# SOME INFLUENCES OF THE ENGLISH LINGUISTICS UPON THE NEW ROMANIAN GRAMMAR

**Lector univ. dr. Claudia LEAH**

**Universitatea din Oradea**

*Abstract*

This paper intends to show that some English linguistic theories have influenced the presentation, analysis and interpretation of grammatical facts in the New Romanian Grammar of Academy, published in 2005. I could mention here the category of Prepositional Object, previously considered Prepositional Indirect Object in Accusative, or that of Object Complement, or the influence of Fillmore's Case Grammar upon the Romanian cases. The entire view on the Romanian grammar has been changed and, therefore, the grammatical phenomena are presented from the new perspective.

*Key words: grammatical correspondences, English language, Romanian language, reorganization.*

The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of the grammatical correspondences which can be identified between Romanian and English languages. These correspondences seem to have occurred as a result of adapting some linguistic concepts, ideas, which initially had been applied to the English grammar by their initiators, famous American or British linguists, to the Romanian language.

The new Romanian grammar, elaborated under the auspices of "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rossetti" Institute of Linguistics, of the Romanian Academy from Bucharest, is remarkable for its profound reorganizations, more or less justified, and a visible reconsideration, both of morphology and especially of syntax. This thing proved to be a generator of confusions and difficulties, both for the teachers, used to focusing on another perspective upon grammar, and for the students, who had already learnt the old way of approaching grammar.

People who are not conversant with the subtlety of the English language cannot easily identify the origin of these changes, but for a graduate of the Faculty of Letters (English / Romanian specialization), interested in the grammar of the two languages, the English influence upon the new Romanian approach is obvious.

Here are some of the correspondences I was talking about:

- The inclusion of some parts of speech in *types of classes* is a structuralist idea, initiated in 1933 by L. Bloomfield who suggests that the parts of speech should be framed into morphological classes and he names four types of classes (*class 1 words – nouns, class 2 words – verbs, class 3 words – adjectives, class 4 words – adverbs*), the other parts of speech being considered *form /functional words* meant to help the



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classes of words function accordingly (Bloomfield, 1933). Having as a starting point this idea, the new Romanian grammar suggests that all parts of speech and also some categories should be included in classes and subclasses, and names the *class of inflexions, of pronouns, of numerals and quantitatives, of determinants, of proforms, of substitutes, of deictics* (this last class rather belongs to discourse analysis by reporting to the situations of communication with the two poles: locutor and message addressee), *of connectors, of junctors* etc.

- Another idea taken from the structuralist linguistic school is that of the identification of the two basic components of the sentence, called then immediate constituents, i.e. *the Noun Phrase and the Verb Phrase*, and then of the other subphrases: *noun phrase, noun phrase substitute, prepositional phrase, adjectival phrase, adverbial phrase.* Both in English and in Romanian, the *phrase* represents (in relation with the part of sentence) a component of the sentence whose basic characteristic is that it associates the head-word (the centre of the phrase) with all its determinatives.
- Generative Transformational Grammar(GTG), through Noam Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, initiated in the 60's, proposed a set of subcategorization rules, meant to identify, at certain parts of speech, the existence (+) or not (-) of some features (Chomsky, 1965: 63-127). For example, the noun *dog* may be characterized by the following features: [+Common], [-Mass], [+Concrete], [+Animate], [-Human], [±Male], etc. On this basis, the new Romanian grammar tries to apply this principle, considering, for instance that a noun like *apa* may be described as having features such as: [+Materie], [-Abstract/+Concret], [-Animat], [-Masc], etc.
- Referring to the morphological category of gender, the English grammar mentions the existence of three basic genders: *masculine, feminine* and *neuter*, to which a fourth one may be added – the *common* or *dual* gender (Quirk et. alii,1979: 136) for nouns such as: *doctor, teacher, parent*. The Romanian grammar also mentions that the basic types of gender are: *masculine, feminine* and *neuter*, but the examples given in English are included in the class of *epicene* nouns. It is admitted, however, the existence of some nouns of *common* gender, in which examples such as: *mutulică, gură-cască, încurcă-lume, pierde-vară* etc. are included.
- In the taxonomic description of the nouns, a type of classification refers, in English, to *Countable/Count Nouns* (substantive numărabile) and *Uncountable-Mass Nouns* (substantive non-numărabile).The new Romanian grammar mentions the existence of *uncountable nouns*, such as: *calm, curaj, importanță*, but it also distinguishes a special category, that of the *massive nouns* (substantive *masive* < *mass* nouns), considered a



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semantic subclass of common nouns, designating undifferentiated material, such as: *alamă, apă, nisip* etc.

- The well-known morphological category of aspect, specific to the English verbs (*Indefinite/Common* for usual, repeated actions, *Continuous/Progressive* for actions taking place in a certain moment, *Frequentative*, and also *Perfective/Non-Perfective*) is found, slightly far-fetched, in the Romanian grammar vision as well, which makes clear distinctions between the aspectual significations of the verb, between *perfectiv (să fi citit)* and *non-perfectiv (să citesc)* and between the aspectual value *unic* (*Am citit cartea.)*, *iterativ – repetitiv* (= repeatedly: *Am citit cartea de trei ori.*) and *frecventativ* (=repeated with a certain frequency: *Am citit cartea săptămânal* ).
- *Causative* is a very debated term in English linguistics, because some linguists consider that it denotes or characterizes a voice, while some others, an aspect. Since in an example such as: *I had my car repaired.* the subject causes the direct object to suffer an action performed by someone else (by the agent), and the meaning is closer to a passive voice, it would rather be considered a type of voice, or better, a subtype of the passive voice. In the Romanian grammar, the term is also found, presented as a kind of *causative – factitive reorganization* with a pendant syntactic effect of the passive. The examples given in the Romanian grammar resemble the English ones: *Efortul îl face pe sportiv să obosească.= Spotivul e făcut să obosească (de efort).*
- A new category of subordinate clauses occurs in the new Romanian grammar, that of *relative clauses* (propoziții relative), which owe their name to the introductory relative element. They can be *restrictive* and *non-restrictive*. In English, the term *relative clause* designates the attributive clauses, and besides the two types: *restrictive* and *non-restrictive*, there is a third type, the so called *sentential relative clauses*, which no longer determine one word (a noun), but a whole clause or sentence.

  **Rom.:** Băiatul [*care vorbeşte*] e Mihai.(*restrictive relative clause*)

  Băiatul acela, [*care e îmbrăcat în roşu* ], e Mihai. (*non-restrictive relative clause)*

  **Engl. :**The boy [*who is speaking*] is Mike. (*restrictive relative clause)*

  That boy, [*who is dressed in red*], is Michael. (*non- restrictive relative clause*)

  The boy is always crying, [*which makes me angry*]. (*sentential relative clause).*
- In English, there are three different names for the Romanian term *complement*: **object** = *Complement Direct, Indirect* and *Prepozitional*, **adverbial** = *Complement circumstanțial* and **complement** = *Complementul subiectului (Numele predicativ), al*



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*adjectivului* şi *al complementului direct (Complementul predicativ al obiectului).* This last syntactical function, that of *object complement* has been recently introduced in the Romanian grammar, under the name of *complementul predicativ al obiectului (CPO)*, with similar values to the English language: e.g. They elected *him* **president**.

S P DO OC
Ei *l* - au ales **presedinte**.
S DO P OC (CPO)

- The distinction between the *Indirect Object* (always in Dative) and the *Prepositional Object* (in Accusative), known previously under the name of *Prepositional Indirect Object in Accusative (Complement indirect în Ac. cu prepoziţie)* is also due to the English influence, which, as mentioned before, makes distinction among Direct Object, Indirect Object (D) and Prepositional Object (Acc.)
- Charles Fillmore proposes a thoroughgoing study into the English cases, enumerating eight possible cases, each of them being able to fulfil the role of the subject case, or of any other syntactical function. Fillmore's Case Grammar refers to the following cases: *Agent, Experiencer, Object, Instrument, Source, Goal, Time, Location (*for example, in a sentence like *London is rainy.,* the subject *London* is in *Location* case) (Fillmore, 1971). Taking over, up to a certain point, Fillmore's ideas, the new Romanian grammar mentions, in a lapidary way, the possibility to express some *thematic roles* within the five cases of the noun in Romanian language (Nominative, Genitive, Dative, Accusative, Vocative). These *thematic roles* are:

▪*Agent* e.g. **Elevul** scrie. (the subject is *Agent)*
**Plecarea** copiilor. (the noun modifier is *Agent)*

▪*Pacient* e.g. **Copilul** este îngrijit. (the subject is *Pacient*)
Realizatorul **emisiunii** (the noun modifier is *Pacient* )

▪*Beneficiar* e.g. **Elevul** a obținut o bursă. (the subject is *Beneficiar )*
*(Beneficiary)*

▪*Instrument* e.g. **Plugul** ară ogorul. (the subject is *Instrument)*

▪*Cauza* e.g. **Vântul** a doborât copacul. (the subject is the *Cauza)*
*(Source)*

▪*Ținta* e.g. **Fata** a primit cadouri. (the subject is *Ținta*)
*(Goal)*

▪*Experimentatorul* e.g. **Omul** se supără. (the subject is



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*(Experiencer)* *Experimentatorul )*

▪*Locativ* e.g. Mă doare **piciorul** . (the subject is *locativ)*

*(Location)*

▪ *Posesorul* e.g.**Fata** are o ie albă.(the subject is *posesorul*)

*(Possessor)*

As it can be noticed, some of the English influences are easily adapted to the specific of the Romanian language (for example the permanent correlation with the discourse analysis, with the referent, with the reference domain etc.), while others are still unfit, being taken over from a language, English, which has nothing to do with Romanian (for instance the massive nouns). On the other hand, some ideas could have gone into the grammatical matrix of the Romanian language, but they were completely ignored (for example, although it is admitted that the predicative (numele predicativ) resembles the class of complements, and that its relation implies both the verb and the subject, the Romanian grammar hasn't taken the English term of *subject complement*, but that of predicative.

As a conclusion, I would like to highlight the fact that in the *Foreword* to the new Romanian grammar it is generally admitted that the scientific updating of the description of the reorganized corpus implied the capitalization of the results obtained during the research devoted to the Romanian language (some of which representing the enlargement of some suggestions taken from the Old Romanian Grammar of Academy), but also the selective assimilation of the recent theoretical acquisitions, widely accepted in the present-day linguistic research (Gramatica Limbii Române, 2005:IX). Indeed, besides the use of some recent concepts, such as *the telicity* of the parts of speech, the New Romanian Grammar of Academy is characterized by some transformations generated by the context of the new tendencies to assimilate the notion of *grammar* to that of *communication*, and to offer a general view from the discourse analysis perspective.

ENGLISH

1.Morphological classes:
-class 1 words – the noun
-class 2 words – the verb
-class 3 words – the adjective
-class 4 words – the adverb

2.Sentence constituents:
Noun Phrase – Verb Phrase
-NP substitutes
-Adjective phrase
-Adverbial Phrase
-Prepositional Phrase

3.Subcategorization rules
(N.Chomsky)
+common
+count
+animate
+human
-male etc.

4.Morphological category of gender:
-masculine
-feminine
-neuter
-common/dual



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5..Classification of nouns:
-simple – compound
-common – proper
-concrete – abstract
-countable/count – uncountable/ mass etc.

6.Verbal aspect:
-indefinite – continuous
-frequentative
-perfective – non-perfective

7. Causative aspect/voice

8.Relative clauses:
-restrictive
-non-restrictive
-sentential

9.Object complement

10.Indirect object (Dative
Prepositional object (Accusative)

11.Fillmore's Case Grammar

-Agent, Experiencer, Object, Instrument, Source, Goal, Time, Location

5.Clasificareasubstantivelor:
-simple – compuse
-comune – proprii
-concrete – abstracte
-numărabile – non-numărabile + masive

6Aspect verbal:
-repetativ –unic
-frecventativ
-perfectiv – non-perfectiv

7.Reorganizare cauzativ – factitivă

8.Propoziții relative:
-restrictive
-non-restrictive

9.Complementul predicativ al obiectului

10.Complement indirect (Dativ)
Complement prepozițional (Acuzativ)

11.Roluri tematice ale cazurilor:
-Agent, Beneficiar, Pacient, Instrument, Cauza, Tinta, Experimentator, Posesor, Locativ

ROMANIAN

1.Clase morfologice:
-clase flexionare (declinări, conjugări)
-clasa pronumelor
-clasa numeralului →clasa cantitativelor
-clasa determinanților

2.Constituenții propoziției:
-Grupul Nominal – Grupul Verbal
-grup adjectival
-grup adverbial
-grup prepozițional

3.Trăsături caracteristice:
+materie
+concret/-abstract
-animat
-masc etc

4.Categoria morfologică a genului:
-masculin
-feminin
-neutru
-comun



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