

ON THE CURRENT USES OF SUPPORT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS IN SOME ROMANCE LANGUAGES

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Abstract. This article focuses on a specific case of light elements, namely the support verbs, also called *verbos de apoyo*, *verbe suport* or in a similar manner in Romance Linguistics. The study raises two issues, applied to oral corpora from Romanian, French, Spanish and European Portuguese languages. The first one consists in considering through what syntactic configurations, and to a lesser extent in what proportions, the support verb constructions appear in comparison with verbs in absolute uses (e.g.: Sp. *dar respuesta* / *responder*, ‘to answer’; Rom. *a da anunț* / *a anunța*, ‘to announce’³). The second issue is to examine possible equivalence between such constructions and verbs with the same lexical base as the selected predicative nouns (e.g. E.P. *dar o alarme* / *alertar*, ‘to warn’; Rom. *a pune o întrebare* / *întreba*, ‘to ask’).

Keywords: Romance Languages, Light elements, Support verbs, Gradualness.

1. INTRODUCTION

French *prendre appui* rather than *s'appuyer* (‘to draw on’), Romanian *a avea o discuție* instead of *a discuta* (‘to discuss’), Italian *fare una presentazione* for *presentare* (‘to lay out’): the constructions with “support verbs” (Gross 1993, 1998) are well-documented in Romance Linguistics (Ranchhod 2000, Danlos 2010, Nagy, Rácz & Vincze 2020, Torterat 2024b, 2025). Often classified among *light verbs* in English (Jespersen 1954) and frequently called *Funktionsverben* in German (Polenz 1989), the support verbs appear in grammars with specific terminologies. While the Lusophone tradition frequently uses the term *verbo-suporte* (Neves 1996, Davel 2011, Rassi, Baptista & Vale 2015, Batista 2000, Baptista & Mamede 2023, Furtado da Cunha 2025), the Spanish one favors the wording *verbo de apoyo* (De Miguel 2005, 2008; Sanromán Vilas 2009, Pereira 2013, Tsutahara 2018), whereas French Linguistics uses *légers* (‘support’ or ‘light’) according to the epistemological viewpoints (Gledhill 2008, Torterat 2024a, Sarda 2024). Romanian grammars include the constructions under *locuțiuni verbale* (GALR, GBLR, Irimia 2008) or under *perifraxe verbale* (Dimitriu 2000); while acknowledging their specific behavior and structure, note that the GALR (2022: 477) uses *verb suport* for any verb in any pattern of complex predicate. Dedicated papers (most of which are comparative, resort to English or French theoretical

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³ The abbreviations: Fr. for French, E.P. for European Portuguese, Rom. for Romanian, and Sp. for Spanish.

backgrounds and rely on artificial examples) treat this construction as a distinct phenomenon and use *verb suport* (Jung-Soo 1996, Şovar 2008, Țără 2007; Căpățină and Preda 2016) or *verb funcțional* (Măciucă 2012). In any case, the corresponding constructions are sensitively distinct from converbs and idiomatic verb phrases, in that they refer not to partly auxiliarized units (Maldonado 2007, Torterat 2009, 2016; Matte & Stumpf 2022), and show more variability than frozen combinations (Mejri 2008, Bosque & Bartolomé 2021).

From a typological perspective, “support verb constructions” (hereafter SVCs) coincide with non-predicative uses of specific verbs in all types of discourse contexts, to the benefit of the subsequent noun occurring in their valency. Generally missing from dictionary classification, this category of units has been the subject of a few studies in Lexicology (mainly on English; see however Blanco 2010, Jezek 2011, Abeillé & Godard 2011 for French; Jung-Soo 1996, Şovar 2007, Țără 2007, Măciucă 2012, Căpățină & Preda 2016, Anițescu 2017 for Romanian language, among others). The compositionality of SVCs, unlike absolute verbs (for which they are variably substituted), is summed up in a $V_{\text{SUPPORT}}\text{-Noun}_{\text{PREDICATIVE}}$ sequence, most frequently followed by a prepositional complement. The concurrence between SVCs and absolute verbs (such as Fr. *donner l'ordre (de) / ordonner* ‘to order’ and *faire appel / en appeler* ‘to call on’, Sp. *poner remedio / remediar* ‘to do something about’, E.P. *dar certo / functionar* ‘to work’, Rom. *pune întrebare / întreba* ‘to ask’), show gradual equivalences of meaning.

From this perspective, the present study raises two issues, which will be addressed in the following pages using oral corpora from French, Romanian, Spanish and European Portuguese languages. The first one consists in considering through what syntactic configurations, and to a lesser extent in what proportions, these constructions appear in comparison with verbs in absolute uses (e.g.: Fr. *pousser un cri / crier*, ‘to scream’; Sp. *dar respuesta / responder*, ‘to answer’; Rom. *a da anunț / a anunța*, ‘to announce’). The second issue is to examine possible equivalence between SVCs and verbs with the same lexical base as the selected predicative nouns (e.g. Fr. *donner l'ordre / ordonner*, ‘to order’; E.P. *dar o alarme / alertar*, ‘to warn’; Rom. *a da un sfat / a sfătui*, ‘to advise’).

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The aim of this article is to provide some attested elements on contemporary uses of these combinations, as they occur in CLAPI, TCOF, ESLO 1 & 2 and CEFC for French; ROVA, IVLRA, Căraușu, VV and FP for Romanian⁴; CORLEC and MAVIR for Spanish; CRPC and SYNAPSE for European Portuguese. The analyses will be followed by a discussion of what we call the gradualness of the idiomatic process (Traugott & Trousdale 2010; Torterat 2022a), after which some conclusions will be drawn regarding possible follow-up to the demonstration⁵.

As announced in introduction, the demonstration implemented below is purposeful and usage-based: in order to appraise the actual uses of SVCs, we rely on contemporary oral

⁴ The Romanian corpus used here was built up of five composite corpora of standard, non-dialectal Romanian. We have selected a number of spontaneous discourses representing informal, semi-formal and formal speech, direct and mediated, in similar volumes.

⁵ On gradients of scalarity between French, Spanish and Italian, see De Mulder & Lamiroy (2012).

corpora to illustrate how constructions are currently used in everyday interaction in Romance languages. Such an approach is well-documented in Grammar as well as in Philology and Typology, in particular to considering to what extent “different types of structural elaboration reflect different discourse functions” (Biber 1993: 222. Cf. Laporte, Ranchhod & Yannacopoulou 2008 for an applied usage-based approach to the variation of SVCs). In this study, we don’t use the terminology of *light verbs*, insofar as this notion refers to many configurations depending on the languages investigated, such as complex predicates (including combinations verb – adjectives or other types of unities), multi-word expressions, even phrasal or auxiliary verbs, with various processes of semantic lightening. From this viewpoint and following Fotopoulou & Giouli (2015):

Generally, verbal multi-word expressions (MWEs) fall into two general classes, namely idiomatic expressions and Support Verb Constructions (SVCs). Idioms or frozen/fixed expressions are defined as having a non-compositional meaning that cannot be deduced from the meaning of their parts (Bobrow & Bell, 1973; Chomsky, 1980; Fraser, 1970; Swinney & Cutler, 1979; M. Gross, 1982, 1988; Van der Linden, 1992⁶). On the contrary, SVCs (also referred to in the literature as Light Verb Constructions, LVCs) consist of a support verb and a predicative noun. In between those two categories, however, a number of MWEs are proved to exhibit properties that are characteristic of both classes.

We disregard phono-prosodic features and oral disfluencies, so as to focus on the morphosyntax of the verbal constructions analyzed. In the first section, the examples reproduced are briefly contextualised in order to underline the morphosyntactic features by using the Leipzig Glossing rules. The following section draws up a systematic semantic analysis of the constructions, with a specific approach to Romanian.

3. TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES

3.1. In European Portuguese

As an opening illustration regarding European Portuguese, let us present several discourse configurations in which respectively *dar* (‘to give’) appears either in absolute use, or as “support” (with therefore a predicative nominal element following it), in comparison with the use in verbal form of the nominal support concerned by the SVC. The examples below are extracted, in this section, from contemporary oral corpora consulted *via* the SYNAPSE database of European Portuguese (hereafter SANTA JUSTA, EXCERTO 2_INF for 1a, PORTO DE VACAS, EXCERTO 1_INF for 1b, and FONTINHAS, EXCERTO 48_INF1 for 1c):

- (1a) eles depois já não lhe davam o papel de desemprego
 eles depois já não lhe da-va-m o papel de desemprego

⁶ In their bibliography.

they then NEG him.DAT give-PST-3PL DET paper PREP⁷ unemployment
 ‘then they wouldn’t give him unemployment papers anymore’

(1b) depois gritavam daquele lado, davam um grito as pessoas – cada um –

depois grita-va-m daquele lado da-va-m um grito as pessoas
 then shout(VERB)-PST-3PL PREP side give-PST-3PL DET shout(NOUN) everyone
 cada um

PRON

‘then they shouted from that side, people shouted – each one of them –’

(1c) {Mas eras pequenina}. E gritavas: “Eu quero vir para casa da minha avó”

E grita-va-s Eu quer-o vir para casa
 {but you were little} COP shout-PST-2SG you want-1SG go PREP house
 da minha avó
 PREP DET grandmother

‘But you were little. And you shouted: “I want to come to my grandmother’s house”’

While examples (1a) and (1c) illustrate the verbal uses of *dar* and *gritar* (respectively) in direct transitive constructions (with a nominal object, *o papel de desemprego* in the first case, and a quoted discourse in the second one), the example (1b) is specific to an SVC pattern. In the same sentence, we note a co-occurrence of the verb *gritar* and its equivalent *dar um grito* (lit. ‘to give a shout’), both in intransitive construction. Even if we assume the possibility that the speaker used this expression to prevent repetition, there is a subtle difference between the two phrasings. As confirmed by native speakers, (1b) does not simply reduplicate the phrase with a variant. The nuance of meaning between the two formulations may be explained by specific features assignable to the SVC, as following:

(1b) gritavam<PAST(ACHIEV)> | davam um grito<PAST(ACHIEV); SEMELFACTIVE>

Whereas the first expression suggests an achievement open to both pluractionality (multiple, concomitant actions) and external plurality (*n* actions repeated), the second concludes on a shout from everyone at once, thus reinforcing its single-action aspect (summed up in the feature <semelfactive>: cf. Ašić, Grujić & Torterat, 2024). Regarding to the close context, such an hypothesis is corroborated by the co-instantiation of *as pessoas* (‘everyone’) and *cada um* (‘each of them’) which have an analogous meaning signified respectively by internal plurality and distributivity: such sense invites us to understand that people shouted as a single person (the meaning of the support verb in SVC isn’t actually modified, but the pattern instantiated restricts its extension).

⁷ For ‘preposition’.

This range of possible restrictions therefore influences the uses of verb forms in discourse contexts, as well as the semantic features that enable us to discriminate between them. For example, the SYNAPSE Corpus contains the sentence *Mas que rapariga que bem ele não chega, dá cada grito que eu sei lá!* (GRANJAL, EXERTO 7)⁸, where the verb *dar* in *dá cada grito* means both ‘to give’ (as a support verb) and ‘to produce’ (with a full meaning in a transitive construction).

In the same way, such variation incites us to reduce, whenever necessary, the equivalences between constructions with a support verb and the corresponding absolute verbs (when they are available) in linguistic usage - in writing as well as in ordinary speeches. For instance, replacing *gritar* (1c) with *dar um grito* is a matter of “free combination”, to borrow Mejri’s term (2008: 193), but the characteristics that can be assigned to the two formulations are distinct according to the delimitation of the time process expressed: in short, punctual in the first occurrence of (1b), extended in the second (1b) occurrence and in (1c). That said, there is nothing automatic about these contrasts, which are directly linked to the discursivity of the representations of tense (Torturat 2022b). We shall see that the gradations can sometimes be more marked: as note De Oliveira Chishman & De Abreu (2014: 156),

Quanto à contribuição dos verbos-suporte para as construções, percebe-se que esses verbos aparentam ter alguma carga semântica, mas, não se pode negar, são verbos de significado mais esvaziado ou leve (por isso, verbos leves ou light verbs) que formam com a expressão nominal um significado global, geralmente correspondente ao significado de um verbo pleno, como é o caso de *dar um grito* (= *gritar*), *fazer um aceno* (= *acenar*), *tomar banho* (*banhar-se*).⁹

These assumptions are confirmed by Davel (2011: 11), who remarks that the SVCs occur more frequently with specific determiners (concerning *dar um grito*, an indefinite article), with a relative variability around a reduced range of combinations (singular / plural; definite / indefinite), the SVC {*dar*_(DET)*grito*} denoting with a plural determiner some “terativity”:

Ana deu um grito de desespero
*Ana deu (uns) gritos de desespero*¹⁰

Commenting the contrast between these two utterances, Davel explains the distinction between the two configurations (absolute verbs, SVCs) in similar terms:

Nesse caso, o uso dos artigos pode interferir no sentido de uma estrutura como um todo, e tem relação direta com os diferentes tipos de construção com os verbos-suporte. Podese entender que o caráter híbrido das estruturas com verbos-suporte está atrelado à presença ou à ausência dos artigos que servem como determinantes, cuja

⁸ Transl. ‘What a girl, she’s not well enough, she screams so much I don’t know!’.

⁹ “Regarding the contribution of support verbs to constructions, it appears that these verbs have some semantic weight, but they are undeniably verbs with a more empty or light meaning (hence, *light verbs*) that constitute a global meaning with the nominal expression, generally corresponding to the meaning of a full verb, as is the case with *dar um grito* (= *gritar*, ‘to shout’), *fazer um aceno* (= *acenar*, ‘to greet’), *tomar banho* (*banhar-se*, ‘to take a bath’).“ (our translation). Cf. Vilas (2013) for similar conclusions concerning *gritar* and the Spanish.

¹⁰ Transl. ‘Ana gave a cry / a few cries of desperation’.

mobilidade do emprego influencia no grau de integração dos elementos do SN dessas estruturas. Em outras palavras, eles têm relevância na organização da construção e, conseqüentemente, no aspecto semântico delas.¹¹

These are just some of the questions raised by support verbs, whose use seems to be genuinely motivated in both written and spoken discourses. And the same issues apply to French as to Spanish.

3.2. In French

The SVCs aren't frequent in French and their count varies from around a hundred to more than 300 units depending on the studies (Caviola 1995, Gaatone 2004, Bittar & Danlos 2009, Abeillé & Godard 2024), so much so that they maintain archaisms whose usage has not retained idiomatic verb phrases (IVPs) based on similar combinations (cf. in Fr. SVC *prendre part (à)*, 'to participate (in)', IVP *prendre parti (pour)*, 'to side (with)'). We note it with the wording *faire montre de*, in the sense 'to show', 'to do proof of', which features a unique construction (here indirect transitive, with the preposition *de*, 'of'), and with Ø determiner, in addition to appearing "resistant" to passivation (Anscombe 1991: 109).

See below three examples extracted from the corpus ESLO 1 (ENT_060_DT78 for 2a, ENT_053_CQ741 for 2b, and REU_551_NS571 for 2c):

(2a) il faudrait presque que je vous fasse une démonstration

il faud-rai-t presque que je vous fasse une démonstration
it must-COND-3SG almost that I you_(DAT) do.SBJV.1SG DET demonstration
'I'd almost have to give you a demonstration, you know'

(2b) je ne sais pas ça je vous dis ça fait peut-être montre d'une certaine supériorité

je ne sai-s pas ça je vous di-s ça fai-t
I NEG know.PRS-1SG NEG that I you_(DAT) tell.PRS-1SG that do.PRS-3SG
peut-être montre d' une certaine supériorité
maybe demonstration PREP DET certain_(ADJ) superiority
'I don't know, I tell you, maybe it shows a certain superiority'

(2c) ils aiment bien montrer leur petite supériorité

ils aim-ent bien montrer leur petite supériorité
they enjoy.PRS-3PL show off.INF DET petty superiority
'they enjoy showing off their little superiority'

¹¹ "In this case, the use of articles may interfere with the meaning of a structure as a whole, and is directly related to the different types of SVCs. We can understand that the hybrid nature of structures with support verbs is tied to the presence or absence of the articles, whose flexibility influences the degree of integration of the SN elements of these structures. In other words, the [argumental] organisation of the construction is relevant in terms of semantic aspect" (our translation).

The distinctions between the occurrences of Fr. *faire* ('to do') in (2a) and (2b) are syntactic and semantic. In (2a), the verbal form appears in direct transitive construction in front of a nominal core object complement ('a demonstration'), which conditions the meaning of *faire* in the sense of *effectuer* ('to carry out') or *accomplir* ('to perform'). The mutual influence of the instantiated verbal and nominal units is part of a gradual compositionality, but here in non-idiomatic use: each element remains distinct and, as a predicate, may receive its own arguments (cf. Vivès 1993).

In (2b), on the other hand, *fait montre (de)*, with a $\emptyset$ determiner, implies an indirect transitive construction requiring a complement that is more an object than a circumstant (cf. by analogy fr. *porter sur* <STG>, 'to deal with', *compter sur* <SB>, 'to count on'). The other characteristic of the construction is strictly functional: between the two units and concretely, in (2b) the noun (*montre*) coincides with the main informative unit, rather than *faire*, which is semantically lightened, by means of semantic bleaching (Forest 1991, Givón 2009, Hagège 2023). This fact, moreover, prevents it from receiving any argument other than a single prepositional object. For its part, (2c) exemplifies with *montrer* ('show') the existence of a non-compositional equivalent with the same syntactic-semantic characteristics as *faire montre de*, with exactly the same meaning in this type of discourse configuration (a complement signifying the manifestation of a capacity, and a relative subsidiarity of information regarding the event).

The SVC reflects that *faire* appears only to "actualize a nominal predicate" (Gross 1993: 16), in this case *montre*, with a determiner conditioned both in number (**faire des montres*, 'to do demonstrations') and in category (here restricted to the indefinite: **faire la/sa/cette montre*, '*to do the/his-her/that demonstration instead of _'). Similarly, in (2b), the verb isn't the effective core of the argument structure: this role is endorsed by the predicative noun. This being said, the hypothesis that the nominal item "select[s] the subject" (Giry-Schneider 1996: 19) remains refutable: from our point of view, such a valence does not mean that the support verb is "emptied" of its predicativity, but partly lightened, in a "process whereby the meaning of a general verb is modulated/specified by the meaning of the noun with which it comes into syntagmatic contact" (Jezek 2011: 29).

Such an example illustrates the proximity of SVCs to the IVPs. This is particularly clear here, as the noun *montre* is no longer used in contemporary French except in what the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* classifies as a locutionary configuration:

Action de montrer, de mettre en vue. Dans ce sens général, ne s'emploie plus guère que dans quelques locutions. *Faire montre de, faire voir, manifester, faire preuve de. Faire montre d'érudition. Il a fait montre de beaucoup de courage. Parfois péj. Afficher, faire étalage de. Il fait toujours montre de ses relations.* (*Dictionnaire de l'Académie*, 2024)¹²

Note that (2b), which may be considered an archaism, appear in 1 occurrence amid 103 segments containing the query <montre>, out of a total of 2560794 segments available (all ESLO corpora). For instance, concerning <pousser un cri>, we find 1 occurrence of the SVC amid 9 segments containing the item <cri>, in the same corpus. This confirms that the

¹² Transl.: To show, to highlight. In this general sense, it is no longer used except in a few locutions. [...] Sometimes pejorative [...].

frequency of SVCs depends on discourse usage of both the support verb and the nominal support with which it is combined.

It is not necessary to detail in the following section the different features and argumental valences of the constructions catalogued in French grammars. Let us just illustrate how the same analyses are just as likely to apply to oral corpora, through the trio Fr. *faire* / *faire suite* (*à*) / *suivre* ('to follow'), as it is distributed in interactions between adults (in a professional context) recounted in TAKI_CAM_13 (2013-12-05) from the French TCOF Corpus. This dialogue, which comprises 4,734 lexical units, includes 36 occurrences of *faire* (inflected and uninflected forms), 2 of *suivre* (likewise), and a single occurrence of the SVC *faire suite* (*à*), exemplified as follows (.trs version cleaned up for the purposes of this demonstration), with respectively LOC2 <166.513>, LOC1 <1.548"/> and LOC2 <910.625> :

- (3a) parce que moi l'espagnol j'en ai fait donc
 parce que moi l' espagnol j' en ai fait donc
 because myself DET Spanish I it have.PST.3ST(AUX) do.PAST.PTCP so
 'because I myself have done Spanish, so'
- (3b) c'est un projet de chant choral et qui fait suite à la l- un projet
 c'est un projet de chant choral et qui fai-t suite
 It's DET project PREP singing choral and which do.PST-1SG following
 à la l- un projet
 PREP DET DET project
 'it's a choral singing project that follows on from a choral project'
- (3c) j'ai pas trop suivi du coup j'ai raté le début
 j' ai pas trop suivi du coup
 I have.PRS.1SG(AUX) NEG too well follow so
 up.PST.PTCP
 j' ai raté le début
 I have.PRS.1SG(AUX) miss.PST.PTCP DET beginning
 'I didn't follow too well so I missed the beginning'

The construction *fait suite*, in particular through what its contextual meaning implies about anteriority, coincides with *suivre* as it would appear in simple or compound form ('a choral singing project and who follows / follows / followed a project that was carried out all last year'). It should be noted, for example, that in the same corpus there is a combination *faire partie* (LOC1 → *il fait partie donc il a un groupe*: 'he's part of a group') which is roughly equivalent to three occurrences of *participer*, and which shows a real proximity between verbal locutions and SVC (cf. *prendre part*, 'to take part' / *donner suite*, 'to follow up').

In French as in European Portuguese, the frequency of the SVCs relative to their non-SVC equivalents depends on two main factors: the lightening capacity of the support verb, which itself depends on both the diversity of its argument structures and its extensiveness. The second factor corresponds, of course, to the vitality of the SVC concerned in everyday language. For instance, the pattern *prendre décision* ('to make_decision') occurs three times out of 15 occurrences of the noun 'decision' (nb. singular) in the CLAPI corpus, as in (4a) (*Histoires racontées par des enfants* – Grenoble ~ babacool, NIC), to which we can add a fourth with the verb support *faire* as it appears in (4b) (*Réunion de travail entre publicitaires* – Lyon Saxe ~ LSG 35, JEB):

(4a) j'étais libre de prendre une décision

j' ét-ai-s libre de prendre une décision
I be-PST-1SG free PREP make.INF DET decision
'I was free to make a decision'

(4b) quand t'as:: une décision à faire en application

quand t(u) a-s une décision à faire en application
when you have.PRS-2SG DET decision PREP do.INF PREP application
'when you have a decision to make in application'

A similar request on *conseil* ('advice'), in singular, on a corpus gathering VALIBEL, CORALROM, CFPP, OFROM, TUFs, RÉUNIONS DE TRAVAIL and CRFP cumulated (more than 3 million tokens) triggers 24 occurrences of the noun in this acception ('suggestion', 'recommandation') and, among them, no less than 9 SVCs with *donner* ('to give'), as related in (5a) from CFPP2000 (Youcef_Zerari_H_29_Abdel_Hachim_H_25_SO) and in (5b) from VALIBEL (<ilcAPIr>):

(5a) même si vous leur donnez conseil oh pfff

même si vous leur donn-ez conseil oh pfff
even if (CONJ) you them give.PRS-2PL advice INTERJ
'even if you give them advice, pff'

(5b) si je [devenais] dev[r]ais donner un conseil c'est en définitive apprenons les langues étrangères

si je devai-s donner un conseil c'est en définitive
if (CONJ) I have (to).IMPF-1SG give.INF DET advice it's ultimately
appren-ons les langues étrangères
learn.IMP-1PT DET languages foreign
'If I had to give one piece of advice, it would be to learn foreign languages'

Given the common usage of this phrase, it is subject to variation. From this perspective, we find in the corpus CRFP an interesting example of an inverse construction within (PRI-AMI-2): *je ne pense pas qu'il y avait {de conseil à donner} ni à l'un ni à l'autre* ('I don't think that there was {any advice to give} to either of them'). The topicalisation of the noun(pred.) doesn't provoke any modification to the SVC pattern in discourse.

3.3. In Spanish

In Spanish, we find analogous features. As De Miguel (2008) confirms,

Las construcciones con verbos de apoyo o soporte son sintagmas verbales en los que se combinan verbos aparentemente vacíos de significado léxico (y, por tanto, escasamente predicativos) con nombres que denotan eventos (por tanto, no referenciales); es decir, en ellas parece alterado el reparto habitual de tareas entre ambas categorías léxicas.¹³

These remarks by De Miguel raise the interesting point of the distribution regarding the respective predicative weights of the two units (verbal, nominal). In contrast to IVPs, SVCs do not constitute a whole in which the combination of units is organised through a process of compositionality with a restriction of acception(s). SVCs imply a non-fixed distributivity, which moreover accepts variably intercalation (Fr. *cela fait complètement suite à*, 'this follows on completely'), modification of inflectional marks (Sp. *suelo dar muchos paseos por la ciudad*, 'I often walk around the city a lot', whereas *paseo* in SVC is most frequently in the singular form), inversion (It. *abbiamo una risposta da dare*, 'we have a response to give') and passivation (E. P. *pergunta é feita por Heitor*, 'the question was asked by Heitor').

As a comparison between European Portuguese and Spanish, the hypothesis of an equivalence between the support-apport combination and the mechanism of co-occurrence, such as argued by Furtado da Cunha (2024: 42) concerning the European Portuguese (a), and by Vilas (2014: 217) for Spanish (b), is still a matter of discussion. The former author upholds:

(a) a análise da construção com os verbos leves *dar*, *fazer*, *ter* e *tomar*, a exemplo de *dar licença*, *fazer compra*, *ter dívida* e *tomar conta*, [através] uma abordagem funcional-construcionista [...] com o objetivo de depreender os processos de variação e mudança que se dão com essa construção em termos das propriedades dos verbos leves e dos sintagmas nominais que com eles coocorrem.¹⁴ whereas the latter one recommends to consider both semantic and topological features:

¹³ Transl. "Constructions with support verbs are verbal syntagms in which verbs apparently empty of lexical meaning (and, therefore, scarcely predicative) are combined with nouns denoting events (therefore, not referential); that is, in them the usual distribution of tasks between both lexical categories seems to be altered."

¹⁴ Transl. "the analysis of the construction with the light verbs *dar*, *fazer*, *ter* and *tomar*, such as *dar licença* ('to give permission'), *fazer compra* ('to do a purchase'), *ter dívida* ('to have a doubt') and *tomar conta* ('to take care of'), [through] a functional-constructionist approach [...] with the aim of

(b) Además de su propio significado léxico, los NCom en coocurrencia con dar/*hacer, habrán de interpretarse como el segundo movimiento de un par adyacente. Así, dar una respuesta, opinión o permiso se entenderán como la reacción lógica a la correspondiente petición (de respuesta, opinión o permiso), que les ha de preceder.¹⁵

As summed up by Vilas (2015), who focused on the definite, indefinite and Ø article, as well as possessive determiners preceding the noun of SVCs (source: 85 occurrences mainly from *CORPES XXI*, a general corpus of contemporary Spanish), the fixation of the SVC elements is gradual and

Due to their semi-phraseological character, LVCs are claimed to display some syntactic peculiarities which show a certain degree of fixation (e.g. restrictions to adjective modification, complementation, passive voice, etc.). [...] a) LVCs accept double analysis (in *Pedro tiene respeto por Ana* ‘Pedro has respect towards Ana’ *por Ana* ‘towards Ana’ can be understood as depending either on *respeto* ‘respect’ or on *tiene* ‘has’); b) LVCs can eliminate the LV to create a nominal phrase (*el respeto de Pedro por Ana* ‘Pedro’s respect towards Ana’); and c) LVCs show certain restrictions related to determiners (*Pedro da su/Ø/*mi autorización para salir* ‘Pedro gives his/Ø/*my authorization to leave’).

These characteristics are partly corroborated by oral corpora and can be extended to Romania, despite differences from one language to another. For example, a query applied to the noun *pregunta* (‘question’) in MAVIR reveals that the unity occurs in SVCs with *hacer* (‘to do’) 5 times out of 45 (ex. MAVIR_03: *hacíais una pregunta que era muy interesante*, ‘you asked a question which was very interesting’), i.e. in 11,1% of cases, with a variety of determiners (*una*, *la* and *alguna*, respectively articles ‘a’, ‘the’, and the indefinite ‘some’), moreover in intransitive (4) and transitive (1) constructions (all in active voice).

The same query in CORLEC, by our count, finds 695 occurrences of *pregunta(s)*, including 209 in SVCs (30%) on the base <hacer_pregunta(s)> (‘to ask question(s)’), most of them in intransitive constructions (191, i.e. 91,38%), and 18 in transitive ones (ex.: PJUR009C: *quería hacerle una pregunta al abogado*, ‘I would like to ask the lawyer a question’). Concerning the determiners in the SVCs, we find respectively 140 *su* (‘your’), 32 *una* (‘a’), 15 *la* (‘the’), 9 *alguna* (‘some’), 8 *otra* (‘another’), and 5 cases of Ø determiner (ex.: AJUR017A, *Hay una serie de fenómenos que al ciudadano le preocupan y... y hace preguntas*, ‘There are a number of phenomena that citizens are concerned about and... and ask questions’). With about 280 occurrences, the verb *preguntar* (‘to ask (a question)’) is more frequent but relatively.¹⁶

deducing the processes of variation and change that arise with this construction in terms of properties of the light verbs and the nominal phrases that co-occur with them”.

¹⁵ Transl. “In parallel to their own lexical meaning, NComs in co-occurrence with dar/*hacer are to be interpreted as the second movement of an adjacent pair. Thus, to give an answer, opinion or permission will be understood as the logical response to the corresponding request (for answer, opinion or permission), which has to precede it.”

¹⁶ Vilas (2014: 208) argues that “La coocurrencia hacer una pregunta-dar una respuesta, la encontramos también en otras lenguas, por ejemplo, en portugués (*fazer uma pergunta-dar uma resposta*), gallego (*facer unha pregunta-dar unha resposta*), catalán (*fer una pregunta-donar una*

Applying the same deductions to *tomar* ('to take') in similar "LVC" (i.e. *light verb constructions*), Vilas (2017) argues that "light verbs are paradigmatically related to their heavier counterparts and syntagmatically to the nouns within the same LVC by means of components of meaning called lexical features" (229). Anyway, the support verbs withstand binary typologization (light/non-light). Indeed, the corresponding constructions present several specific factors, including compositionality as summarized by Bittar & Danlos (2009: 5) through the use of a verb that lifts some of its predicative properties in favor of "a predicative noun (Npred)", while retaining in its valence a subject "morphologically associated with the Npred if it exists – and as a possible oblique object the other participant if there is one" (our translation). That said, the term "light" raises two issues.

The first is terminological and concerns a somewhat hasty shift from the findings made on Germanic languages to those concerning Romance languages. From this viewpoint, the denomination of "light" verbs, entirely justified from a syntactic (as noted above, there is indeed a lightening of the support verb as well as an argumental restriction), regularly bolsters a hypothesis of grammaticalization on which several studies conclude. Some authors refer in particular to Gross (1998), who describes the elements analyzed as "grammatical words, such as prepositions" (p. 27), often forgetting that Gross puts forward such a hypothesis as a preliminary analysis, which he also designates as an "approximation"¹⁷. Simultaneously, the assumption of a "meaningless" verb reduces the support verb to a particle. To give an example applied to the Brittonic languages, the CNRS summary note on the "light verb" in Breton syntax associates it with causative suffixes *-aat* or factitive suffixes such as *-at*, which it illustrates functionally as $X_{\text{CAUSE}} Y_{\text{BE}}$ in the first case and X_{DO} in the second case, which apply respectively to adjectival and nominal bases. However, most works in linguistic typology relativize this "empty"/"full" binary by defining a gradual process of compositionality between the apport (nominal) and the support (verbal), as evidenced by the quotation marks around "empty" in some of them, or the terminology of "quasi-light" (or "quasi-empty") alluding to intermediate levels of lightening (see Hämäläinen 2021 for a comparative study with Finnish, Caviola 1995 for links with Spanish).

This brings us to the second point, namely the similarity between the SVCs and IVPs that also involve a verb-noun sequence. As indicated above, since the process of semantic reduction is fundamentally scalar, it is highly likely that all SVCs are initially part of a free combination, until some of them, particularly those in common use, become fixed in usage to the point of becoming locutions. However, as these processes are related to context-sensitive uses, they are partly reversible. In intermediary conclusion, we assume that there are multiple gradients from single verbs (or nouns) to SVCs or IVPs, as evidenced by diachronic approaches to these issues (cf. Valli 2007, Samardzija & Torterat 2023). It is therefore inappropriate to generalize a movement towards the decategorization of support verbs, or to view idiomaticity as the outcome of a unidirectional process of fixation towards compositional unity.

¹⁷ The term is moreover rephrased as 'affixal verb'.

4. SVCs IN THE ROMANIAN CORPUS

In Romanian, SVCs were mainly studied using written texts or even dictionary entries. As stated in the introduction, SVCs are acknowledged as a particular class of verb constructions only in a handful of dedicated research papers, whose main goal was to distinguish SVCs both from free combinations, and from IVPs *via* various tests. Using the example of the verb *a da* ('to give'), we will show in the following lines that Romanian behaves largely like other Romance languages: the use of a verb as support is not "opposed" to other uses, but occupies an intermediary stage between the lexical verb in free combinations, and the "empty" verb in locutions/IVPs. As in the other Romance languages, Romanian SVCs exhibit an imperfect equivalence to lexical verbs. The limits of this alleged synonymy, and the circumstances in which SVCs compete with lexical verbs or are preferred by speakers instead of a unique, lexical verb will be addressed in chapter 4.2.

4.1. An analysis of *a da* ('to give') in free combinations, SVCs and IVPs

The Romanian corpus exhibits 58 verbs frequently used in SVCs, of which the most frequent are *a face* ('do': 307 occurrences in SVCs, representing 160 different constructions), *a avea* ('have': 197/80), *a da* ('give': 177/55), *a pune* ('put': 63/18), *a aduce* ('bring': 58/17), *a lua* ('take: 47/26), *a fi* ('be': 40/17), and *a ține* ('keep': 23/7). Other verbs have 10 occurrences or less; most of these are aspectual or stylistical variants of the verbs above, such as *a lansa* ('launch' – inchoative of *a face* 'do', or *a acorda* – stylistical variant of *a da*, 'give'). These verbs range on a continuous scale from a "proper", full or lexical meaning to null verbs (in frozen locutions), with SV at the middle, as exemplified below with *a da*.

The SVCs are directly concerned by the contextual conditions of scalar change along a range of possible meanings influenced by the verbal predicate (Rappaport Hovav 2008; Beavers 2013), but also the discourse configurations and linguistic uses.

In our corpus-driven approach, we note that Romanian *a da* ('give') has 28 possible constructions according to the DCV¹⁸ and participates in 55 "expressions" or IVPs. The basic construction is NP[NOM, +h] – *da* – NP[ACC, -h +concrete] – (facultative) NP[DAT +h] / PP[*la* +animated] and is illustrated by the second instance of *a da* in the sequence below:

- (7) El a mers până la capăt, dându-ne un exemplu asupra mod-ului în care trebuie să ne asumăm crucea pe care ne-o dă Dumnezeu.
 el a mers până la capăt, dându =ne un exemplu
 he have.PRS.3SG go.PST.PTCP until PREP end give.GER 1PL.DAT DET example
 asupra mod-ului în care trebuie să ne asumăm
 PREP way-DET-DAT in which must SBJV 1PL.DAT take_up.PRS.SBJV.1PL
 cruce-a pe care ne =o dă Dumnezeu.
 cross-DET ACC which 1PL.DAT 3SG.F.ACC give.PRS.3SG God
 'He went to the end, giving us an example of the way we must carry the cross that God gives to us.'
 (Căr 125, sermon at a funeral, formal)

¹⁸ <https://dcv.lingv.ro/grams/case/ac/da>

The first instance, ‘give [us] an example’, represents a step further on the scale: the meaning of the verb becomes more abstract, since the direct object is not concrete. The meaning of the construction remains however compositional, there is no corresponding lexical verb, and the noun may have different determiners or occupy different positions with respect to the verb. The corpus exhibits for instance the noun *exemplu* (‘examples’) with an adjective: *dacă ar fi să dau exemplu, exemple bune* (‘if I wish to give [some] examples, good examples’, VV 40, phone interview), or placed before the SV: *vreau să-l evoc pe iordan ca o persoană foarte obiectivă. Și din exemplele pe care-am să le dau sper să-i conving* (‘I want to remember Iordan as a very objective person. And from the examples I will give I hope to convince them’, ROVA1 52, semi-formal conversation). In such constructions may appear other declarative nouns, which are not deverbal, such as *cuvânt* (‘word’) or *argument*, *verdict*, etc.

Further down the scale, *a da* (‘give’), combines with deverbal nouns expressing speech acts, in a more coherent construction, which has a verbal equivalent: *a da răspuns*¹⁹ (‘give_answer’) corresponds to *a răspunde* (‘answer’), or *a da definiție* (‘give_definition’) corresponds to *a defini* (‘define’). Other such constructions in the corpus express verbal interactions: *a da ordin/poruncă* (‘give_command’) corresponding to *a ordona/porunci* (‘command’), *a da comandă* (‘give_order’) = *a comanda* (‘order’), *a da sfat* (‘give_advice’) = *a sfătui* (‘advice’). Let’s remark that some of these nouns do not allow for number or determiner variation, being probably on their way to lexicalisation, although they may theoretically vary: *comandă* only appeared in our corpus in the singular, mostly with Ø article, and *poruncă* was mainly used in the singular, with the indefinite or Ø article.

As a specificity in Romanian, the SVC *a da comandă* may even participate in a new syntactical configuration, where the Patient is encoded as an indirect object with the preposition *de* (not in our corpus, but well attested in internet informal chats):

- (8) Salut! Dacă am dat comandă de ceva de pe Emag...
- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|------|--------------|---------|------|-----------|------|------|------|
| Salut | Dacă | am dat | comandă | de | ceva | de | pe | Emag |
| hi | if | give.PST.1SG | order | PREP | something | PREP | PREP | Emag |
- ‘Hi! If I have given order for something / I ordered something on Emag...’
(chat thread, <https://www.tpu.ro/shopping/salut-daca-am-dat-comanda-de-ceva-de-pe-emag-in-prima-ora-de-black-friday-stii-cineva-sa-mi-spuna-cam-in-cat-timp-imi/>)

In this configuration, the verb and the noun are reanalysed as forming a unique predicate, much as an IVP, and the deverbal noun hasn’t the semantic role of Patient, but it only saturates the direct object position. In our corpus, *a da comandă* occurred twice in free alternation with the corresponding lexical verb, *a comanda*, and also with the construction *a face comandă* (‘do–order’):

- (9a) A: îl aduc peste trei săptămâni [...] dacă îl comandăm
 B: da, e bine [...]
 A: atunci rămâne să facem noi comanda înainte, pentru microfon, nu?
 B: [...]

¹⁹ If not mentioned otherwise, we cite an SVC in general using the bare noun; in use, the noun may appear with various determiners, in the singular or in the plural form.

A: o să-i sun mâine [...] și o să dau comanda.

A: îl aduc peste trei săptămâni dacă îl comandăm
3SG.M.ACC bring.PRS.3PL PREP three week.PL if 3SG.M.ACC order.PRS.1PL

B: da e bine
yes be.PRS.3SG fine

A: atunci rămâne să facem noi comanda înainte pentru microfon nu?
then remain.3SG SBJV do.PRS.SBJV.1PL 1PL order.DET before PREP microphone NEG

A: o să =i sun mâine și o să dau comanda.
FUT SBJV 3PL.ACC call.PRS.SBJV.1SG tomorrow and FUT SBJV give.PRS.SBJV.1SG order.DET

'A: They can bring it in three weeks [...] if we order it

B: Yes, it's fine [...]

A: Then it's settled, we make/do ourselves the order before, for the microphone, right?

B: [...]

A: I will call them tomorrow [...] and I will give the order.'

(IVLRA 186-188, phone call between colleagues, semi-formal)

(9b) B: vream să-mi cumpăr niște teniși

A: [...]

B: și am dat comandă [...]

eram entuziasmată că au putut să facă comandă.

B: vream să =mi cumpăr niște teniși
want. IMPF.1SG SBJV 1SG.DAT buy.PRS.SBJV.1SG some sneaker.PL

B: și am dat comandă
and have.PRS.1SG give.PST.PTCP order

eram entuziasmată că au putut să facă comandă
be. IMPF.1SG enthusiastic that have.PRS.3PL can.PST.PTCP SBJV do.PRS.SBJV.3PL order

'I wanted to buy these sneakers, and I gave order/ordered [...]

I was enthusiastic that they could manage do the order.'

(Căr 213, phone call between friends, informal)

Examples (9a) and (9b) show that *a da* ('give') and *a face* ('do'), are semantically bleached, since they are in free alternation without any change in meaning, and both constructions can alternate with the lexical verb cognate of the noun *comandă*.

Further down the scale, *a da* forms a partially frozen SVC with the noun *telefon* ('phone(call)'), corresponding to the full verb *a suna* ('call'). But in this case, the inversion of the verb and noun isn't possible, and the noun determination is restricted to the singular indefinite (with indefinite or Ø article):

(10) B: dacă îl vezi pe Răzvan să-i spui...

A: îi spun să-ți dea un telefon

B: dacă îl vezi pe Răzvan să =i spui
if 3SG.M.ACC see.PRS.2SG ACC Răzvan SBJV 3SG.M.DAT tell.PRS.SBJV.2SG

A: îi spun să =ți dea un telefon
3SG.M.DAT tell.PRS.1SG SBJV 2SG.DAT give.PRS.SBJV.3SG DET phone

'B: If you see Răzvan, tell him...

A: I will tell him to give you a call / to call you.'

(IVLRA 40, phone call between friends, informal)

The freer SVCs have a low frequency: *a da comandă* has only 5 occurrences in the whole corpus, *a da poruncă* and *a da răspuns* 6 occurrences each, and the other ones even less. The more “frozen” construction *a da telefon* (‘call’) is more frequent, with 19 occurrences in all registers, but still less than the corresponding lexical verb *a suna* (33 occurrences), which may indicate a correlation between the degree of frozenness and the frequency.

Even further down the scale, *a da* participates in two completely frozen constructions, *a da voie* (‘give permission’), and *a-și da seama*²⁰ (lit. ‘give himself conscience’, i.e. ‘realize/understand’, cf. Fr. *se rendre compte*). The noun here is completely invariable in number and determination, and the constructions have no corresponding lexical verb (or neological, rare), hence, they were very frequent in all registers, with 20 occurrences for *a da voie* and more than 40 for *a-și da seama* in our corpus. The first one has an aspectual correspondent, *a avea voie* (‘have the permission’), itself frozen and very frequent.

At the end of the scale, there are metaphorical, frozen “expressions” in which the verb *a da* has no semantic contribution, and the syntactic configuration is opaque, such as: *mă dau rotund* (lit. ‘I give myself round’, i.e. ‘I’m bragging’, or: *nu ți-a dat prin gând?* (lit. ‘didn’t it give through your thought’, i.e. ‘didn’t it cross your mind?’).

Therefore, among the uses of *a da*, we may consider that SVCs – that is, constructions where the verb carries little or no meaning while the noun bears the full meaning, and the construction as a whole may function as a synonym for a full lexical verb (cognate or not of the predicative noun) – are at an intermediate stage between some “abstract” or bleached uses of *a da* and frozen, non-analytical expressions, and have themselves various degrees of frozenness:

+ lexical in free combinations		SV		empty in IVPs	
<i>da</i> + concrete object	<i>da</i> + abstract object (speech act or social interaction)	<i>da</i> + deverbal speech act noun	frozen analytical constructions	frozen non analytical constructions	metaphorical expressions
<i>da crucea</i> <i>da o carte...</i>	<i>da cuvântul</i> <i>da exemplu</i>	<i>da răspuns</i> <i>da comandă</i>	<i>da telefon</i>	<i>da voie</i> <i>își da seama</i>	<i>se da rotund</i> <i>da prin gând...</i>

Figure 1: A scalar representation of some constructions using *a da* (‘give’)

Since one of the features of SVCs is their (partial) equivalence with a lexical verb, which is illustrated in (9a), the question arises of the reasons for their appearance. One would expect that SVCs belong to a formal, written register, and indeed, as shown for *a da telefon* vs. *a suna*, they are less frequent than lexical verbs in speech. For instance, in the selected corpus, *a întreba* (‘ask’), has

²⁰ *Seama* is an archaism no longer used, except for some frozen expressions: *a da seama* (‘report’, ‘declare/acknowledge’, cf. Fr. *rendre (des) comptes*, *a ține seama* (‘count with something’), cf. Fr. *tenir compte*, and *a băga de seamă* (‘pay attention’).

123 occurrences, but *a pune întrebare* (lit. ‘put_question’, i.e. ‘ask_question’) only appears 25 times; *a răspunde* (‘answer’) has 18 occurrences, *a da răspuns* (‘give_answer’) – only 8; *a se referi* (‘refer to something’) appears 10 times, *a face referire* (lit. ‘do_reference’) – only 4 times; *a schimba* (‘change’), 11 times, compared to only 2 occurrences of *a face schimbare* (‘make change’).

4.2. SVCs or not: a context-sensitive and discourse-oriented selection

In very rare cases in the Romanian corpus, the SVC is more frequent than the lexical corresponding verb, for instance *a vizita* (‘to visit’), only appears 5 times, while *a face vizită* (‘do visit’) – 8 times, to which we must add 4 occurrences of *a veni în vizită* (‘come to visit’, which presents a different point of view on the same event). Other such cases were *a face poză* (‘do a photo’) and *a face cadou* (‘do a gift’), but in the first one, *a face vizită*, the noun is not deverbal, and for the two, the corresponding lexical verbs are neologisms, limited to formal speech or written language, which is enough to justify why they have a higher frequency than the corresponding unique verb. These exceptional cases indicate that a criterion for using SVCs instead of a single verb can be sociolinguistic.

A second criterion is semantic: a number of SVCs have a different meaning than the corresponding lexical verb: two rather frequent constructions, *a face cerere* (‘do demand’), and *a da anunț* (‘to give announcement’), have another meaning than *a cere* (‘to ask, demand’), respectively *a anunța* (‘announce, to let know’). In most of the situations in our corpus, *cerere* is not the name of the action of asking, but a type of administrative document, hence *a face cerere* implies writing a kind of document, while *a cere* is the (oral) act of asking for something. Note that in *a face cerere* ‘do’ has its full, lexical meaning of producing something, in this case a document. The same for *anunț* (‘announcement’), which was only used in reference to a public announcement or a classified, therefore, *a da anunț* is producing and sending/publishing a text, while *a anunța* means ‘to let know’ by any (spoken) mean. Other, rarer similar cases include *a face ofertă* (‘make_offer’) with reference to the commercial act/document, viz. *a oferi* (‘offer’, in general).

Finally, a) the complex structure of the SVC (allowing variation of the verb, of the noun and of the verb-noun order) and b) its thematic role in the context may be decisive for speakers’ choice of an SVC instead of a verbal synonym.

An SVC contains a noun, which must bear determination and number, which can vary (contrary to what happens in “locutions”, see Șovar 2008: 157-9), and may also have expansions, such as adjectives, which constitute a different predication. Noun number may affect the global aspect of the SVC, as well as the (non)referential character of the predicative noun. Noun variation and its effect on the aspect was only marginally taken into account by Căpățână & Preda (2016: 53) or by the contributions in Pompei, Mereu & Piunno (2023; mainly mentioned by Eshaghi & Karimi-Doostan on Persian). Consider for instance:

- (11a) Bica nu vrea să-mi cumpere și mie o brățară din asta
 Bica nu vrea să =mi cumpere și mie o brățară din asta
 Bica NEG want.PRS.3SG SBJV 1SG.DAT buy.PRS.SBJV.3SG also 1SG.DAT DET bracelet PREP DEM
 ‘Bica doesn’t want to buy a bracelet like this for me too.’
 (ROVA1, 105, family conversation, informal)
- (11b) O să plecăm la Sibiu [...] și stăm două zile, ne facem cumpărăturile de acolo.
 o să plecăm la Sibiu și stăm două zi-le
 FUT SBJV leave.PRS.SBJV.1PL PREP Sibiu and stay.PRS.1PL two day-PL

- ne facem cumpărături-le de acolo
 1PL.DAT do.PRS.1PL buying.PL-DET PREP there
 'We'll go to Sibiu and stay there for two days, we'll /do our shopping there.'
 (ROVA1, 132, conversation with the housekeeper, informal)
- (11c) Eu de obicei mă duc cu vecinii mei care vin aici în piață la CUG ca să facă cumpărături
 eu de obicei mă duc cu vecini-i mei
 1SG.NOM usually 1SG.REFL go.PRS.1SG PREP neighbour.PL-DET 1SG.POSS
 care vin aici în piață la CUG ca să facă cumpărături.
 who come.PRS.3PL here PREP market PREP CUG to SBJV do.PRS.SBJV.3PL buying.PL
 'I usually accompany my neighbours, who come here, to the CUG market, for shopping.'
 (Căr 222, conversation between two students, informal)

In (11a), the object of *a cumpăra* ('to buy'), is referential and specific, it carries a new information, and the global aspect of the sentence is an achievement, because the noun is in the singular. In (11b), *cumpărăturile* ('the shoppings') is non-specific: the SVC allows the speaker not to express an information (irrelevant in the context) which would have been mandatory if he used the full verb *a cumpăra*. The noun remains however referential, because of the definite article, and the global aspect is an achievement. In (1c) however, because of the indefinite plural, the noun is non-referential, non-specific, and the global reading of the SVC is an activity. In this case, using the lexical verb was impossible.

The differences between the SVC and the lexical verb in what concerns aspect and determinacy tend to disappear, and the two may be used alternatively, without any change in meaning, even in the same discourse, in negative contexts (as 12), or in interrogatives (as 13)

- (12) Și cu orarul, [...] acum iar să-l modific? Eu nu-l mai fac [...], nu mai fac nicio schimbare.
 și cu orar-ul acum iar să =l modific
 and PREP timetable-DET now again SBJV 3SG.ACC change.PRS.SBJV.1SG
 eu nu =l mai fac nu mai fac nicio schimbare.
 1SG.NOM NEG 3SG.ACC more do.PRS.1SG NEG more do.PRS.1SG no.F change
 'And the timetable, shall I change it again? I won't do it, I won't make/do no further change.'
 (FP, 21, conversation between teachers, informal)
- (13) A: 8000 de firme care făceau export [...] și-au închis activitatea.
 B: Ce exportau aceste firme, domnu' G.?
 A: 8000 de firme care făceau export și= au închis activitatea.
 8000 of company.PL who do.IMPF.3PL export 3PL.DAT HAVE.PRS.3PL close.PST.PTCP activity.DET
 B: Ce export-au aceste firme domnu' G.?
 what export-IMP.3PL DEM company.PL mister G.
 'A: 8000 companies who were in the export business ceased their activity.
 B: What were these companies exporting, Mr. G.?'
 (Căr 325, political debate, semi-formal)

On the other hand, the predicative noun of the SVC may serve as the basis for an expansion:

- (14) Domnul Berceanu [...] dă un răspuns așa, șmecheresc prin excelență
 domnul Berceanu dă un răspuns așa, șmecheresc prin excelență
 mister Berceanu give.PRS.3SG DET answer like_this mocking PREP excellence
 'Mister Berceanu gave an answer of particular mockery.'
 (Căr 345, TV talkshow, semi-formal)

In this case, the speaker's focus wasn't on the act of answering, but on the quality of the answer, cf. the initial hesitation with *aşa* (a demonstrative for quality) and the long description that followed. Using the verb *answer* would have only allowed him to add an adverb, which is less emphatic.

See also the reformulation in (15), where the speaker preferred the SVC, after beginning with the unique lexical verb:

- (15) Am convins foşti participanţi la atelier [...] să se filmeze, să facă un video testimonial
 am convins foşti participanţi la atelier
 have.PRS.1SG convince.PST.PTCP former.PL.M participant.PL PREP workshop
 să se filmeze să facă un video testimonial
 SBJV REFL record.PRS.SBJV.3PL SBJV do.PRS.SBJV.3PL DET video testimonial
 'I have convinced former participants to the workshop to record themselves, to make a video testimonial'
 (Căr 236, radio interview, semi-formal)

The speaker began by using the verb *a se filma* in the reflexive voice, which didn't allow him to express a direct object, therefore, he/she reformulated using an SVC. The speaker intended to draw attention to the English borrowed noun, and *să facă* ('do'), was just the way of introducing this noun into the discourse.

The nominal expansion may consist in a full relative clause, such as:

- (16) A fost concediată pe motiv că în concediu a făcut fotografii în care avea alcool în apropiere.
 a fost concediată pe motiv că în concediu
 have.PRS.3SG be.PST.PTCP fire.PST.PTCP.F PREP reason that PREP holiday
 a făcut fotografii în care avea alcool în apropiere.
 have.PRS.3SG do.PST.PTCP photo.PL PREP which have.IMPF.3SG alcohol PREP proximity
 'She was fired because during the holidays she took pictures [of herself] having alcohol nearby'
 (Căr 175, teacher-students conversation, semi-formal)

In the first part (main clause), the focus is on the event of taking pictures, hence on the SVC, which could have been replaced by the lexical verb *a poza*, but at the level of the sentence (cited here in full) the focus is on the result of the event, expressed by the noun and its relative clause.

Finally, another possible reason for the choice of a SVC instead of a unique verb is the thematic insertion of the sentence into the context, if the noun may serve as a thematic anchor to the context (examples 17 and 18) or, on the contrary, if the noun is explicitly presented as a new topic (example 19):

- (17) O parte din îmbunătăţirile respective au fost făcute de către cel dinainte.
 o parte din îmbunătăţiri-le respective
 DET part of improvement.PL-DET mentioned.F.PL
 au fost făcute de către cel dinainte.
 have.PRS.3PL be.PST.PTCP do.PST.PTCP.F.PL PREP PREP DEM before
 'Some of the aforementioned improvements were made by the previous [tenant].'
 (IVLRA, 251, at the courthouse, formal)

In this case, the predicative noun precedes the support verb, *via* a passive construction (other attested possibilities are a simple change in order, reflexive-impersonal construction, or relativization, or interrogation). This inversion of the verb-noun order is practically the rule when SVCs are used in posters, such as reproduced in Appendix 1 (18).

- (18) Intrarea se face pe ușa alăturată.
 Intrarea se face pe ușa alăturată.
 entry.DET REFL do.PRS.3SG PREP door.DET neighbouring.F.SG
 ‘Entrance through next door.’
 (poster on a restaurant, together with the image of an arrow)

In the material context of the poster, <entering the restaurant> is the topic, and it constrains in a sense to begin the text with the noun *intrarea*. The verb *face* only serves as an anchor for the new information ‘through next door’, it lacks its first argument, being in the reflexive-impersonal form, and may be omitted (which is attested in other similar posters).

Finally, the inversion of the verb-noun order may be dictated by the opposite situation, i.e. the introduction of a new topic in the discourse, *via* a presentative construction:

- (19) Am și eu două anunțuri de făcut:
 am și eu două anunț-uri de făcut
 have.PRS.1SG also 1SG.NOM two announcement-PL PREP do.PST.PTCP
 ‘I have also two announcements to make / I want to make two announcements.’
 (IVLRA, 224, radio dialogue with the public, semi-formal)

Here too, the verb has no first argument, since it is in an impersonal form, it carries no significant meaning and may be omitted.

In the Romanian corpus, the reversed, noun-verb order represents a little more than 30% of the SVCs with the verb *a face*, and 28% of *a da*, a proportion more than accidental, which suggests that the complex internal structure and the possibility given by it to “play” with the verb-noun order may be an important trigger for the choice of the SVC instead of the single lexical verb. A lexical content is more easily thematized or focalized if it takes a nominal rather than a verbal form.

5. CONCLUSION

Examining authentic oral corpora allowed us to see that SVCs exhibit a wide range of syntactic configurations, more than the Verb-Noun alignment usually presented in studies on written corpora or dictionary forms. These configurations are triggered by the wider context, and by pragmatic factors as focus, topicalization, and the need for a nominal expansion (see Torterat *et al.* 2015). The corpus-driven approach also allowed us to measure the real degree of variation of the noun: while some SVCs allow indeed a full variation in number and determination, which in turn has consequences on the aspectual reading of the construction, others seem to be more restricted (such as Rom. *dă comandă*), probably more advanced on the lexicalization cline.

Secondly, we took the perspective of a single verb in each Romance language, analyzing its constructions, which may be conceived as a scale running from the full, lexical meaning (in free combinations) to completely opaque IVPs where the verb is semantically bleached and only contributes its morphosyntactic features. SVCs occupy an intermediate zone between these two poles. A zone itself gradual: some constructions were shown to be both more compositional and variable, with the verb retaining some of its “lexical” meaning. Whereas other SVCs, although not (or partly) idiomatic, are more restricted, their meaning is less compositional, and the verb has no semantic contribution (such as Rom. *a-și da seama*). The degree of frozenness seems moreover correlated to frequency, as it was observed in both grammaticalization and lexicalization (see for instance Brinton & Traugott 2005).

These outcomes raise the issue of the “competition” between SVCs and equivalent unique verbs (cognates or not to the noun), i.e. how speakers make their choice. In the languages analyzed here, SVCs were less frequent than their corresponding lexical verbs. However, they exist and sometimes appeared in a co-occurrence pattern with such verbs, in free alternation. One obvious reason for choosing a SVC instead a single verb relates to a difference in meaning. But beyond this, SVCs have the advantage of a multi-word structure: speakers may “play” with noun determination according to their discourse needs, and also with the internal structure, reversing the order if pragmatic factors are at play, such as focus, mitigation or emphasis.

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Appendix 1

