DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

TITLE : ISSUES IN ROMANIAN LINGUISTICS AND GENERAL LINGUISTICS

Domain: PHILOLOGY

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This work presents my scientific contributions made after the defense of my PhD thesis (2008), as well as my plans for developing my research career.

As most of these contributions stemmed, quite naturally, from the identification of certain problems, which belong to various domains of linguistics, I chose the tile "Issues in Romanian Linguistics and General Linguistics." I have also contributed to large projects where the main goal is not solving a problem, but rather providing a comprehensive presentation of a field — namely, the Romanian grammar and the etymological dictionary of the Romanian language — and many of the problems addressed in specific research arose from working on these broader projects.

The issues tackled primarily concern the Romanian language, though not exclusively — some issues have been from the very beginning general linguistic issues (such as: definiteness in relative superlatives, the majority-quantifier interpretation of quantitative superlatives, the internal structure of personal pronouns, the relative order of adjectives and noun complements and their consequences for cartographic theory). But it often occurred that working on issues specific to Romanian led to results with implications for general linguistics: for instance, the study of the genitival article *al* and Romanian possessives led to the more general phenomenon of genitives agreeing with the head noun, with consequences for structural case theory; the analysis of the Romanian double definiteness construction and the comparison of its semantics with that of recognitional demonstratives led to the proposal of a general analysis of demonstratives, contributing to the still unsettled theoretical issue of the basic semantic distinction between the definite article and demonstratives; the study of Romanian vocatives highlighted the importance of a specific general semantic-pragmatic classification of vocatives; the problem of restrictions on temporal modifiers in the context of the imperfective aspect led to the adoption of a particular view on aspect; the study of Romanian exclamatives led to a rejection of

theories positing scalarity as a defining component of exclamatives.

Most of the issues addressed concern the grammatical system, with a focus on syntax and semantics, which is why I began the presentation with these, grouped by theme:

(i) issues concerning genitives and possessives: the syntactic analysis and historical development of the genitival article *al*, the phenomenon of agreeing genitives and possessives, with implications for structural case theory and related phenomena in the history of Romanian (the evolution of demonstratives and definiteness marking);

(ii) the structure of pronouns and determiner phrases (DPs) without an overt noun, continuing the topic of my PhD thesis, where I explored the structure of third-person personal pronouns, the pro-N clitic It. *ne*/Fr. *en*, with implications for cliticization theory, and the gender of personal pronouns, including genderless pronouns and the implications for the Romanian gender system (especially the issue of the neuter);

(iii) the interpretation of the Romanian double definiteness construction (*casa cea mare* 'house-the the big'), in relation to recognitional demonstratives and the semantic analysis of demonstratives;

(iv) the omission of the definite article after prepositions (e.g., *pe masă* 'on table' meaning "on the table"), both syntactically and from a diachronic and comparative perspective;

(v) the marking of vocatives with definite article forms, with implications for the universal semantic typology of vocatives;

(vi) issues related to adjectives and degrees of comparison, particularly the superlative (adjective order, the gradation and complementation system of adjectives in Romanian, definiteness in so-called "relative" readings of the superlative, and lack of agreement in the Romanian "tough-construction");

(vii) issues concerning the semantics of determiners (majority quantifiers and their relation to quantitative superlatives, the semantic analysis of bare noun phrases with indefinite interpretation);

(viii) word order issues in relation to information structure (subject distribution in a language like Romanian with flexible VS/SV word order, the definition and types of topic, contrastive topicalization of indefinite pronouns, polarity focus — or *verum focus* — and focus fronting in Romanian; as a byproduct of the work on exclamative focus, I included here an overview of exclamative sentences in Romanian);

(ix) issues regarding verbal functional categories — voice and aspect (the constraints on reflexive passive subjects, the syntactic types of participles in Romanian, the restrictions on temporal modifiers with the imperfective aspect, the present perfect readings of the compound perfect, the analysis of clitic auxiliaries and modal particles which form the so-called "verbal complex" in Romanian);

(x) issues related to certain adverbs (the semantics of the clitic adverb *mai*, the semantics of celerative adverbs and the syntactic correlates of the observed semantic distinctions, the interpretation of the interrogative particle *oare*, and the existence of adverbs whose comparative form has a different syntax than the positive form, associated with special meanings).

Then I present some other issues in Romanian historical grammar which are not included in the major themes above:

(i) the origin of the 3rd person plural dative clitic *le* and the shift *nă > ne, lă > le*;

(ii) the origin of the conjunction *de*.

The final part of the section on scientific achievements describes the role I have played (and continue to play) in two major Romanian linguistics projects: the Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DELR) and the development of a modern grammar of the language, based on

generative syntax and formal compositional semantics (the first part of this work was published in 2013: C. Dobrovie-Sorin and Ion Giurgea (eds.), *A Reference Grammar of Romanian. I: The Noun Phrase*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, xxviii +900p.).

The second part of the dissertation presents my plans for future studies and career development. First and foremost, this includes the large-scale, long-term projects in which I am one of the coordinators: the Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language (DELR) and the Reference Grammar, which complements the volume on the noun phrase published in 2013 by Benjamins with volumes dedicated to the verb phrase and the sentence, aiming to be the most comprehensive and detailed description of the grammatical system of Romanian based on the results achieved in generative syntax and formal semantics.

I also outlined several research directions that emerged as a consequence of some of the previous studies described in the first part of this dissertation. One such direction concerns expanding research focused on Romanian by adding a comparative dimension and developing the theoretical consequences of such comparative studies:

(i) the investigation of aspectual systems, aiming to establish, through clear tests, the appropriate semantic characterization of "imperfective" and "perfective" across languages;

(ii) comparative research on subject topicalization in languages with flexible word order, in connection with information structure, seeking to establish differences between languages characterized as VS/SV (like Romanian) and stricter VSO languages (such as Celtic languages);

(iii) the implications of the findings regarding Romanian structural case marking for general case theory, including a comparison with other systems exhibiting differential marking of structural cases.

A second direction aims to investigate underexplored aspects of the Romanian grammatical system:

(i) the aspectual properties of paradigm forms not explicitly marked for a specific aspect;

(ii) the semantics of mood;

(iii) the prosodic system of Romanian, especially at the sub-clausal level.

A third direction concerns Romanian historical grammar, where some areas remain insufficiently clarified and require in-depth corpus studies:

(i) the evolution of the prepositions *spre* and *p(r)e* (involving a merger stage followed by a differentiation along different semantic dimensions)

(ii) the evolution of the aspectual system, particularly the perfect aspect.

Finally, I have identified the fields in which I could supervise doctoral theses and provided some examples of potential dissertation topics.