A Romance perspective on embedded gapping:
the case of Spanish and Romanian

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It is usually assumed (Hankamer 1979, Neijt 1979 and the subsequent literature) that some elliptical constructions such as gapping cannot be embedded within the conjunct it belongs to (cf. Johnson 2009 for English data in (1) and Abeillé *et al.* 2014 for Romance data in (2)) ; therefore, according to Johnson (2009, 2014), there would be a very strong syntactic constraint on gapping (and a diagnostic of this elliptical construction), called "the no embedding constraint".

(1)   *Some <u>had eaten</u> mussels and **she claims that** others shrimp.

(2)   a   *Paul <u>a mangé</u> une pomme et **on m'a dit que** Marie une orange. (French)

        b   *Ion <u>predă</u>   spaniola   și   **mi s-a   spus că**   Maria italiana. (Romanian)
              Ion teaches Spanish.DEF and me REFL.3-has told   that Maria Italian.DEF
              'Ion teaches Spanish and one told me that Maria teaches Italian.'

The only reported counter-example comes from Farsi (the variety of Persian spoken in Iran): Farudi (2013) observes that gaps are possible under a wide range of embedding verbs and argues that the subordinating heads are not parenthetical, but syntactically integrated.

Coming back to Romance languages, one observes that some of them (e.g. Romanian, Spanish) allow embedded gaps too in some specific contexts (compare (3a-b) and (3c)).

(3)   a   Nu eu <u>îl   urăsc</u>   pe el, ci **cred   că** el pe mine. (Romanian, Bîlbîie 2016)
              NEG I ACC.3M.SG hate.1SG DOM him, but think.1SG that he DOM me
              'I don't hate him, but I think he hates me.'

        b   Pedro le regaló flores a María y **creo que** Alicia unos libros. (Spanish)
              'Pedro offered flowers to Maria and I think that Alicia some books.'

        c   *Jean <u>aime</u> Marie et **je crois qu**'elle aussi Jean. (French, Bîlbîie 2016)

Embedding is possible in Romanian with some epistemic verbs like *a crede* 'to think', *a vedea* 'to see', *a ști* 'to know' (especially with a deictic person such as the first person) and with impersonal verbs such as *a părea* 'to seem', which all express a propositional attitude towards the content of the gapped clause and have to be analyzed as weak verbs or 'syntactic amalgams' in the sense of Lakoff (1974) in these contexts (Bîlbîie 2016). Marginal embedded contexts become quite natural with a reciprocal relation between the remnants and the correlates, thus supporting the semantic and discursive strong constraint on gapping: there must be a semantic contrast and a discursive symmetrical relation between the source and the gapped clause. As for Spanish, embedded gapping seems to be less restricted than in Romanian, coming closer to Farsi.

These new data supports the continuum analysis of embedding gapping cross-linguistically: there is no universal ban on embedding, as usually assumed. Typologically, there are three kind of languages with respect to embedded gapping : languages where embedded gaps are impossible (English, French), languages where embedded gaps are possible only with parenthetical matrix predicates (Romanian) and languages where embedded gaps are possible under a wide range of non-parenthetical embedding verbs (Farsi, Spanish).