

LINGUISTIC VARIATION, THE VARIATION OF INTERPRETATIONS

Abstract

A habilitation thesis in the domain of *Philology*,

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The paper that I am putting forth is called *Linguistic variation, the variation of interpretations* and is elaborated with the view of being granted the degree of Dr. Habil. in the domain of Philology, with the following domains of expertise: the morphology of Romanian (the inflectional domain), the syntax of Romanian (synchronic and diachronic), the dynamics of the language, normative grammar, school grammar.

I began my research activity 20 years ago at the Institute of Linguistics “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti”, in the Grammar Department, coordinated by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, and, at the same time, I have been teaching at the Faculty of Letters, University of Bucharest. As a co-author of the collective works developed at the Institute of Linguistics, reference grammar works with a major impact on the scientific community, I have been exposed to various directions of research which helped me discover and understand not only the evolution of language, but also the evolution of interpretations. At the same time, my teaching activity (courses and seminars as part of the Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees at the Faculty of Letters, as well as practical courses of Romanian as a foreign language taught at the Preparatory year for foreign students enrolled at the Centre of Romanian Studies, the Faculty of Letters), but also the activity related to the coordination of bachelor papers (over 40, in the wider domain of grammar) gave me different perspectives of analysis over specific language facts: descriptive, normative, practical, modern, traditional (the didactic perspective), synchronic, diachronic, comparative, typological, etc.

The thesis consists of three important sections, preceded by an introduction and followed by a short ending: a section related to linguistic variation, a section referring to the variation of interpretations and a section in which I put forth a personal research, which has not been published yet.

The chapter referring to linguistic variation is an overview of the most important morpho-syntactic subjects that I pursued in my previous scientific activity. In the following, I will present some of the most significant topics approached in my previous research.

(i) semantic differentiation, with a direct impact on the grammatical behaviour, between two special semantic classes of nouns – the collective and the massive;

(ii) separating the genuine apposition from the so-called *false* apposition (the categorial attribute or the denominative modifier);

(iii) finding the more or less rigid restrictions involved in the phenomenon of subject – predicate agreement;

(iv) delineating a third class of adjectives (alongside qualifying adjectives and relational adjectives);

(v) the analysis of *mixed and double* adjectives and the role of word order in the process of the disambiguating process;

(vi) the diachronic and typological presentation of the category of intensification (the comparison and intensification of adjectives);

(vii) identifying the patterns of analysis involved in the reanalysis of motion verbs as copula or aspectual operators in Romanian;

(viii) identifying inflectional variation in two lexical-grammatical classes: the verb and the adjective.

The chapter referring to the variation of interpretations brings forth four perspectives from which I have analysed the inflectional behaviour of certain classes of words or syntactic phenomena. I have started from the descriptive grammar of current Romanian for foreign researchers (*The Grammar of Romanian*), after which I continued with the diachronic perspective, alongside the grammar of old Romanian (*The Syntax of Old Romanian*), then to the didactic perspective, alongside school grammar (*Gramatica limbii române pentru gimnaziu*), to get to the last project in which I was involved, dealing with „small words posing great problems” (plurifunctional/marginal categories difficult to accommodate and with interfering values – *Dicționar de interpretări gramaticale*). All these four works (among which the first two were translated in Romanian as *O gramatică a limbii române altfel* and *Sintaxa limbii române vechi*), coordinated by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, gave me the opportunity to be part of teams made of experienced researchers and to understand the fact that the dynamics of language is accompanied by the dynamics of interpretations.

The results of my previous research are available in the cited works, that is why the presentation of my personal achievements in these two sections looks more like fragments excerpted

from the papers I have published, in order to answer the goals of the present theses, i.e., to support the areas of expertise mentioned at the beginning.

In the final part of the thesis, I put forth one of my most recent research paper, which has not been published up to the present moment, dealing with invariable adjectives. The originating phenomenon in this research is the enrichment of the class of invariable adjectives. Given the fact that invariability is considered a weakness in the inflectional system, the extension of this class of units with a marginal status raises the unpredictability area in the inflection of the adjective. In my research I focused on the common path of certain units in spoken Romanian (de tipul: *crișă* ‘steel’, *sloi* ‘ice block’, *bătă* ‘bat’, *lună* ‘moon’, *bec* ‘bulb’, *lulea* ‘cigar’, *pușcă* ‘shot gun’, *măr* ‘apple’, *cuc* ‘cuckoo’, *cobză* ‘kobsa’, *scândură* ‘plank’, *belea* ‘trouble’, *bombă* ‘bomb’, etc.) and I delineated more stages: first, we deal with nouns, which occur in *false-comparative* structures; then they undergo a process of partial desemantisation, after which they become inflectionally rigid, and, due to a process of metaphoric transfer, they become intensifiers of certain adjectives; in the third stage, these nouns enter recategorization, they become invariable adjectives (they encapsulate the initial adjective, deleted through ellipsis and add an extra-meaning of strong intensification, specific to the superlative); finally, some of these forms become adverbs and they acquire a purpose reading (accompanying verbs) or they enter adverbial patterns (adverb + *de* + adjective). The pattern with nouns which recategorize and acquire the superlative meaning is vivid and very productive in current Romanian and is characteristic of the colloquial, spoken language. The goal of my presentation is not only to point to the area of unpredictability, but also to identify the aspects of predictability which some of the units of the class mentioned display.

Sources and bibliography cited in this paper are mentioned after the final section of the paper.

