

RODICA ZAFIU, ADNANA BOIOC APINTEI (eds), *Variație sintactică în româna actuală* [Syntactic Variation in Present-Day Romanian], București: Editura Universității din București – Bucharest University Press, 2025, 357 p.

Variație sintactică în româna actuală [Syntactic Variation in Present-Day Romanian], published at Bucharest University Press, represents a significant collaborative achievement by the research team of grammarians from the “Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti” Institute of Linguistics of the Romanian Academy and from the Faculty of Letters of the University of Bucharest, under the coordination of Gabriela Pană Dindelegan. The book comprises eleven corpus-based studies examining syntactic variation at the morphology-syntax and syntax-pragmatics interfaces. The authors draw primarily on the roTenTen16/21 corpora, occasionally complemented by the CoRoLa balanced corpus and the Arcanum digital library for a diachronic perspective. Several studies also incorporate linguistic questionnaires administered to native speakers, providing valuable acceptability judgments that complement corpus frequency data. The volume addresses both well-known phenomena (indirect object doubling, adverbial clitic placement, the competition between supine and infinitive/subjunctive) and understudied topics (the infinitival relative, collective noun agreement, the status of nouns functioning as intensifiers), organized into five thematic sections, each anchored by a shared concern: the complex interplay between variation in usage and implicit or explicit norms.

The opening section, *From Morphology and Semantics to Syntax* (pp. 15–67), pairs two studies that share an underlying question: how do properties at the morphological and semantic levels shape syntactic behavior? Isabela Nedelcu, in *Sintaxa specială a substantivelor neologice cu finalele -a, -o și -i în limba română* [The Special Syntax of Neological Nouns Ending in -a, -o, and -i in Romanian] (pp. 15–37), tackles this issue through the lens of recent loanwords, showing that these neological nouns with atypical endings (i.e., -a, -o, -i: *lasagna, cappuccino, emoji*) constitute a distinct morphosyntactic class marked by invariability or tendency towards invariability, preference for unmarked syntactic relations, and resistance to enclitic articulation. Based on the roTenTen16 corpus, the analysis brings into discussion classifier constructions (e.g., *pasăre flamingo* ‘flamingo bird’, where the neologism denotes a property) and the emergence of adjectival uses (e.g., *geantă cappuccino* ‘cappuccino-colored bag’), underscoring how morphological non-integration has syntactic consequences. Blanca Croitor’s study on collective noun agreement, *Acordul substantivelor colective* [The Agreement of Collective Nouns] (pp. 39–67), combining corpus data (CoRoLa) with a scalar acceptability task administered to 126 subjects, establishes that, in the case of Romanian collectives, the agreement of the verb and of anaphoric elements depends on multiple interacting factors. The results demonstrate that semantic type plays a crucial role, in the sense that human collectives (e.g., *echipă* ‘team’, *guvern* ‘government’) allow plural agreement more readily than non-human ones. Furthermore, plural agreement is conditioned by verb class (with reciprocal verbs, such as *a se despărți* ‘to separate’, and individualizing verbs favoring plural), word order (meaning that predicate-subject configurations facilitate plural agreement more than subject-predicate order) and specific quantifiers (for instance, adverbials such as *împreună* ‘together’, *separat* ‘separately’, *pe rând* ‘in turn’ individualize group members, thereby increasing the acceptability of plural agreement). The gradient patterns identified through the questionnaire confirm that agreement is governed by interacting factors rather than categorical rules.

Section II, *Clitic Doubling and Word Order* (pp. 69–128), also comprises two studies which converge on a shared theme: linear position encodes both register and semantic distinctions. Adina Dragomirescu and Irina Nicula Paraschiv, in *Dublarea complementului indirect în limba română actuală* [Clitic Doubling of the Indirect Object in Present-Day Romanian] (pp. 71–104), revisit dative

clitic doubling through a large-scale survey (nearly 1,000 respondents) and corpus analysis. Their study finds that resumptive configurations (preverbal DP) follow stricter rules than anticipatory configurations (postverbal DP): doubling is obligatory with demonstratives and personal pronouns, shows clear preference with *wh*-elements, but remains variable with indefinites and negative quantifiers. Moreover, the animacy and definiteness hierarchies interact asymmetrically across the two configurations. The central contribution is documenting that contexts traditionally described as obligatory doubling in fact involve certain register differentiations (literary and archaizing style maintaining some situations of non-doubling) and constructional differentiations (the analytic realization of the dative implying, for example, a preference for absence of doubling). In conclusion, preverbal vs. postverbal object placement correlates with different doubling patterns and stylistic registers. These findings are important for understanding the relationship between prescriptive rules and actual usage by native speakers. In the following chapter (pp. 105–128), Adnana Boioc Apintei examines the distribution of four light adverbs (i.e., *mai*, *prea*, *cam*, *tot*) relative to lexical and auxiliary verbs in various analytic tenses. *Mai* shows strong preference for position between auxiliary and lexical verb (over 99% in perfect compound constructions). *Prea* exhibits differentiated behavior depending on semantic context. This means that in negative contexts, where it has an approximative or attenuative meaning, it prefers pre-auxiliary position (57.67%), whereas in affirmative contexts, expressing excess, it shows more variable placement. *Cam* dominantly occurs between auxiliary and lexical verb (90.50% in future constructions). The main finding concerns *tot*. When placed before the auxiliary (87.75%), it carries concessive meaning, and in this use, Boioc Apintei argues it is not truly a clitic. Conversely, when placed between auxiliary and verb (13.25% of cases), it entails an aspectual reading. Positional variation thus encodes semantic distinctions.

Section III, *Relative and Completive Constructions* (pp. 129–217), the longest in the volume, gathers four studies on subordination. The unifying thread is that syntactic patterns in this domain are shaped as much by phonological, lexical, and register as by formal grammatical rules. Mihaela Gheorghe, in *Variație sintactică în uzul actual al construcțiilor relative* [Syntactic Variation in the Current Use of Relative Constructions] (pp. 131–151), documents variation among competing forms in relative clause constructions using the roTenTen21 corpus. The analysis confirms the frequency hierarchy of relative connectors (preference for *care* ‘which’ over *ce* ‘what’), the existence of zero-connector constructions (in well-delimited patterns), and the preference for inflectionally unmarked forms. The study also examines clichéization of certain patterns containing relatives (*indiferent* + relative, *în cazul/ipoteza/măsura în care* ‘in case/in the hypothesis/to the extent to which’), modal existential constructions, and pseudocleft structures. A notable finding is that relativization from direct object position without *pe*, though frequent in spoken language, proves strikingly rare in written web data (only 5 tokens in a 2000 example sample), thus highlighting the importance of register-sensitive corpus selection. The theoretical centerpiece of the section is Alexandru Nicolae’s analysis of infinitival relatives (pp. 153–186). Combining a corpus-based approach (roTenTen16) with theoretical syntactic analysis and native speaker judgments, Nicolae provides a detailed account of infinitival relative constructions, such as *are cine veni* (‘there is someone to come’) or *e ce mânca* (‘there is something to eat’). The author establishes the defining characteristics of the construction in present-day Romanian with respect to the internal structure (arguing in favor of its propositional status), the inventory of regents (*a avea* ‘to have’ (personal or impersonal) and *a fi* ‘to be’ (impersonal only)), the topicalization possibilities (either the entire infinitival relative can be topicalized by movement to the left of the regent, or the infinitive alone can be topicalized with the relative element remaining in its base position, noting that this second type of topicalization triggers obligatory insertion of the infinitival marker *a*), to the independent negation scope, as well as the possibility of pronominal and adverbial clitics. As part of the of the broader class of MECs (i.e., modal existential constructions), the infinitival relative construction is shown to be a reduced clause, which is headed by a relative connector that projects a CP layer, it is temporally dependent on the features of the regent, and selected by two governing verbs that function as syntactic-semantic operators (i.e., *a avea* and *a fi*). Nicolae interprets these constructions as generalized existential quantifiers, distinct from both free relatives and embedded questions. In turn, this study contributes to typological debates on clause size, which can be further

developed in a cross-linguistic setting. Rodica Zafiu's diachronically informed study, *Variație sintactică în domeniul complementizării: că vs faptul că* [Syntactic Variation in Complementization: *că* 'that' vs. *faptul că* 'the fact that'] (pp. 187–206), investigates the competition between the shell-noun *fapt* ('fact') as used in the construction *faptul că* ('the fact that') versus the complementizer *că* ('that'). Drawing on the roTenTen16/21 corpora and the Arcanum digital library, Zafiu identifies euphony as the primary conditioning factor: after verbs ending in *-că* (*explică* 'explains', *remarcă* 'remarks'), *faptul că* reaches 80–91%, whereas after *constată* 'notes', where no cacophony arises, it falls to 1%. This demonstrates how speakers' sensitivity to perceived cacophony can drive syntactic choice. Grammaticalization diagnostics (feminine clitic resumption, emergent *faptul să* construction) suggest incipient reanalysis as a complex complementizer, though the process remains incomplete and stylistically constrained. In the closing chapter of this section (pp. 207–217), Andreea Dinică examines competition among three verbal moods (supine, infinitive, and subjunctive) across various syntactic contexts. Drawing on the CoRoLa and RoTenTen corpora, results show that the distribution is lexically idiosyncratic, precluding general syntactic rules. *Demn* 'worthy' favors supine (driven by frequent constructions like *demn de menționat* 'worthy of mentioning'), *gata* 'ready' selects subjunctive. Verbal regents with prepositional regimes, such as *a se gândi la* 'to think about', *a se teme de* 'to fear', clearly prefer subjunctive, while aspectual verbs show mixed patterns: *a se apuca de* 'to start' prefers subjunctive, while *a termina de* 'to finish' prefers supine more often. It is observed that impersonal constructions (*este greu/ușor/difil de* 'it is hard/easy/difficult to') strongly prefer supine. In conclusion, selection is a matter of lexical collocation and degree of clichéization.

Section IV, *Comparative and Degree Marking Constructions* (pp. 219–303), reunites two studies showing that variation is governed by competing normative systems represented by explicit prescriptive rules and implicit phonological (i.e., euphony) constraints. In the chapter *Variație în actualizarea complementului comparativ din grupul adjectival în româna actuală* [Patterns of Comparative Complement Actualization in Romanian Adjectival Phrases. A Corpus-Based Study of Current Usage] (pp. 221–287), Carmen Mîrzea Vasile examines comparative constructions with and without overt complements, as well as competition among connectors within the same construction type. Drawing on the roTenTen21 corpus and a correction test administered to native subjects, Mîrzea Vasile finds that speakers observe prescriptive rules (e.g., *decît* 'than' over *ca* 'than' in lexicalized inequality constructions, *dintre* 'of, from' over *din* 'of, from' with plurals) but simultaneously follow implicit euphonic constraints avoiding cacophony. Usage variation thus reflects the interplay of explicit prescriptive norms and speakers' internalized beliefs about proper usage. Raluca Brăescu's corpus-based study (pp. 289–303) documents a degree marking strategy, well represented in Romanian colloquial speech. Using the RoTenTen corpus spoken Romanian, the author identifies a multi-stage recategorization process: nouns first appear in false comparative constructions (e.g., *beat criță* 'drunk as a quail' involves a stereotyped comparison), then become invariable intensifiers of adjectives (e.g., *prost bâță* 'stupid as a stick' comes to mean 'very stupid'), and finally achieve full adjectival use, modifying nouns directly (e.g., *om criță* 'a criță person', in colloquial Romanian, means 'an extremely stupid person'). Brăescu argues for recategorization on both grammatical grounds (e.g., occurrence in typically adjectival contexts, compatibility with degree markers, loss of nominal features) and semantic grounds (e.g., shift from comparison to pure intensification). This process, in turn, enriches the inventory of invariable adjectives in colloquial (and argotic) registers.

Section V, *From Pragmatics to Syntax*, contains a single contribution that reframes a classic issue in Romanian syntax. Andra Vasilescu, in *Subiectul nul vs subiectul pronominal în limba română actuală. Distribuție și constrângeri pragmadiscursive* [Null Subject vs. Pronominal Subject in Present-Day Romanian: Distribution and Pragmatic-Discursive Constraints] (pp. 307–354), replaces the traditional explanation of overt subject pronouns as markers of *emphasis* or *contrast* with a fine-grained taxonomy of pragmatic-discursive functions. In this corpus-driven account (roTenTen16/21, ILVR), Vasilescu argues that Romanian is a consistent pro-drop discourse-configurational language, where the null subject is the unmarked (default) option, and pronominal subject realization is the marked option constrained primarily by pragmatic-discursive factors, not purely syntactic ones. In preverbal position, overt pronouns function as informational topics (marking cohesion, intensifying illocutionary force),

contrastive topics (with prosodic accent), or hanging topics. In postverbal position, they serve as rheme, informational or contrastive focus, or afterthought. The analysis demonstrates that null/overt alternation is governed by information-structural principles, rather than purely syntactic accounts, aligning Romanian with broader typological patterns in pro-drop languages and contributing to cross-linguistic understanding of the syntax-pragmatics interface.

Variație sintactică în româna actuală makes several important contributions to Romanian linguistics in particular and to the study of syntactic variation more broadly. These corpus-driven studies reveal that syntactic variation is conditioned by morphological, lexical, semantic, and discursive factors, thus showcasing the interplay between norm and usage. Without taking from the importance of this volume, two limitations merit note. First, the reliance on web corpora, while enabling large-scale (quantitative) analysis, inevitably skews the data toward written registers. Several studies acknowledge that spoken Romanian may exhibit different distributional patterns. This is a hypothesis that showcases the pressing need for the development and systematic exploitation of Romanian spoken corpora in future (syntactic) research. Second, we believe that the volume would have benefited from a general discussion chapter, highlighting the main findings, placing the results in a cross-linguistic setting, and sketching out future research directions.

These reservations notwithstanding, the volume demonstrates the importance of an approach that integrates syntactic features with morphological and discursive ones, and that relates variation in usage to explicit or implicit norms. The readership for this volume extends beyond Romanian specialists, being equally relevant for romance syntacticians, variationists, scholars working on the syntax-pragmatics interface, as well as advanced students. The volume provides essential empirical foundations for future (grammatical) descriptions of Romanian data.

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MARÍA MARE, GONZALO ESPINOSA (eds), *Aportes Disciplinarios II SAEL* [Disciplinary contributions II SAEL], Neuquén: Universidad Nacional del Comahue. Facultad de Lenguas; Buenos Aires, Sociedad Argentina de Estudios Lingüísticos, 2024, 118 p.

The volume *Aportes Disciplinarios II SAEL*, edited by María Mare and Gonzalo Espinosa, compiles the contributions that resulted from the plenary talks at the 18th Congress of the Argentinian Society of Linguistic Studies, which took place in General Roca, Río Negro, Argentina, between May 10 and 13, 2023. The volume consists of an introduction by the two editors in which they explain the goals of the conference and the main idea behind the apparently dispersed topics included, highlighting that they aimed to offer discussions and perspectives not only relevant to the field of linguistics, but, more importantly, to the development of the field in Argentina and South America. The six contributions are grouped into three sections: *Pensar la variación* [Thinking about variation], *Mirar las lenguas* [Looking at languages], and *Aplicar el conocimiento lingüístico en la escuela* [Applying linguistic knowledge in school].

The first section begins with a study by Juan Carlos Moreno Cabrera titled *Paradojas de la dialectología española* [Paradoxes of Spanish dialectology] in which he describes the field of Hispanic prescriptivist dialectology. He argues that certain foundational assumptions in Spanish dialectology are problematic, since it is based on the standard variety of Spanish, which is not a natural language, but rather a cultivated language. Starting from the observations of Saussure that natural languages only manifest through dialects or varieties, the author argues that what is now considered the basis for all Spanish norms is a prescriptivist language that has neither existed naturally nor does it exist now. The author argues that the phonological system of Argentinian Spanish is not a sub-system of a bigger system, but rather an autonomous system in its own right. From this perspective, there is no difference

between language and dialect and, subsequently, the same applies to linguistics and dialectology. Based on this, the study of different Spanish varieties should fall under descriptive linguistics rather than dialectology. Moreover, all dialectal features of Spanish are based on the standard language, but the latter emerged after the dialectal diversity, thus there are no dialectal traits, but rather linguistic traits that characterize dialects, which are natural languages. Therefore, the author defines Spanish dialectology as Hispanic prescriptivist dialectology, since it takes as reference a cultivated language which never existed naturally.

The second study from this section is authored by Virginia Bertolotti and Magdalena Coll and is titled *La lengua y la guerra en el periódico El Tambor de la Línea (Montevideo, 1843)* [The language and the war in the newspaper *El Tambor de la Línea* (Montevideo, 1843)]. This study analyzes three issues of *El Tambor de la Línea* published during the Uruguayan Civil War. The study begins with describing the historical context behind the Civil War, with a special focus on the multiethnicity present in that area, followed by a brief description of the journalistic context and the demolinguistic context. The authors also briefly describe the three issues (which are included as appendices to the study) before moving to the linguistic analysis which focuses on the depiction and speech varieties of four soldiers: a Spanish soldier, a Genovese legionary, a Basque soldier, and a French soldier. In each case, a brief description of the picture representing said soldier is given, followed by the original text (and gloss) in which the soldier explains their reasons for supporting the Defense Government during the Great Siege of Montevideo. For each text, the authors describe the linguistic representations compared to the standard Spanish of that period, focusing on the phonetics, lexicon, and morphosyntax. The study reveals that the Spanish soldier's speech relied on phonetic level (vowels), the Genovese soldier used a mixture of Italian and Spanish interferences, the Basque soldier was characterized through syntactic features (word order), while for the French soldier's speech orthography was used to mimic French pronunciation.

The second section, *Mirar las lenguas*, contains a study of Ronice Müller de Quadros titled *Gramática de Libras basada en corpus: Rutas metodológicas* [Corpus-based grammar of Libras¹: Methodological paths] and the study *The world through the prism of meaning: noun categorization devices and the ecology of language* by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald.

In the first study, Quadros begins by contextualizing the history of grammatical studies starting from the Greek period to the Port-Royal Grammar focusing on the distinction between the traditional and descriptive grammars, as well as a brief discussion about the two main Portuguese grammar books, a descriptive grammar by Perini and a functionalist grammar by de Moura. This introduction ends with a short history of Libras and its legal status. The author then focuses on the methodological steps, as well as the motivation, for compiling the National Libras Inventory, starting from the identification of the participants and the data collection, the tools used in data collection (including interviews, conversations, storytelling, and vocabulary), data collection for video recordings, video archiving, data management, and metadata, data transcription, and data availability. Each of these steps is extensively described focusing on the methodology and is accompanied by concrete examples. The study ends by listing a few of the things learned from the grammatical study of Libras, including the need for the Deaf to be the protagonists in these studies and the unique features of Libras compared to spoken languages.

Aikhenvald's study concludes this second section by talking about noun categorization through a typological perspective. It begins by referencing Haugen's concept of *ecology of language* and by a cursory review of the noun categorization devices, including numeral classifiers, noun classifiers, classifiers in possessive constructions, as well as multiple classifier languages—languages that use classifiers in multiple environments. The next part focuses on the versatility of grammatical gender, discussing the slow language change towards gender-neutral pronouns and then how different languages use gender switch as a sign of respect (with a particular focus on the Tariana language) and endearment (Swiss German and Bulgarian). The study then turns to the typology of classifiers, discussing sortal and mensural numeral classifiers and the semantic distinction hierarchy, highlighting that a specific classifier

¹ The word *Libras* is a portmanteau for *Língua Brasileira de Sinais* (Brazilian Sign Language).

may only exist if the language also exhibits more general categories, based either on humanness, animacy, or shape and consistency. The study concludes with a discussion about special classifiers, including the use of different classifiers for different social categories in Thai, Lao, and Zhuang and the use of highly specific classifiers for non-human nouns that play a pivotal role in the respective cultures. The author concludes with a discussion about the roles of specific classifiers and their distinction compared to the rest. In essence, specific classifiers do not primarily “classify” in the general sense but rather act as linguistic markers of cultural values of a community at a given time and are therefore more sensitive to changes in the outside world and may be lost if the cultural practice disappears.

The last section of this volume is dedicated to applying the linguistic knowledge in school (*Aplicar el conocimiento lingüístico en la escuela*) and begins with a study by Charles Bazerman titled *Enseñar a escribir: mucho más que enseñar la lengua* [The teaching of writing: more than the teaching of language] in which he describes the importance of teaching (and learning) how to write. He begins with an introduction about the multifaceted questions a writer needs to consider when deciding on their writing and the importance of mentoring students in honing their writing skills. The study then proceeds to discuss several matters that can help create a better writer, starting with helping the writers grow, teaching young writers to be confident in their writing, discussing the timeframe needed to write a good composition, emphasizing how time consuming it is to improve one’s writing. The study then emphasizes the importance of teaching the difference between writing in school and writing in other environments, the importance of self-regulation, as well as that of intertextuality. This study aims to highlight the importance of helping students not only focus on the language but also dedicate some time specifically to writing.

The final study of this volume is signed by Andrey Nikulin and is dedicated to the linguistics olympiads under the title *Las olimpiadas de lingüística, o cómo llevar la lingüística a la secundaria* [Linguistics olympiads or how to bring linguistics to high school]. The study aims to encourage the involvement of high school teachers in promoting the linguistics olympiads to secondary students. The introduction starts with a brief history of the linguistics olympiads, focusing on the social impact and what an olympiad involves, before moving on to a more technical description of self-sufficient linguistics problems, the core of all linguistics olympiads. When describing these self-sufficient problems, the author gives concrete examples of problems used in previous olympiads and discusses the thematic scope of the problems, the featured languages, and the bibliography used to generate a problem, the requirements that a correct problem must meet, as well as a classification of linguistics problems. The study then moves to practical aspects of linguistics olympiads for interested teachers and professors, discussing how to start an olympiad, how to create a linguistics problem, and how to grade students’ submissions. The study ends with a brief introspection into the use of self-sufficient problems in other contexts. Moreover, the potential for reducing inequality in the educational environment is highlighted. This reduction of inequalities is possible because linguistics is generally not part of the standard school curriculum, allowing students from different socioeconomic backgrounds to compete on equal footing.

The six papers that compose the volume *Aportes Disciplinarios II SAEL* cover different corners of linguistics, from dialectology to corpus linguistics, from sign language to linguistic typology, from methodological approaches for writing to linguistics olympiads. While dispersed, they are all topics of interest and necessity, and for that reason they were chosen as plenary lectures in the 18th Congress of the Argentinian Society of Linguistic Studies. This makes the present volume a valuable resource for the academic community, researchers, teachers, and students alike.

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