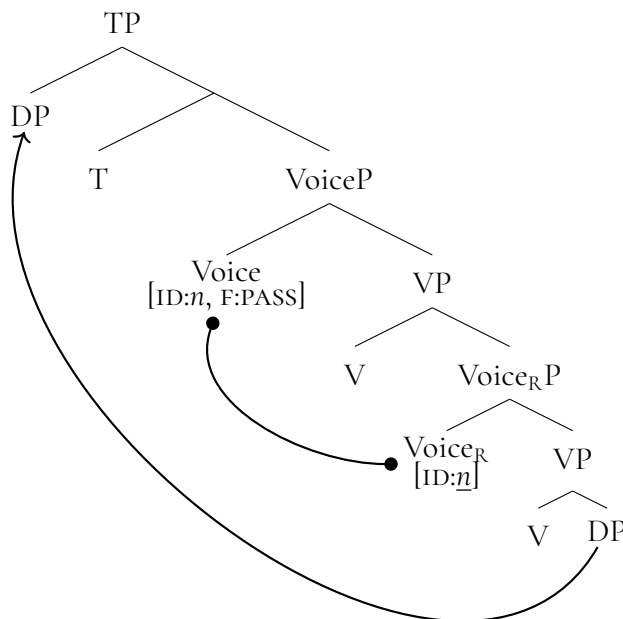
Some Romance varieties also have *double passives* like (43).

- (43) *La ermita fue empezada a ser construida en el siglo XIV.*
 the church be.PST.3SG start.PSTPRT.FSG A be.INF build.PSTPRT.FSG in the century 14th
 ‘They started building the church in the 14th century’. (Bosque & Gallego 2011: 11)

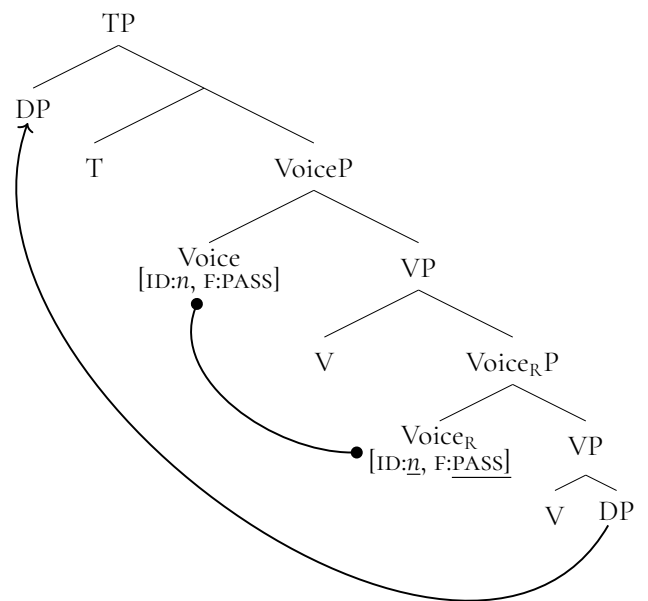
- (44) DP ImpEA_i V(matrix):PASS [ImpEA_i V(embedded):PASS <DP>]

Bryant et al. (2023) propose a theory of Voice restructuring (VR) that accounts for these (and many other) cases, assuming that some infinitival clauses can have an underspecified Voice head (Voice_R). They posit that regular active/passive Voice bears a valued [ID] feature, whose value *n* is an index for the agent it licenses, and optionally a feature [F] specifying the morphological realisation of passive Voice, while Voice_R has unvalued [ID] (hence it cannot assign accusative) and possibly unvalued [F].

- (45) Long passive (Bryant et al. 2023: 7)



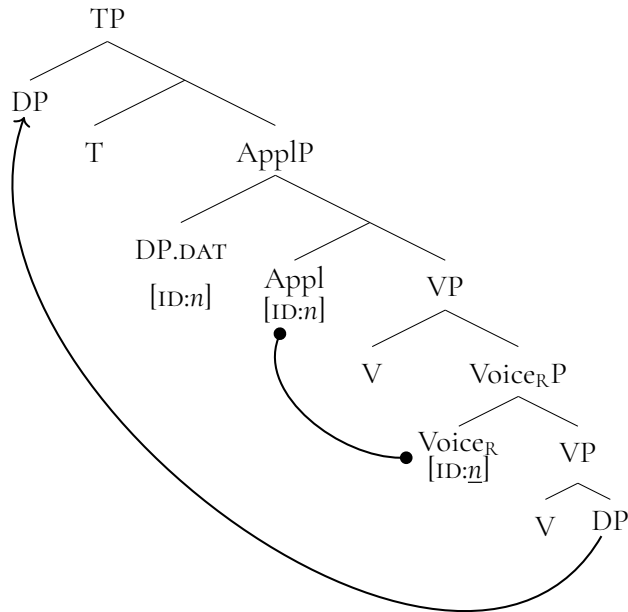
- (46) Double passive



They also suggest that, when the matrix verb is unaccusative, VR can be triggered by an Appl head:

- (47) a. *weil mir der Brief auf Anhieb zu entziffern gelungen ist.*
 since me.DAT the.NOM letter straightaway to decipher managed be.3SG
 ‘since I managed straightaway to decipher the letter’. (Wurmbrand 2001: 26)
- b. DP Exp_i V(matrix) [ImpEA_i V(embedded) ⟨DP⟩]

(48) (Bryant et al. 2023: Appendix)

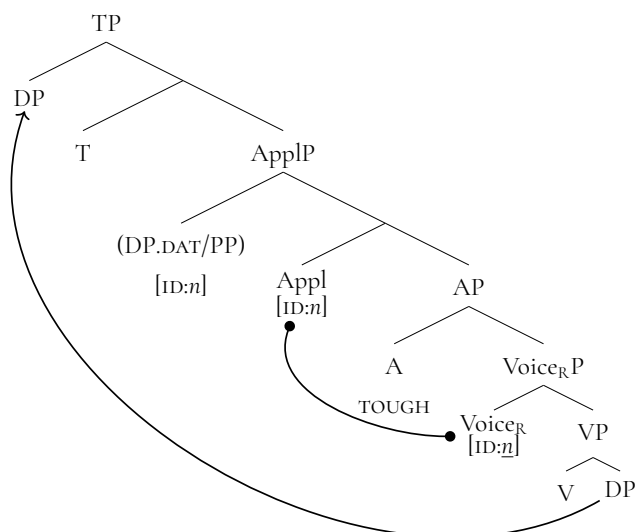


Can we apply a similar reasoning to TCs, despite the lack of any lexical V in the matrix clause?

TCs have an explicit/implicit argument, probably the experiencer of the matrix predicate/adjective (as shown by the fact it can cliticise on the matrix verb), which ‘controls’ the embedded ImpEA. Let us assume that this argument is encoded by an Appl head, perhaps within the structure of the adjective as proposed by Berro & Fernández (2019).

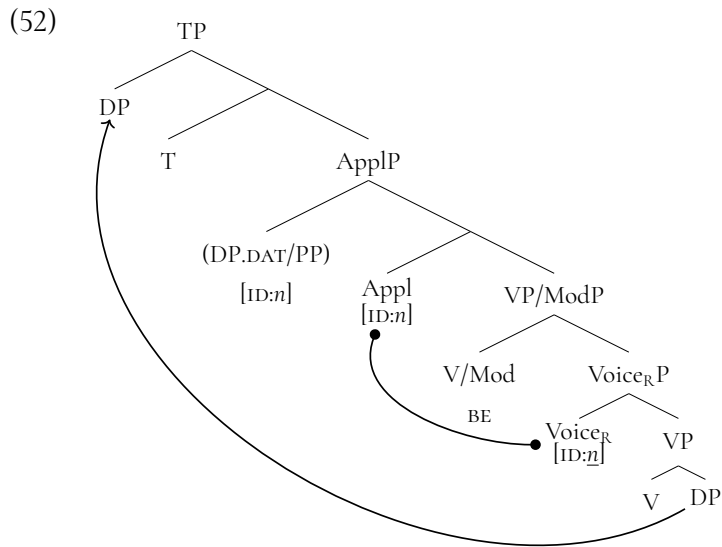
- (49) DP (Imp)Exp_i TOUGH [ImpEA_i V(embedded) ⟨DP⟩]

(50)



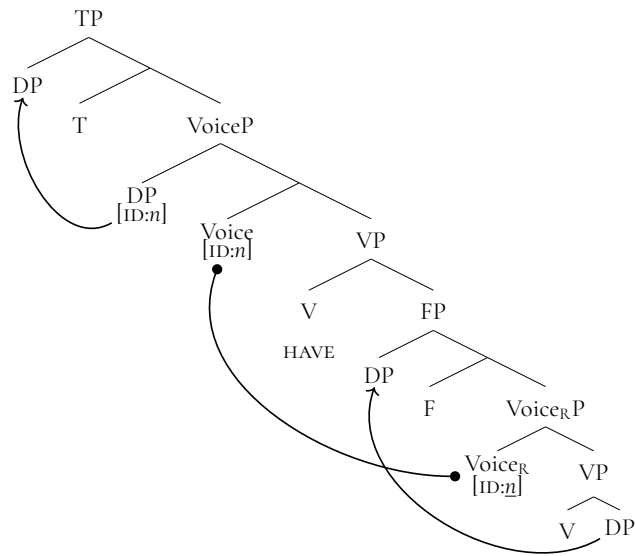
Other similar constructions introduced by *da* and having the same properties as TCs (A-movement of the embedded object, controlled embedded agent, reduced embedded structure) but no adjective can be captured by VR:

- (51) a. *Questi errori sono da evitare (per uno studente).*
 these mistakes be.3PL DA avoid.INF for a student
 ‘These mistakes are to be avoided (by a student)’.
- b. DP Exp_i BE/MOD [ImpEA_i V(embedded) ⟨DP⟩]



- (53) a. *Gianni ha molti libri da leggere.*
 Gianni have.3SG many books DA read.INF
 ‘Gianni has many books to read’.
- b. Poss_i HAVE DP [ImpEA_i V(embedded) ⟨DP⟩]

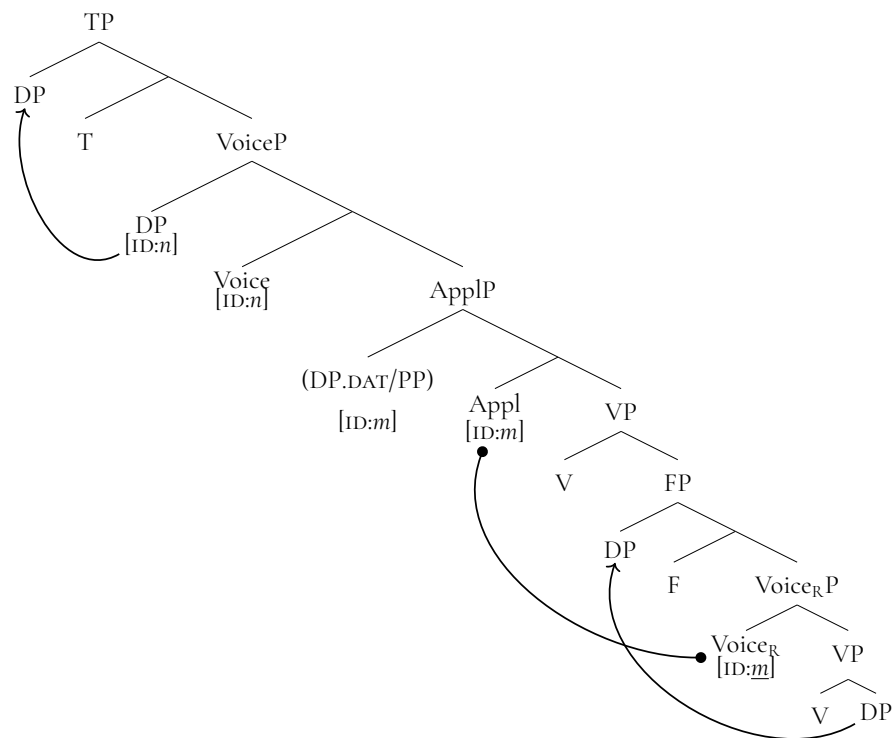
(54)



(in 54 FP is the same functional projection hosting moved DP in raising-to-object/ECM constructions, the embedded object can also stay low)

- (55) a. *La maestra ha dato (ai bimbi) molti libri da leggere.*
 the teacher have.3SG give.PPRT to=the kids many books DA read.INF
 'The teacher has given the kids many books to read'.
 b. Ag_i Goal_j V(matrix) DP [ImpEA_j V(embedded) ⟨DP⟩]

(56)



4.3 The status of *da*

I have left the question open for now as what *da* is: we know that (at least in these constructions) it can't be a genuine complementiser, since the clause it introduces is heavily reduced.

So, either *da* realises a functional head (modal?) or it is a P-like 'transparent' element similar to those selected by Romance restructuring verbs (*iniziare a, finire di,...*), whose infinitival complements don't have a left periphery and a complete inflectional structure. The same can be argued for its equivalents in the other Romance languages (French *à*, Spanish and Portuguese *de*). This would imply that, despite having selectional properties, it has no actual meaning (Cinque 2006).

4.4 Why can infinitivals be special?

The question is now what the distribution of VR (that is, of Voice_R) is in Romance.

First, we have seen that TCs and the like involve reduced, tenseless clause (not CPs, not full TPs).

Moreover, a language like European Portuguese, where infinitives can be inflected (Raposo 1987), tells us that inflection (either referring to the understood agent or to the moving object) is banned from TCs.

- (57) *Esses relógios são difíceis de arranjar(*mos/*em).*
these watches be.3PL tough.PL DE fix.INF.(1PL/3PL)
'These watches are hard to fix.'

Conversely, if the embedded clause has a regular Voice head (and therefore the verb is overtly passive), inflection agreeing with the promoted object becomes grammatical:

- (58) a. *Esses relógios são difíceis de ser(em) arranjados.*
these watches be.3PL tough.PL DE be.INF.(3PL) fix.PPRT.MPL
b. *Esses relógios são difíceis de se arranjar(em).*
these watches be.3PL tough.PL DE SE fix.INF.(3PL)
'These watches are hard to fix.'

So, inflection seems incompatible with Voice_R: this could be taken as evidence that if the T domain is richer (either in terms of projection or in terms of features), VR becomes impossible.

In fact, inflected infinitives are also ungrammatical with other restructuring phenomena like clitic climbing (Sheehan 2018): this is one more argument that VR must be responsible for TCs.

Similarly, languages where TCs employ finite complementation need overt passivisation or a resumptive object clitic in the embedded clause (cf. Modern Greek):

- (59) a. *Sti libri su difficili mi *(si) leggiunu.*
these books be.3PL tough.PL MI SI read.3PL
'These books are hard to read.' (Southern Calabrian)
b. *Sti libri su difficili cu *(lli) leggi.*
these books be.3PL tough.PL CU OCL.3MPL read.2SG
'These books are hard (for you) to read.' (Salentino)

- c. *I kithara ine dhiskoli na kataskevasti /tin kataskevazo.*
 the.NOM guitar.NOM be.3SG tough.FSG NA make.PASS.3SG OCL.3FSG make.1SG
 ‘The guitar is hard to build.’ (Modern Greek)

So, Voice_R is incompatible with inflection and finiteness, a restriction found in all other restructuring phenomena.

However it’s still not clear *why* VR is only possible with the morphosyntax associated to (uninflected) active-looking infinitives: the most obvious reason seems to be that these forms require less functional structure and/or fewer features. To this end, a further piece of evidence is provided by varieties where infinitives are indeed used in TCs, but with a complete functional structure (as shown by the presence of a left periphery): here, object clitics are obligatory.

- (60) *Custu vasu el fazile, a Mario, a *(bilu) dare.*
 this vase be.3SG easy.SG to Mario A DATCL.3=OCL.3FSG give.INF
 ‘Mario, this vase is easy to give to’. (Logudorese Sardinian)

Finally, TCs and the like also resemble other cases in Romance where Voice seems underspecified on infinitives (Montalbetti & Saito 1983, Giurgea & Soare 2010b, Bosque & Gallego 2011):

- (61) *Faire par/fare da causatives*
 a. *Ho fatto riparare la macchina al/ dal meccanico.*
 have.1SG made to.fix the car to=the by=the technician
 b. *J’ai fait réparer la voiture au/ par le mécanicien.*
 I=have.1SG made to.fix the car to=the by the technician
 ‘I made the technician fix the car’. (French)

- (62) P + infinitive
 a. *El problema seguía sin solucionar.*
 the problem remained.3SG without to.solve
 ‘The problem remained unsolved’. (Spanish, Bosque & Gallego 2011: 40)
 b. *La comida ya está lista para servir.*
 the food already stay.3SG ready for to.serve
 ‘The food is ready to be served’. (Spanish, Bosque & Gallego 2011: 40)
 c. *Porto la macchina a riparare.*
 bring.1SG the car to fix.INF
 ‘I’m taking the car to where it will be fixed’.

However, these contexts seem to differ from TCs and long passives in that also unaccusative verbs (which do not have Voice) are grammatical (cf. adjectival passives).

- (63) a. *Faccio cadere (*a /*da) Mario.*
 make.1SG to by Mario fall.INF
 'I make Mario fall'.
- b. *Metto il vino a fermentare.*
 put.1SG the wine to ferment.INF
 'I put the wine where it will ferment'.

This is particularly problematic because causatives can express overtly the causee argument of a transitive verb, either as a dative or as a *by*-phrase (with interesting constraints subject to cross-linguistic variation, about which there is an extensive literature). On the other hand, according to Bosque & Gallego (2011), *P* + infinitive sometimes accept overt passivisation (i.e. a structure with regular Voice), too.

It is unclear how the above mentioned constructions can be related to TCs and other VR contexts, as they seem to be very heterogeneous and have a varying functional structure.

4.5 Conclusion

In this talk, I have shown that Italian (and Romance) TCs have very different properties from English TCs, in that they do not involve an *A'*-movement step but are just *A*-dependencies. This implies that a null *wh*-operator analysis is not required. Moreover, Italian TCs seem to lack a CP layer altogether, and their introductory element is not a 'well-behaved' complementiser.

A further observation is that TCs also work very differently from standard *A*-dependencies (even when selected by the same adjective), which target the highest argument in the embedded clause, whereas only the IA of a transitive verb can be targeted in TCs.

Crucially, I have provided extensive evidence that TCs pattern like (long) passives in a number of syntactic tests and the IA thus moves from its base position in the embedded clause to the matrix Spec,TP while crossing the ImpEA, despite the lack of passive morphology on the verb.

To explain this fact, I have proposed that the introductory element *da* selects a reduced clause with underspecified Voice (Voice_R): following Bryant et al. (2023), this implies that a thematic head in the matrix clause (an Appl in the case of TC) must be probed by the embedded Voice_R. As a consequence, the embedded implicit agent becomes controlled by the experiencer argument of the matrix predicate, and the embedded object moves to the matrix subject position to receive case. I have also shown that a similar analysis can explain other constructions with the same properties, even if the type of thematic head in the main predicate varies.

There are other cases of covert passivisation of infinitives in Romance needing further attention, so that their respective peculiarities can be explained.

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