

Control in Romanian and *Se* constructions

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Abstract

In this paper, we account for different patterns found in complement clauses of *se* constructions in Romanian and Spanish. In Romanian, a *se* construction cannot host an infinitival complement, an apparently controlled clause, whereas in Spanish a *se* construction can. However, when an additional *se* is added to the complement clause (a “double *se* construction”), the Romanian structure becomes grammatical, while the Spanish equivalent becomes ungrammatical. The Romanian patterns have been previously argued in Giurgea & Cotfas (2021) to be cases of control, with a failed agreement relation forcing the obligatory presence of *se* in the complement. We propose an alternative based on two major differences found in Romanian and Spanish. First, in *se* constructions, Spec, Voice is saturated by the external argument in Spanish, but it is unsaturated in Romanian. We argue that this prevents the external argument in Romanian from acting as a controller. Second, Romanian infinitival clauses appear to share properties with finite clauses, in contrast to Spanish. We argue that the

grammatical Romanian double *se* construction is not an instance of control and suggest that it is the finite nature of the infinitival complement that allows for a double *se* construction.

Keywords: *se* constructions, Romanian, Spanish, control, implicit agents, finiteness.

1. Introduction

Romance languages have been observed as employing several different types of *se* constructions, including reflexive, middle, anticausative, and passive constructions. Spanish possesses two distinct *se* constructions in which the external argument is implicit: impersonal *se* and passive *se*. Morphological evidence for these being two different constructions arises from different agreement patterns. Although verbs in both constructions are obligatorily third person, in impersonal *se* constructions number agreement is absent between the theme and the verb (1a), it is invariantly singular, while in passive structures, the verb does agree in number with the theme (1b).^{1,2}

(1) Spanish

- a. Se respeta a los trabajadores. [Impersonal]
Imp_{se} respects.SG DOM the.PL workers
'One respects the workers.'
- b. Se respetan las leyes. [Passive]
Pass_{se} respect.PL the.PL laws
'The laws are respected.'

Like Spanish, Romanian also has a *se* construction with an implicit external argument. However, Romanian is limited to only passive *se* (referred to by Dobrovie-Sorin 1998 as a middle-passive *se* with unergatives) in which agreement between the theme and the verb must obtain, as in (2a). When the theme does not agree with the verb, the result is ungrammaticality, as in (2b). See Dobrovie-Sorin (1998) for more arguments that Romanian only has passive *se*.

(2) Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin: 405)

- a. Se cântă/doarme/muncește/mănâncă. [Passive]
SE sings/sleeps/works/eats
'It is sung/slept/worked/eaten.'
- b. *În această universitate se predă științele umane. [Impersonal]
in this university SE teaches the humanities
Intended: 'In this university one teaches the humanities.'

A point of divergence between the *se* constructions in Romanian and Spanish is found in their licensing of complement clauses. Romanian *se* constructions with subject control verbs are ungrammatical when a subjunctive or infinitival complement

¹ See Ormazabal and Romero (2023) for a discussion on the lack of agreement in Spanish *se* constructions.

² As far as we are aware, the judgements from Spanish are not variety specific.

is added, shown in (3a) from Giurgea and Cotfas (2021) (henceforth G&C), however Spanish *se* constructions may host this type of complement clause (3b)³.

(3) a. Romanian (G&C 2021: 99)

*S-a început {a curăța / să curețe} camera copiilor.
SE-has begun to clean / SBJV clean.3 room-the children.the.GEN
Intended: ‘People/someone began cleaning up the room.’

b. Spanish

Se empezó a limpiar la habitación.
SE began to clean the room.
‘One began to clean the room.’

Interestingly, the acceptabilities reverse when an additional *se* is added to the complement clause. These “double *se*” examples (that is, those containing a *se* construction in both the matrix and embedded clause) are grammatical in Romanian (4a), but ungrammatical in Spanish (4b).

(4) a. Romanian (G&C 2021: 99)

S-a început {a se curăța / să se curețe} camera copiilor.
SE-has begun to SE clean / SBJV SE clean.3 room-the children.the.GEN
‘People/someone began cleaning up the room.’

b. Spanish

*Se empezó a limpiarse la habitación.
SE began to clean SE the room.
Intended: ‘One began to clean the room.’

The goal of this paper is to provide an account of the patterns in (3) and (4). We argue that two main factors contribute to the differences in grammaticality between the two languages. First, following MacDonald & Maddox (2018), in Spanish, the implicit external argument in Spec, Voice of the *se* construction contains a D(eterminer)-feature (i.e. *prod*) and saturates the external argument position, while in Romanian the implicit external argument does not contain a D-feature (i.e. *pro*) and does not saturate the external argument position. We argue that the implicit external argument only in the Spanish *se* constructions may act as a potential controller. Second, Romanian infinitival and subjunctive clauses that have been previously categorized as non-finite controlled clauses appear to display an ambiguity in their finiteness. From this we conclude that, despite previous claims of the sentences in (3) and (4), only in Spanish (single) *se* constructions (3b) is a control clause licensed. In the grammatical Romanian double *se* construction, the embedded clause lacks a proper controller and is better analyzed as an instance of a finite complement clause with a null subject, rather than a controlled clause with a big PRO subject. We also show that the Spanish double *se* construction is ungrammatical due to a clash of having both *prod* and PRO.

³ In Romanian, it is observed that obligatory control verbs of the aspectual class allow either a subjunctive or infinitival complement (Pană Dindelegan & Maiden 2013: 47). In Spanish, this class of control verbs only licenses infinitival complements (that is, they do not license subjunctive or other finite complements which select a lexical DP or a null subject). We return to this difference in Section 3.

The structure of the paper is as follows. In Section 2 we review relevant background on *se* constructions and how the D-feature of the implicit external argument relates to its ability to control. In Section 3 we turn to a detailed analysis of the clause types that are licensed as the complement of subject control verbs in Romanian and show that both finite and non-finite clauses are licensed in this environment. Applying this to double *se* constructions, in Section 4 we offer an analysis in which the Romanian double *se* construction does not display control, but instead licenses a finite complement. We also review previous alternative analyses of the Romanian examples in the context of our approach. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Background: Control and D-features

We begin Section 2.1 with a discussion of the importance of a D-feature and saturated external argument in order to establish predication and control (following a theory of control as predication), followed by a discussion in Section 2.2 of the presence of a D-feature on *se* constructions in Spanish, and the lack thereof in Romanian.

2.1. Predication and D-features

As a first step in evaluating the potential of a control relation in (3) and (4), it is necessary to establish what constitutes a proper controller. In the context of the *se* constructions, this becomes an important point to examine, as it is not an overt, lexical DP in the position of the assumed controller. This subsequently raises a question whether the subject of a *se* construction can serve as a controller. We begin the discussion of the necessary features of a controller by reviewing Landau's (2010) categorization of implicit arguments as either strong or weak. Strong implicit arguments (SIA), which include the null subjects of consistent null subject languages and big PRO are composed of a ϕ -set and a D-feature. Weak implicit arguments (WIA), such as an agent of a passive and an implicit object, differ in that they include a ϕ -set but lack a D-feature. Crucially, in order to be the subject of predication, Landau suggests that a syntactic item must qualify as a syntactic argument, and in turn, following Longobardi (1994), it must be a DP. As a result, only strong implicit arguments are expected to participate in predication operations. This is demonstrated in (5) from Landau (2010: 3), where the passive agent in (5a) is unable to act as the subject to the secondary predicate *angry* but big PRO in (5b) is able to.

(5) a. *The room was WIA left [PRO angry].

 b. They expected SIA to leave the room [PRO angry].


Landau (2010) also shows that partial control, crucially a subtype of obligatory control that is not analyzed as involving a predication relation, may have either type of implicit argument as its controller. Landau (2015) recasts his earlier framework of control as Agree as being derived through predication and variable binding. Complement control is divided between predicative control and logophoric control. Predicative control is selected by non-attitude predicates (including *begin*, *manage*,

fail) while logophoric is found in attitude predicates (including *believe*, *promise*, *ask*). Predicative control is established through two main steps of movement and then predication. First, PRO moves from Spec, TP to Spec, FinP to check [uD] on the Fin head which results in the infinitival clause, FinP, being a property (a lambda abstract is derived via movement, as in Heim and Kratzer 1998). To obtain the control reading, the predicate is then saturated by the controller, the subject in cases of subject control. The basic structure of this derivation is provided in (6).

(6) a. The man_i began PRO_i to clean the room.
 b. [_{vP} The man [_v began [_{VP} **began** [_{FinP} PRO_D [_{Fin} Fin_[uD] [_{TP} **PRO_D** [_T to clean the room]]]]]]].

Logophoric control functions similarly, but with an added CP projection headed by null subject *pro* in the complement clause. Bound by the author or addressee in the matrix clause, null subject *pro* acts as the subject to the FinP predicate, invoking an indirect relationship between the controller and controllee. The main examples we focus on in this work are of predicative control. Thus, taking into account both Landau's (2010) discussion of implicit arguments and the model of predicative control described in Landau (2015), by extension, a controller is also expected to be a syntactic, DP argument.

Work on control by implicit arguments is continued in van Urk (2013), who proposes a revised version of Visser's generalization. The original version of Visser's generalization states that subject control is disallowed when the verb is passivized, demonstrated in (7).

(7) a. Sam_i promised Mark PRO_i to send him a letter.
 b. *Mark was promised PRO_i to send him a letter.

Van Urk, however, shows that this generalization should not be as broadly stated as in its original conception. He shows that this generalization only holds in personal passives, where there is an Agree relation established between an overt DP and T. In impersonal passives, which lack a nominative DP and the verb is always 3SG, control by an implicit argument is allowed. Control by the implicit agent is illustrated in the Dutch example in (8).

(8) Dutch (van Urk 2013: 170).
 Er werd geprobeerd om eekhoorns te vangen.
 There was tried INF.C squirrels to catch.INF
 '(Lit.) There was tried to catch squirrel.'

Similar examples found in German and Norwegian lead to the revised version of Visser's Generalization, in (9).

(9) Revised Visser's Generalization (van Urk 2013:172)
 Obligatory control by an implicit subject is impossible if an overt DP agrees with T.

Van Urk also shows how this relates to, and can be regarded as a consequence of, Landau's Agree-based theory of control (2000 et. seq), where a functional head (T for subject control) mediates control between the controller, and PRO. To assimilate the control data involving impersonal passives, van Urk proposes that implicit arguments of impersonal passives are existential D's, without NP complements, that saturate the external argument position and establish an agreement relationship with T. This agreement with T allows control to proceed as it would with a typical DP subject. As desired, this still prevents an implicit agent of personal passives, in which case the theme agrees with T, from establishing control.

Landau (2015) examines van Urk's revised Visser's generalization in light of his updated model of control and introduces a slight amendment to the generalization: it is only expected to hold in logophoric control contexts, where the matrix predicate is an attitude verb. In predicative control contexts, where the matrix predicate is a non-attitude verb (*begin, manage, fail*), control by an implicit argument remains impossible. This division is accounted for through the different mechanisms involved in logophoric vs predicative control, and goes back to his generalization from Landau (2010): an implicit argument cannot participate in predication.

This view, however, that an implicit agent may not participate in predication, has been challenged in recent work. Pitteroff and Schäfer (2019) argue that while this division may hold in some languages, including English, for others, any passive agent may participate in predication/control. Specifically, Pitteroff and Schäfer propose that languages that license impersonal passive of unergative predicates (including Dutch, German, Icelandic, and Norwegian) are those that also allow for implicit, predicative control. Their account relies on the proposal that languages with impersonal passives differ from those without, in that languages with impersonal passives contain a T without ϕ -features that allows for default valuation. In languages without impersonal passives, the lack of predication by implicit agents is a reflex of T's ϕ -features being unvalued or an unchecked EPP. Unlike Landau (2015), it is not analyzed as a failure to establish control. In essence, implicit predicative control, in the languages that allow for it, is to be analyzed as an impersonal passive, rather than a personal passive. While these patterns and analysis raise questions regarding Landau's division of WIA vs SIA, for the current work we maintain the division and assume that a WIA, lacking a D-feature, may not control.

Data and discussion from Legate (2014) provide support of the correlation between the lack of a D-feature/saturated external argument and lack of control. Through an examination of different types of passive voice structures, particularly those found in Acehnese, she looks in detail at the differences between the VoiceP and vP projections, as well as the ϕ -features associated with VoiceP and when they do or do not saturate the external argument role. By looking at the patterns and structures of three major categories of voice constructions-- passive voice, object voice, and grammatical object passive-- different properties belonging to each can be explained. Most relevant to the current discussion is the aspect of Legate's discussion regarding initiators and their relationship to the external argument (which in this work is said to be introduced by Voice). Looking first at the canonical passive voice, the initiator is argued to be semantically restricted based on ϕ -features found in Voice, with a *by*-phrase being licensed as an adjunct and is assigned the initiator theta role. This is semantically related to the initiator theta role introduced on Voice. The impersonal/object voice differs in that the initiator consists of not only ϕ -features, but

instead is a full DP found in the specifier of voice. In contrast to the canonical passive, because the initiator in Spec, Voice saturates the external argument role, a *by*-phrase is not found in the impersonal/object voice. Finally, the grammatical object passive bears ϕ -features, like the passive voice, but unlike the canonical passive, these features are found in the specifier of voice. A *by*-phrase is permitted in these structures. A summary of these three categories of passive voice structures is provided in (10).

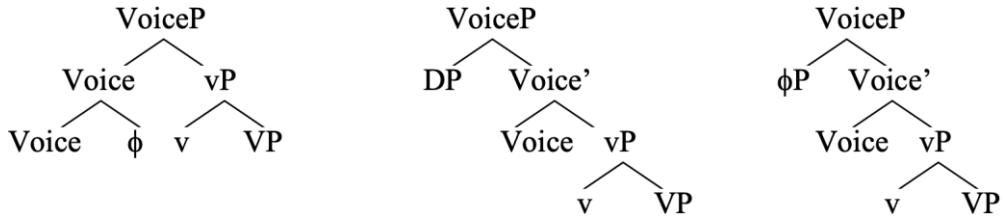
(10) a. **Canonical passive**: ϕ -features that restrict initiator role in Voice; by-phrase optional in adjunct

b. **Impersonal and object voice**: DP initiator (ϕ P and D) in Spec, Voice; by-phrase not licensed.

c. **Object passive**: ϕ -features that restrict initiator role in Spec, Voice; by-phrase optional in adjunct

The corresponding, basic structures for each are shown in (11), from Legate (2014: 85-86).

(11) a. Canonical passive b. Impersonal and Object voice c. Object passive



Legate supports the difference in position of the initiator in the canonical passive and object voice with the observation that the initiator in the canonical passive in Achenese (as well as Indonesian and Balinese) always follows a morpheme that under a standard analysis is a preposition, unlike the initiator in the object voice which appears as a bare DP. Likewise, word order also suggests that these are in different positions. While an initiator PP in a canonical passive structure may appear postverbally, an initiator in the object voice must be positioned next to the verb (either preadjacent or postadjacent, depending on the language and head movement of the verb). Moreover, the initiator is optional in the passive voice but obligatory in the object voice, reinforcing its status as the external argument in Spec, Voice. Legate also shows similar results from tests involving Condition C, extractability, and topicalization.

The object passive, while not found in Achenese, has been observed in Icelandic as well as Slavic and Celtic languages. These structures differ in that the verb contains passive morphology but the thematic object bears accusative case (rather than nominative, as expected in a canonical passive structure) and it does not raise to the subject position of Spec, TP (as is typically found in the canonical passive). Interestingly, the initiator in these structures, while positioned in Spec, VoiceP like impersonal structures, is analyzed as only containing ϕ -features. Like with passive structures, but unlike object voice, by-phrases are licensed. This, combined with the

fact that the theme may be assigned accusative case, leads to Legate's analysis of Spec, Voice containing a ϕ P that restricts, but does not saturate, the external argument role. As there is a ϕ P merged in the specifier, following a revised version of Burzio's Generalization, accusative case may be assigned to the object. The lack of a D-feature corresponds with the unsaturated argument role which allows for the presence of a *by*-phrase.

Within Legate's discussion, she uses control data to test if the initiator is in an A-position and functions as the grammatical subject. Interestingly, some of this same data—particularly contrasts between the impersonal/object voice and object passive—parallels what we will suggest is also found in control patterns in *se* constructions: a syntactic item is in the correct position (Spec, Voice) to control, but control only results if the item in Spec, Voice saturates the external argument role. From the data provided, it appears that this is again related to the lack of a D feature, preventing the item from saturating an argument role, and therefore making it ineligible to control.

Looking first at control in object voice, in Indonesian and Balinese, the object voice allows control by the initiator (12). This is expected, as in the object voice the initiator is realized as a DP in Spec, Voice.

(12) Balinese object voice (Legate 2014: 74 from Arka and Simpson 2008: 111)

Ia janjang ci_i [PRO_i meli montor].
 3 ov.promise 2 PRO av.buy motor.bike
 'Him you promised to buy a motor bike.'

Likewise, the impersonal constructions Legate discusses are also claimed to be similar to the object voice. In Irish, it is shown that the DP initiator can also act as a controller (13). In this case, the initiator is null, and Legate assumes this is *pro* (composed of D and ϕ P).

(13) Irish Impersonal (Legate 2014: 104 from Stenson 1989: 390-39)

Ní fhéadfaí [PRO feall a dhéanamh air].
 Neg can.COND.IMPERS PRO failure PRT make on.3SG
 'One couldn't let him down.'

In contrast, Legate argues that Icelandic and Ukrainian grammatical object passive constructions have only a ϕ P (without D) in Spec, Voice that restricts the external argument position and allows accusative case assignment. The example in (14) shows that the initiator here cannot act as a controller, despite the presence of ϕ -features in Spec, Voice. This looks otherwise structurally similar to the impersonal constructions, with the key difference being the lack of D feature, which presumably results in no control. (Note, however, that Legate does not directly attribute the lack of control to lack of D-feature, but rather differences in agreement).

(14) Ukrainian grammatical object passive (Legate 2014: 155 from Lavine 2005: 12)

*U misti počato [PRO buduvaty novu cerkvu].
 In city began.TO to build new church.ACC
 'They began to build a new church in the city.'

These data corroborate the hypothesis that a DP saturating the external argument role is needed in order to establish predicative control. Only when the initiator is both in Spec, Voice and has a D-feature may it act as a controller. From the data looked at in this section, we conclude with the generalization that without these properties, a syntactic item is not eligible to participate in predicative control.

2.2. D-features in Romanian and Spanish

Returning to the Romanian and Spanish *se* constructions, we adopt the structures from MacDonald and Maddox (2018), henceforth M&M, in which *se* is realized as the head of Voice, with implicit argument *pro(D)* in its specifier, shown in (15).⁴

(15) a. [VoiceP *pro* Voice-*se* [VP DP]] [Romanian]
 b. [VoiceP *proD* Voice-*se* [VP DP]] [Spanish]

An important difference that comes out in (15) is the presence of a D-feature on Spanish *proD* but not on Romanian *pro*. M&M support this claim in part through the observation that in Romanian (16a), but not in Spanish (16b), *se* constructions license a *by*-phrase.

(16) a. Romanian (M&M 2018: 397 from Geniušiene 1987: 267)⁵
 Vesela se spală de el.
 Dishes Pass_{se} wash by him.
 ‘Dishes are washed by him.’
 b. Spanish (M&M 2018: 398 from Sánchez López 2002: 60)
 *Este cuadro se pintó por Goya/ti/mi/ella.
 This painting Pass_{se} painted by Goya/you/me/her
 ‘This painting was painted by Goya/you/me/her.’

M&M attribute the behavior of *by*-phrases to the presence or absence of the D-feature on the implicit external arguments in Spec, Voice of these *se* constructions. Following work from Bruening (2013), they assume that a *by*-phrase may combine with Voice only if the external argument position is unsaturated. Observe that when a verb is in the active voice as in (17a), no *by*-phrase can appear, because the external argument (*the boy* in 17a), saturates the position and prevents the *by*-phrase from being licensed.

⁴ While we will adopt these structures proposed in M&M, an alternative in which *se* itself is a pronoun merged in Spec, Voice, with or without a D-feature, is available, as shown in (i).

(i) [VoiceP *se(D)* Voice [VP DP]]

As far as we can tell, this would also be able to capture the range of patterns discussed in the main body of the article.

⁵ An anonymous reviewer notes that for them, the example in (16) sounds slightly odd but it would be improved with a “*de către*” *by*-phrase, and with an indefinite DP, instead of a personal pronoun.

(17) a. The boy stole the bike (*by the girl).
 b. The bike was stolen by the girl.

Thus, M&M conclude that in Romanian, the *by*-phrase is licensed because *pro* lacks a D-feature and does not saturate the external argument role. In contrast, *prod* in Spanish *se* constructions does saturate the external argument role, disallowing a *by*-phrase from combining.

Additional support for this difference in the saturation of the external argument is provided from patterns of differential object marking (DOM). Following Burzio's generalization, accusative case is only licensed when there is an external argument. This predicts that DOM will be licensed in Spanish *se* constructions, where *prod* saturates the external argument role, but not in Romanian. As expected, only Spanish licenses DOM in these contexts (18), as observed in Dobrovie-Sorin (1998).⁶

(18) a. Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin 1998: 405)
 *În școala asta *pro* se pedepește pe elevi.
 In school this *pro* SE punishes DOM students
 Intended: 'In this school they punish the students.'
 b. Spanish
 En esta escuela *prod* se castiga a los alumnos.
 In this school *pro* SE punishes DOM the students
 'In this school they punish the students.'

Relating these facts back to the patterns in (3), where it appears that only Spanish *se* constructions license a controlled complement, this can now be explained via the lack of a proper controller in Romanian. As *pro* in Spec, Voice does not contain a D-feature and does not saturate the external argument position, following Landau (2010, 2015), it is not expected to participate in obligatory, predicative control. Observe this structure in (19), where (19a) is the example repeated from (3a).

(19) Romanian (G&C 2021: 99)

a. *S-a început {a curăța / să curețe} camera copiilor.
 SE-has begun to clean / SBJV clean.3 room-the children.the.GEN
 Intended: 'People/someone began cleaning up the room.'

b. [VoiceP *pro* s-a [VP început [FinP PRO [TP curăța camera copiilor]]]]



Conversely, in Spanish, the D-feature makes *prod* a proper controller, and allows for control to obtain in the complement of a *se* construction (20).

(20) Spanish

a. Se empezó a limpiar la habitación.
 SE began to clean the room.
 'One began to clean the room.'

⁶ See Giurgea (2019) for an alternative that could also account for the DOM patterns in (18a).

b. [VoiceP *prod* se [vp *empezó* [FinP PRO [TP PRO a limpiar la habitación]]]]



To conclude this section, we have now accounted for the lack of uniformity found in the single *se* constructions in (3), by appealing to the presence vs absence of a D-feature. Only in Spanish, and not Romanian, will *prod* saturate the external argument role and be able to participate in control established via predication. The question that remains, and will be addressed in the upcoming section, is why the grammaticality of these structures reverses when an additional *se* is added to the complement clause, as in (4).

3. Flexible clause types

Before proceeding to the double *se* constructions in (4), we first take a step back to look closer at clause types of the complements licensed by Romanian subject control verbs. As was mentioned in Section 1, control verbs of the aspectual class in Romanian, like *begin*, may select a subjunctive or infinitival complement, unlike what is found with control verbs in English (21a,b) or Spanish (21c,d) which only license non-finite, infinitival or gerund complements.

(21) a. The man began [FinP {to clean/cleaning} the room].
 b. *The man began [CP (that) he clean(ed) the room].
 c. El hombre empezó [FinP a limpiar el cuarto].
 The man began to clean.INF the room
 ‘The man began to clean the room.’
 d. *El hombre empezó [CP que limpie/limpiara el cuarto].
 The man began that clean.SBJV the room
 Intended: ‘The man began to clean the room.’

Related to this observation of Romanian allowing either subjunctives or infinitives in this position, G&C (2021: 99) make the following remark:

“...As subjunctives became more and more frequent in control environments, their syntax influenced the syntax of infinitives. Note also that complement infinitives resemble finite clauses in allowing, to a certain extent, overt subjects (especially with non-agentive predicates).”

With this idea as a point of departure, in this section, we examine the finiteness of infinitival and subjunctive clauses in Romanian and its relation to the double *se* data in (4).

3.1. Ambiguity between finite or non-finite clause

Our central claim regarding the clause types is that infinitival and subjunctive clauses in Romanian are ambiguous between acting as a finite or non-finite clause. To begin, infinitival clauses display characteristics of finite clauses, as seen below in (23) and

(24) in the possibility in Romanian of disjoint, overt referents in the matrix clause and the embedded clause.⁷ In Spanish (and other languages), disjoint referents are not licensed as the subject of a non-finite, infinitival clause (22a) and are instead restricted to finite clauses (22b).

(22) Spanish

- a. *Francisco_i quiere [FinP Julia/pro_j cantar].
Francisco wants Julia sing.INF
Intended: ‘Francisco wants Julia to sing.’
- b. Francisco_i quiere que [CP Julia/pro_j cante].
Francisco wants that Julia/pro sings.SBJV
‘Francisco wants Julia to sing.’

However, this divide is not the same in Romanian, where disjoint subjects are found in apparent control contexts. Observe the example in (23), where the matrix subject “I” is distinct from the subject of the infinitival clause, “an opinion.”

(23) Romanian (G&C 2021: 88)

Sper a nu fi respinsă o părere a unui umil părerist
hope.1SG to not be rejected an opinion GEN a.GEN humble opinionator
‘I hope that the opinion of a humble opinionator will not be rejected.’

This is not limited to Romanian infinitival complement clauses but can also be found in infinitival adjuncts as well. In (24), the matrix subject “Ion” is distinct from the adjunct subject “Petru.”

(24) Romanian (Cotfas 2011: 66)

Ion a plecat înainte de a fi venit Petru.
Ion has left before of a have come-PERF.INF Petru
‘Ion left before Petru arrived.’

The possibility in Romanian of disjoint referents for the subjects of the matrix and infinitival clauses suggests that infinitival clauses pattern as is expected of a finite clause.

Nevertheless, despite disjoint referents being possible in Romanian complements of subject control verbs, it is also possible to have a null subject that is interpreted as the matrix subject (that is, what is expected in controlled clauses). Again, this is found in both complements (25a) and adjuncts (25b).

(25) a. Romanian (Cotfas 2011: 173)

A_i a început PRO_i a zice că sunt urâtă.
A. has started.3SG PRO a say.INF that be.3SG ugly
‘A. started saying that I’m ugly.’

⁷ This is to some extent limited, as G&C (2021) observe that aspectuals and some circumstantial modals as well as ‘forget’ constitute a class of verbs that disallow disjoint subjects.

b. Romanian (Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin p.c.)

Ieri Ion_i a plecat înainte de PRO_i a cânta.
 Yesterday John has left before of PRO to sing.
 'Yesterday, John left before he sang.'

This is parallel to other languages, including Spanish, where the null subject of the infinitival clause receives its reference from the matrix subject, as in (26).

(26) El niño_i empezó PRO_i a gritar.
 The boy began PRO to shout
 'The boy began to shout.'

These data suggest that infinitival clauses can also have null, PRO subjects, as is expected of a non-finite clause. Combined with the possibility of disjoint reference, this leads to the conclusion that complements of control verbs may vary as to whether they are finite like or non-finite like.

Finally, a similar proposal is made in Cotfas (2021), who, looking at subject clause infinitives with transitive, passivized verbs like (27), makes a similar claim that the presence or absence of ϕ -features on infinitival clauses makes some infinitives closer to finite structures.

(27) Romanian (Cotfas 2021: 23)⁸

- a. Era estimate [a avea loc mai multe demonstrații].
 Was estimated to take place several demonstrations
- b. Demonstrăriile sunt estimate [a avea loc mâine t_i].
 Demonstrations-the are estimated to take place tomorrow

The example in (27a) of an infinitival subject clause is classified by Cotfas as a control (NOC/NC) construction, in which no agreement with the subject is shown in the predicate (*era* being default, 3sg, *demonstrații* being 3pl)⁹. On the other hand, she shows that it is also possible to have agreement between the predicate and an infinitival subject as in (27b). Examples like (27b) are analyzed by Cotfas as raising structures. Through corpus searches, Cotfas shows that one group of matrix verbs, believe-type verbs (*know, consider, suspect, prove*), seem to only license raising/agreeing infinitivals as their complement while another group, futurate-type verbs (*plan, foresee, schedule, anticipate, arrange*), allow for either raising/agreeing or control/non-agreeing infinitival complements. Cotfas proceeds to argue that non-agreeing infinitives like (27a) are endowed with ϕ -features, similar to finite CPs, that allow for a disjoint subject. On the other hand, raising infinitives are argued to have different properties, crucially the absence of such ϕ -features, that force the subject to raise (for further discussion on agreement in Romanian see Pană Dindelegan & Maiden 2013).

⁸ No translation (only the gloss) was provided for these examples in the original work.

⁹ Cotfas analyzes these structures in two categories: raising and control. Note, however, that the control category is specified as "control (NOC/NC)", which is assumed here to stand for non-obligatory control (NOC)/no control (NC). This is different than our categorization of "control," which includes cases of obligatory complement control.

Although her data involve a different type of control configuration than the one we focus on, and her characterization of these as control vs raising is different than our account, this nevertheless makes a similar point regarding finiteness to the one we aim to make: some infinitival clauses display properties of finite clauses. In the examples found in (3) and (4), the matrix verb is not of the *believe* class. If Cotfas's generalization can be extended beyond control into a subject clause, it would predict that either agreeing or non-agreeing infinitivals are theoretically possible in (3) and (4). Based on her discussion, if we can make a broad claim that any infinitival clause may have ϕ -features either present or absent, it makes a similar prediction to what we have concluded. If the clause lacks ϕ -features (that is, is more non-finite like) it will license a controlled complement. If the infinitival has ϕ -features, it presents itself as more finite-like, requires a non-PRO subject and does not license a controlled complement. From here, we can begin to explain the *se* patterns in Romanian more precisely.¹⁰

To conclude this section, while we abstract away from further discussion as to the exact distribution of this finiteness ambiguity, it is clear that infinitival clauses do not display uniform behavior and may behave as a finite or nonfinite clause.

3.2. Possible embedded clause types in *se* constructions

In light of this conclusion regarding the finiteness of Romanian complement clauses, it is necessary to now reevaluate the Romanian single *se* example from (3a), repeated below in (28). We are consequently presented with three possible clause/subject types for the complement clause, listed in (29).

(28) Romanian (G&C 2021: 99)

*S-a început {a curăta / să curete} camera copiilor.
 SE-has begun to clean / SBJV clean.3 room-the children.the.GEN
 Intended: 'People/someone began cleaning up the room.'

(29) a. Complement is a non-finite clause with a null subject PRO
 [VoiceP *pro* s-a [VP început [FinP PRO...]]]
 b. Complement is a finite clause with a null referential subject *pro*
 [VoiceP *pro* s-a [VP început [XP ... [VP *pro*...]]]]
 c. Complement is a finite clause with an overt subject
 [VoiceP *pro* s-a [VP început [XP ... [VoiceP DP...]]]]

The first option (29a), that the embedded clause is non-finite with a controlled, PRO subject, has already been shown in Section 2.2 to not be possible given the lack of a proper controller. The second option (29b), that the embedded clause is finite with a referential null subject, is arguably independently ruled out since *se* (or corresponding implicit external argument) is not able to bind a referential null subject. Evidence that *se* cannot bind a referential null subject in Romanian can be found in

¹⁰ As a reviewer points out, Romanian infinitives have both a present and past tense variant, which could also support this view of the infinitive as more finite-like.

examples like (30)¹¹. When *se* is not included in the embedded clause, a *pro* subject is not licensed as there is no proper binder in the matrix clause.

(30) Romanian (Ion Giurgea p.c.)
 Când se câştigă mult, {se/**pro*} și cheltuieste mult.
 When se earns much se/*pro* also spends much.
 When one earns a lot, one also spends a lot.

The problems presented with hosting either PRO or referential *pro* as the subject of the embedded clause then accounts for the ungrammaticality of (28) (which lacks any overt subject, excluding the option of (29c)). However, while not applicable to the single *se* construction, option (29c), the presence of a finite clause with an overt subject still remains to be evaluated. Here is where the double *se* construction (shown in (31), repeated from (4a)) becomes relevant. When a *se* construction is added to the embedded clause, implicit external argument *pro* (licensed by *se*) patterns with an overt subject (but in this case, unlike referential *pro*, it does not need to be bound) and the construction becomes grammatical. In the next section, we provide a detailed analysis of these double *se* constructions.

(31) Romanian (G&C 2021: 99)
 S-a început {a se curăța / să se curețe} camera copiilor.
 SE-has begun to SE clean / SBJV SE clean.3 room-the children.the.GEN
 'People/someone began cleaning up the room.'

4. Double *se* constructions

4.1. Romanian double *se* analysis

As we progress to the discussion of the Romanian double *se* constructions, let us first review each of the clause type options presented in (29) now in the context of double *se* constructions. (29a) is expected to be ungrammatical for the same reason as the single *se* construction: *pro* (without a D feature) cannot control. The lack of a non-finite control structure involving PRO in the double *se* constructions is emphasized by the presence of a *by*-phrase that can be found in the embedded clause of a double *se* construction (32).

(32) Romanian (G&C 2021:98)
 S-a început să se aducă îmbunătățiri de către specialiști.
 REFL-has begun SBJV se bring.3 improvements by specialists.
 'Specialists began to make improvements.'

¹¹ The same pattern is also observed in Spanish, where *pro* cannot be bound by an impersonal *se*.

(i) Si se gana mucho dinero, {se/**pro*} compra mucho.
 If se earns much money, se/*pro* buy much
 'If one wins a lot of money, one buys a lot.'

Per the discussion in Section 2, a *by*-phrase is only expected to occur if the external argument is unsaturated. If the embedded clause in (32) were an instance of control, the external argument role would be saturated by PRO. It is expected that both PRO and a *by*-phrase cannot co-occur, which is the case, as illustrated in (33).

(33) Pat {began/managed/failed} PRO to make dinner (*by Jerry).

On the other hand, the possibility of a *by*-phrase in a double *se* construction like (20) is consistent with the analysis in M&M where Romanian *se* licenses a *by*-phrase because *pro* in Spec, Voice does not saturate the external argument role. In turn, this suggests to us that (32) does not contain a non-finite, controlled clause.

Additional support for the lack of a controlled clause in the Romanian double *se* constructions is found in adjunct control. Unlike the problem from (28) of *pro* not constituting an eligible controller, in the adjunct control example in (34), there now is a proper DP controller (the subject *Ion*). Nevertheless, no obligatory control relation obtains when *se* is in the embedded clause. In (34), the subject of the adjunct clause is not interpreted as (that is, controlled by) *Ion* but rather as an impersonal subject ‘people.’

(34) Romanian (Dobrovie-Sorin 1998: 424)
 Ieri Ion a plecat [înainte de a se cânta].
 Yesterday Ion has left before of to *se* sing
 ‘Yesterday, Ion left before people sang.’

Like the *se* constructions in complements clauses in Romanian, the adjunct in (34) also appears to not contain a controlled clause. In the presence of *se*, PRO does not occur.¹² Observe, however, that when *se* is removed, an obligatory control reading, where *Ion* is the subject of both the matrix and the embedded clauses, is possible (35).

(35) Romanian (Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin p.c.)
 Ieri Ion_i a plecat înainte de PRO_i a cânta.
 Yesterday John has left before of PRO to sing.
 ‘Yesterday, John left before he sang.’

¹² However, this does not necessarily rule out (34) being a case of arbitrary control, like (i), which could also be occurring.

(i) It is good to study before PRO_{ARB} taking an exam.

An arbitrary control reading would have a similar interpretation to that of a *se* construction, as (i) could be paraphrased as ‘It is good for people/one to study before people/one take(s) an exam’. If (34) were a case of arbitrary control, it would not affect the current analysis, as PRO would saturate the external argument role but, as an instance of non-obligatory control, it would not require a local, syntactic controller. While this may raise a question of why NOC does not obtain in a structure like (3a) (the ungrammatical single *se* control construction), because the control in (3a) is into a complement clause, and NOC is typically restricted to adjuncts (see Landau 2015, 2021), only OC, requiring a local controller is expected.

We have now shown that obligatory control, option (29a), is not expected to obtain in double *se* examples like (31), and as such a novel account (not relying on control) is needed to explain its grammaticality, particularly in light of the ungrammatical single *se* construction. We propose that the embedded clause in (31) is finite, and that the presence of *se* in both clauses is an instance of a disjoint subject where there is accidental co-reference. The structure we assume is that of (29c), repeated below in (36).

(36) [VoiceP *pro* s-a [VP *început* [XP ... [VoiceP *pro* se...]]]]

This then appears not unlike an instance of a disjoint subject, as in (37). The set of individuals that falls within the denotation of *people* in both clauses overlaps. The same set is understood to be hungry and to eat.

(37) When people are hungry, people eat.

Similarly, in *se* constructions, there is also a necessary interpretation of the external argument as human, thus, it is natural, that the same set of humans is involved. This then allows examples like (31) to be accounted for under a non-control analysis. Moreover, this predicts that other finite clauses with overt subjects should be possible with a *se* construction involving a subject control verb in the matrix clause. This appears to be the case, as examples like (38) are possible, where a subjunctive with a (disjoint) overt subject occurs in the complement clause.

(38) Romanian (G&C 2021: 87)
 S-a decis ca spectacolul să înceapa la șase
 REFL-has decided that show-the SBJV begin.3 at six
 'It was decided that the show should begin at 6 o'clock.'

4.2. Spanish double *se* analysis

As we have now discussed the structures of both single and double *se* constructions in Romanian, in this section we shift to the Spanish data, which shows opposite patterns. Recall from (3b) and (4b), repeated below in (39), that in Spanish, a *se* construction with an infinitival clause is grammatical (39a) but when *se* is also present on the complement clause, the structure is no longer acceptable (39b).

(39) Spanish
 a. Se empezó a limpiar la habitación.
 SE began to clean the room.
 'One began to clean the room.'
 b. *Se empezó a limpiarse la habitación.
 SE began to clean-SE the room.
 Intended: 'One began to clean the room.'

First, Spanish infinitival clauses differ from Romanian in that they lack the flexibility that Romanian has. These infinitivals may only act as non-finite clauses.¹³ Looking then at (39a), this does appear to be a true case of complement control. As discussed in Section 2, *prod* saturating the external argument role in Spec, Voice of the *se* construction constitutes a proper controller. This is predicted to pattern like any other case of subject complement control, and no further explanation is required.

We suggest that the problem with (39b), then, is the presence of both PRO and *prod*, which violates the θ-criterion. In the embedded clause, *prod*, from the passive *se* construction is in Spec, Voice which, per the previous discussion, will saturate the external argument position. If *prod* already fills this role, the presence of PRO- necessary for a control construction and to license the non-finite verb- would be in competition for the same external argument role. Having both of these subjects violates the θ-criterion and the structure in (40) is ungrammatical¹⁴.

(40) *...[VoiceP *prod* se [vp *empezó* [FinP PRO [TP ~~PRO~~ [VoiceP *prod*...]]]]]

The impossibility of having both PRO and a *se* construction in the same clause is not unique to these double *se* constructions. This analysis also predicts that impersonal/passive *se* will not be available in any controlled clause in Spanish (see also Martins and Nunes 2017). This is illustrated in the adjunct control example in (41).

(41) Spanish
 Ayer, Juan salió después de PRO cantar/*cantarse la canción.
 Yesterday, Juan left after of PRO to.sing.SE the song
 'Yesterday, Juan left after singing the song.'

¹³ Note, however, that there are examples in Spanish (as well as other languages) where an overt subject may occur postverbally with an infinitival clause. In these cases, the subject is observed as being the controllee, either a lexical reflexive or pronoun, that is associated with focus (Landau 2015).

(i) Julia_i prometió [hacer ella_{i/*j} los deberes].
 Julia promised to.do she the homework
 'Julia promised to do the homework herself.' (Landau 2015: 80)

Examples like (i) have been considered to be an overt realization of PRO, and per Landau (2015) this optional PF spell-out is licensed by the [+focus] feature. Crucially, this differs from examples found in (23) and (24) where the overt subject is also disjoint from the matrix subject, which is unexpected in a non-finite clause.

¹⁴ Landau (2015) discusses a similar ban on the presence of a lexical subject or both PRO and a lexical subject (for example, one in TP and the other in FinP) in controlled complements, making note of semantic selectional requirements that would be violated with any other combination outside of PRO in TP and FinP. As the predicate must come to denote a property of type <e, <s, t>>, and the merger of a lexical subject in the place of PRO would denote a proposition of type <s, t>, the structure would be uninterpretable.

In (41), as with (39b), the subject control reading becomes unavailable with the addition of *se* to the embedded clause.¹⁵ Again, *se* may not occur in a controlled clause in Spanish due to the incompatibility of both *prod* (from the *se* construction) and *PRO* (present for control).

4.3. Alternative analyses

Before concluding, it is worth noting two alternative analyses that have been presented for the Romanian patterns. In Section 4.3.1 we address an analysis of these structures as raising, and in 4.3.2 we look at how G&C analyze these as control and address their concerns with an account not involving control.

4.3.1 Raising rather than control

Cotfas (2011) and Nicolae (2013) both present arguments in favor of analyzing Romanian *se* + complement structures not as control, but as raising. Their claim is that *se* on the aspectual verb in (42), a double *se* construction, forces a passive interpretation, while (43), lacking a *se* associated with the aspectual verb, is ambiguous between being interpreted as passive or reflexive/reciprocal.

(42) Romanian (Nicolae 2013: 14)
 Se începe să se certe echipa.
 Se starts(3SG) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse team.DEF
 'The team begins to be verbally abused by someone (the boss, for instance).' (Passive)

(43) Romanian (Nicolae 2013: 14)
 Începe să se certe echipa.
 starts(3SG) SUBJ SE verbally-abuse team.DEF
 'The (members) of the team start verbally abusing one another.' (Reflexive-reciprocal)
 'The team begins to be verbally abused by someone (the boss, for instance).' (Passive)

Likewise, Nicolae (2013: 1-2) presents the following paradigm in (44). In (44a), *se* is only present in the embedded clause, in (44b), *se* is licensed in both clauses, and in (44c), we again see that the *se* only in the matrix clause is ungrammatical.

(44) Romanian

- ora la care începe să se vină
 hour.DEF at which starts SUBJ SE come
- ora la care se începe să se vină
 hour.DEF at which SE starts SUBJ SE come

¹⁵ Crucially, it is the impersonal/passive *se* reading that is unavailable. Other uses of *se*, like reflexive *se* in (i), may be found in this context.

(i) Juan salió después de bañarse.
 Juan left after of bathing-REFL.'

c. *ora la care se începe să vină
hour.DEF at which SE starts SUBJ come

A question emerges from this pattern on an analysis of raising in which there is movement of what regulates the choice of copy to be pronounced. That is, why is it that a lower copy in (44a) is pronounced, but the higher copy in (44c) cannot be? Moreover, what allows the pronunciation of both copies in (44b)? Given these concerns, this is not the analysis we adopt, however these patterns in (42)-(44) are also consistent with the present “no control” analysis.

4.3.2 A problem with agreement

G&C present a different analysis for the Romanian control patterns, where, following the discussion in Pitteroff and Schaefer (2019), they argue that the initiator is syntactically present and therefore control should be licensed in *se* constructions. The fact that only double *se* constructions are grammatical is explained by agreement patterns. They claim that in order to license control in *se* clauses, *se* must be repeated on the embedded verb because Romanian has agreement in predicative control. Both the controller and controlled PRO must match and be specified as [+3 +Arb]. These features only appear when *se* is in voice, consequently causing the obligatory presence of *se* in both clauses. However, we have proposed a different analysis not rooted in control, given that we have argued that although the implicit external argument *pro* is syntactically present, the lack of a D-feature precluding external argument saturation results in the lack of a proper controller in *se* constructions, and predicative control with any complement (containing *se* or not) is unexpected.

G&C present two main objections to analyzing the double *se* constructions as not involving control. First, they claim there is an otherwise unexplained pattern of why participial passives are not licensed in the complement of *se* constructions, and second, they claim that, if there is no control, it is unclear why the complement clause does not behave like a nominal subject. Regarding the first objection, G&C’s data are presented in (45) where a contrast is observed between the double *se* construction in (45a) and a similar construction but one where the complement is replaced with a participial passive instead of a *se* passive in (45b).

(45) Romanian (G&C 2021: 92-93)

a. S-a început [să se restaureze / a se restaura piața].
REFL-has started SBJV REFL restore.3 / to REFL restore square-the
‘They started to restore the square.’

b. ?S-a început [să fie restaurată piața/ a fi restaurată piața].
REFL-has begun SBJV be. SBJV3 restored square-the/to be restored square-the

An explanation for these patterns can also be offered by our account. As *se* may not act as a controller or bind referential *pro*, any complement with PRO or referential *pro* is predicted to be ungrammatical. However, there is also an independent problem that arises with an analysis of (45b) appealing to control, outside of the lack of controller. While PRO in an active complement is expected to raise from Spec, TP to Spec, FinP, thus deriving the interpretation of PRO as the subject, in a passive

structure, PRO—the subject—is expected to originate as the complement of the embedded verb, as in (46b).

(46) a. [TP The city_i [VoiceP was [VP destroyed ~~the city_i~~]]].
 b. The city began [FinP PRO_i [TP PRO_i [T to [VoiceP be-v [VP destroyed PRO_i]]]]]

This structure predicts there to be a problem with examples like (46b) where there is an overt theme present. As one would assume that the theme, ‘the square,’ also merges as the complement of the verb ‘restored,’ where then does PRO merge and how does it get interpreted as the theme? It would appear that both cannot occur, further ruling out the option of a non-finite, participial passive as the complement of a *se* construction. (Recall that our analysis does not assume the double *se* construction to involve PRO, thus this is not a problem with those structures). This ungrammatical structure is shown in (47), where an issue arises in the complement of VP.

(47) *SE began [FinP PRO_i [TP PRO_i [T to [VP be-v [VP restored {the square/PRO_i}]]]]]

While this accounts for why a non-finite clause with a participial passive is unavailable, under our proposed account where controlled complements may be non-finite or finite, this does still leave the option of the participial passive being a finite complement, without PRO as the subject (like the structure we have proposed for double *se* constructions). It is possible that the ungrammaticality of the participial passive under the analysis of it being a finite clause is in fact more of a pragmatic than syntactic concern. Observe (48a), which has two different impersonal subjects for each clause, and is much degraded compared to the natural (48b,c) where the same subject is used in both clauses.

(48) a. ??When a person is hungry, one eats.
 b. When one is hungry, one eats.
 c. When a person is hungry, a person eats.

In (48), having both subjects be ‘one’ (48b) or both be ‘a person’ (48c) is fine, but the mix of one of each in (49a) is odd, despite the presumably shared features (3SG/impersonal) between the two. There may be a similar constraint in Romanian affecting these examples, where having two lexically different subjects (implicit external argument *pro* in the matrix clause, ‘the square’ in the embedded clause) degrades the acceptability of the sentence in comparison to double *se* constructions where implicit external argument *pro* is the subject of both clauses.

G&C’s second objection to analyzing these constructions as not displaying control is that the subordinate clause does not behave as a nominal subject does. (49a) shows that nominal subjects can occur with participial passives, while clauses (like the embedded *se* clause) cannot (49b).

(49) Romanian (G&C 2021: 94)
 a. Restaurarea pieții a fost începută.
 restoration-the market-the.GEN has been begun
 ‘The restoration of the square began / has begun.’

b. *A se restaura piața a fost început./ *A fost început a se
 to REFL restore square-the has been begun/ has been begun to REFL
 restaura piața.
 restore square-the

These patterns G&C attribute to the lack of a D-feature, and the same explanation (along with other factors) can be extended to the present account. As implicit external argument *pro* does not contain a D-feature, it is not unexpected that it has a different distribution than other nominals.

To summarize, despite the proposed problems outlined by G&C with adopting a non-control approach to the Romanian patterns in (3) and (4), our present analysis is also able to provide answers for these data sets.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we have argued that Romanian and Spanish *se* constructions involving an embedded infinitival or subjunctive clause show contrasting patterns due to the differences in clause types and the features of the implicit external argument. In Romanian, implicit external argument *pro* in Spec, Voice of *se* constructions lacks a D-feature, does not saturate the external argument position, and therefore fails to license control. When an additional *se* is added to the embedded verb, the structure is grammatical, but we have argued it is not an instance of control. Instead, there is a finite clause with an implicit external argument *pro* subject. On the other hand, Spanish implicit external argument *prod* found in Spec, Voice of *se* constructions does have a D-feature, saturates the external argument, and control can obtain. When an additional *se* is added to the embedded verb, the competition for the external argument role by both *prod* and PRO results in ungrammaticality. These results are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Complement clause type and subject of Spanish and Romanian *se* constructions

	Romanian single <i>se</i> (3a)	Romanian double <i>se</i> (4a)	Spanish single <i>se</i> (3b)	Spanish double <i>se</i> (4b)
Non-finite <i>PRO</i> subject	* (no proper controller)	*(no proper controller)	✓	*(can't have <i>prod</i> and PRO)
Finite referential <i>pro</i> subject	* (<i>se</i> can't bind referential <i>pro</i>)	* (<i>se</i> acts as overt subject)	* (not licensed in Spanish infinitivals)	* (not licensed in Spanish infinitivals)
Finite overt subject	✓	✓	* (not licensed in Spanish infinitivals)	* (not licensed in Spanish infinitivals)

While this work has explored how control interacts with *se* constructions, larger questions outside the scope of this paper remain regarding the boundaries of finiteness in Romanian subjunctives and infinitival clauses. While we are without a theoretical delineation of when or why a clause behaves more finite or non-finite like, we hope that the present discussion can contribute to future research on the topic.

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