

Blanca Croitor

## TWO TYPES OF UNMARKED GENITIVES IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN

In Romanian, the genitive case is marked either by synthetic, enclitic markings (*școala băiatului* ‘the boy’s school’) or by analytic, proclitic markings (*școala lui Ion* ‘Ion’s school’). In some syntactic contexts, both types of markings are present, either in standard language (*școala nouă a elevului*<sup>1</sup> ‘the boy’s new school’) or in non-standard varieties (*școala a multor elevi* ‘the school of many children’ – see GBLR: 64). Two types of contexts in which the genitive case is not marked have been described in the literature: with a bare kinship noun and a possessive affix, in dialectal varieties<sup>2</sup>, as in (1), and with an abbreviated noun, as in (2):

- (1) *ochiul soacră-sa*  
eye.DEF mother-in-law=his/her.NOM≡ACC  
‘the eye of his / her mother-in-law’ (see Pană Dindelegan 2013: 271–272)
- (2) *angajații RADET*  
employee.PL.DEF RADET<sup>3</sup>  
‘the employees of RADET’ (see Pană Dindelegan 2013: 272).

In this article we show that there are two more types of unmarked genitives in contemporary Romanian. The first type is found in structures like the ones in (3), taken from the online press and other websites:

---

<sup>1</sup> The presence of the genitive marker *al* (inflected for gender and number, in agreement with the Possessee) is required whenever the genitive noun is not adjacent to the definite article of the Possessee; *al* has been described as a determiner or as a pronoun (for a description of these contexts, see Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013: 311–313, Pană Dindelegan 2013: 265–268 a.o.).

<sup>2</sup> This type of structure was preserved in dialectal varieties from the old language: *pentru chipul soțu-său* (Coresi, *CC*<sup>2</sup>, p. 314) ‘for her husband’s face’; *va sări înaintea domnu-său* (*Fl. darurilor*, 536<sup>f</sup>) ‘(s)he will jump before his/her master’; *rana stăpănu-mieu s-au tămăduit* (*Sindipa*, 87<sup>f</sup>) ‘my master’s wound has healed’ – see Stan 2013: 100, Pană Dindelegan 2016: 323. With this type of possessive structures, the dative case can also be unmarked: *Iară păzitorii și portarii se mirară și curseră de spuseră domnu-său...* (*Fl. darurilor*, 487<sup>v</sup>) ‘Then the guards and the gatekeepers were surprised and went and told their master...’; *Robul înțeleptu cu credință lucrează domnu-său.* (*ibid.*, 522<sup>v</sup>) ‘The wise slave works for his master with loyalty’.

<sup>3</sup> *RADET* is an abbreviation from *Regia Autonomă de Distribuție a Energiei Termice* ‘The Independent Company for the Distribution of Thermal Energy’.

- (3) a. *Ești fan ciocolată?* (bitpress.ro, <https://bit.ly/3kzfjhx>)  
 be.PRES.2SG fan.SG chocolate.DEF.NOM≡ACC  
 ‘Are you a chocolate fan? / Do you like chocolate?’
- b. *Știu, prietenii mei ar spune:*  
 know.PRES.1SG friend.PL.DEF my.PL AUX.COND.3PL say.INF  
*Ești fan cumpărături online.* (brunchy.ro,  
<https://bit.ly/2DTUBrL>)  
 be.PRES.2SG fan.SG shopping.PL.NOM≡ACC online  
 ‘I know, my friends would say: You are a fan of online shopping.’
- c. *Știți foarte bine că sunt fan*  
 know.PRES.2PL very well that be.PRES.1SG fan.SG
- Victor Ponta** (jienii.ro, <https://bit.ly/3isUiTQ>)  
 Victor.NOM≡ACC Ponta  
 ‘You know very well that I am a fan of Victor Ponta.’
- d. *Nu sunt fan Iohannis.* (gandul.info, <https://bit.ly/3kGoRHQ>)  
 Not be.PRES.1SG fan.SG Iohannis.NOM≡ACC  
 ‘I am not a fan of Iohannis.’
- e. *Sunt fan Celia, care m-a*  
 be.PRES.1SG fan.SG CELIA.NOM≡ACC who CL.1SG.ACC=AUX.PAST.3SG  
*cucerit iremediabil* (bogdanstoica.ro, <https://bit.ly/2XOWEVj>)  
 conquer.PART irremediably  
 ‘I am a fan of Celia, she stole my heart irremediably’
- f. *Eu sunt fan Steaua, dar asta nu înseamnă*  
 I be.PRES.1SG fan.SG Steaua.NOM≡ACC, but this not mean.PRES.3SG  
*că nu-mi doresc să o*  
 that not=CL.1SG.DAT wish.PRES.1SG SĂ<sub>SUBJ</sub> CL.3SG.ACC  
*înving.* (mediafax.ro, <https://bit.ly/30JsvbX>)  
 beat.SUBJ.1SG  
 ‘I am a fan of Steaua [a football team]’

In this kind of examples, which are very frequent in standard language, the nouns which immediately follow *fan* are unmarked for case and have the default form (identical with the nominative-accusative form), irrespective of their type (common and proper nouns, in the singular or plural, countable or uncountable etc.). The interpretation of these juxtaposed nouns is that of a genitive (*a fan of...*). They are not invariable nouns, they have the morphological property of displaying case marking; they do so either enclitically, in the definite form (*ciocolatei, cumpărăturilor, Celiei, Stelei*) or with proclitic markers (*lui Victor Ponta, lui Iohannis*). The unmarking of the genitive is not obligatory. In the same type of texts, the structures where the genitive is marked are equally frequent:

- (4) a. *nu ești un fan al ciocolatei* (www.livebiz.ro, https://bit.ly/3kvPdvQ)  
 not be.PRES.2SG a fan AL.M.SG chocolate.DEF.GEN  
 ‘you are not a chocolate fan’
- b. *Ești fan al cumpărăturilor online?* (romanioliberal.ro, https://bit.ly/3irxGDf)  
 be.PRES.2SG fan AL.M.SG shopping.PL.DEF.GEN online  
 ‘Are you a fan of online shopping?’
- c. *poze cu daci, pensionari și un fan al lui Ponta* (vice.com, https://bit.ly/31ANkpi)  
 picture.PL with Dacian.PL retiree.PL and a fan AL.M.SG LUI.GEN Ponta  
 ‘pictures with Dacians, retirees and a fan of Ponta’s’
- d. *Nefiind un fan al lui Klaus Iohannis, de data aceasta încerc să îl înțeleg.* (orange.ro, https://oran.ge/35ybnZ2)  
 not=being a fan AL.M.SG LUI<sub>GEN</sub> Klaus Iohannis at time this try.PRES.1SG SĂ<sub>SUBJ</sub> CL.M.3SG.ACC understand.SUBJ.1SG  
 ‘I am not a Klaus Iohannis fan, but this time I am trying to understand him’
- e. *Monologul impresionant al unui fan al Stelei.* (prosport.ro, https://bit.ly/3ktNRBT).  
 monologue.DEF impressive AL.M.SG a.GEN FAN AL.M.SG Steaua.DEF.GEN  
 ‘The impressive monologue of a Steaua supporter.’

How can the structures with unmarked genitives be explained? Since these nouns are not invariable, we should look into the semantic and syntactic features of the noun *fan* which allow the unmarking. Let us remark that nouns with similar meanings do not display the same ability of allowing unmarked genitives:

- (5) a. *\*Ești iubitor / pasionat / amator ciocolată?*  
 be.PRES.2SG lover passionate lover chocolate  
 ‘Do you love chocolate?’
- b. *\*Nu sunt admirator / simpatizant Iohannis.*  
 not be.PRES.1SG admirer sympathizer Iohannis  
 ‘I am not an admirer / sympathizer of [president] Iohannis’

The synonym nouns in (5) occur in structures with the preposition *de* (about) followed by a noun in the accusative case (as in (6a)) or with a noun marked for the genitive case (as in (6b)):

- (6) a. *Ești iubitor de / pasionat de / amator de ciocolată?*  
 be.PRES.2SG lover of passionate of lover of chocolate  
 ‘Do you love chocolate?’  
 b. *Nu sunt admirator / simpatizant al lui*  
 not be.PRES.1SG admirer sympathizer AL.M.SG LUI.GEN

*Iohannis.*

Iohannis

‘I am not an admirer / sympathizer of [president] Iohannis’

The noun *fan* has been recently borrowed from English and French<sup>4</sup> (according to MDA), as an abbreviation from *fanatic*. In English, it is followed by a prepositional genitive: *a fan of heavy metal, a fan of Art Deco, a fan of Jen’s new boyfriend* (cf. *Farlex Dictionary of Idioms*, via thefreedictionary.com). Therefore, the unmarking of the genitive in Romanian cannot be explained as a foreign influence.<sup>5</sup> We believe it is the semantic structure of the noun *fan* that allows for the use of the unmarked genitive. *Fan* has a relational meaning, it is a predicate with two argument slots, which requires a complement NP/DP. Its saturation can be accomplished with a NP/DP (as in (3) and (4) above) or it can be retrieved from the context<sup>6</sup>:

- (7) a. *Știu că adori ciocolata,*  
 know.PRES.1SG that adore.PRES.2SG chocolate.DEF  
*dar eu nu sunt fan.*  
 but I not be.PRES.1SG fan  
 ‘I know you love chocolate, but I am not a fan’.  
 b. – *Mergem la noul film Tarantino diseară? – Eh, nu*  
 go.PRES.1PL to new.DEF film Tarantino tonight meh not  
*sunt fan.*  
 be.PRES.1SG fan

‘Shall we go to the new Tarantino film tonight?’ ‘Meh, I am not a fan’.

The unmarking of the complement genitive in (3) is facilitated by the relational meaning of *fan* and the juxtaposition of the two nouns. However, since synonym nouns do not accept unmarked genitives (see (5) above), we can conclude that the structure ***fan* + unmarked genitive** is rather idiomatic. We should note that the synonyms indicated in (5) are deverbal nouns (with adjectival uses as well), derived with the suffixes *-tor*, *-ant* or *-at*, and that their syntax is influenced

<sup>4</sup> In French it was borrowed from English as well. Many international words were borrowed in Romanian through French, as a result of the influence of French culture.

<sup>5</sup> See also the structures from French: [...] *je suis particulièrement fan des aéroports régionaux; [...] je suis même un fan de votre transparence politique* (from *Le Petit Robert*, available online).

<sup>6</sup> For the complements of relational nouns in Romanian, see Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013: 21 and Pană Dindelegan 2013: 282–283, 353–355.

by the syntax of the base verb<sup>7</sup>. The idiomatic nature of the structures in (3) is evidenced by the fact that other relational nouns do not accept unmarked NPs/DPs<sup>8</sup>:

- (8) a. \**Nu sunt prieten Victor.*  
not be.PRES.1SG friend Victor.NOM≡ACC  
'I am not Victor's friend.'  
b. \**Sunt vecin Iohannis.*  
be.PRES.1SG neighbour Iohannis.NOM≡ACC  
'I am Iohannis's neighbour.'

When expressed, the complement of relational nouns is in the genitive case, in the dative case or in the accusative case, preceded by a preposition:

- (9) a. *Nu sunt prietenul lui Victor.*  
not be.PRES.1SG friend.DEF LUI<sub>GEN</sub> Victor  
b. *Nu sunt îi sunt prieten lui Victor.*  
not be.PRES.1SG CL.1SG.DAT be.PRES.1SG friend LUI<sub>DAT</sub> Victor  
c. *Nu sunt prieten cu Victor.*  
not be.PRES.1SG friend with Victor  
'I am not Victor's friend.' (for a–c above)

Another evidence of the idiomatic nature of the structures in (3) is the fact that the noun *fanatic* cannot allow unmarked DPs/NPs; its complement is either a PP or a DP marked for genitive:

- (10) a. *nu ești gamer înrăit sau fanatic după aplicații* (f64.ro, <https://bit.ly/2Iv7cVk>)  
not be.PRES.2SG gamer addicted or fanatic after application.PL  
'you are not an addicted gamer or an applications fanatic'  
b. *Cristiano Ronaldo, 35 de ani, este recunoscut drept un fanatic al pregătirii fizice.* (digisport.ro, <https://bit.ly/3f1x1rM>)  
Cristiano Ronaldo 35 of year.PL be.PRES.3SG known as a fanatic AL.M.SG preparation.DEF.GEN physical.GEN  
'Cristiano Ronaldo, 35 years old, is known as a fanatic of physical preparation'

<sup>7</sup> See Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013: 21–22, 663–717 and Pană Dindelegan 2013: 283–284 for more properties of deverbal nouns in Romanian.

<sup>8</sup> Spontaneously, other relational nouns can allow unmarked genitives; the following examples are taken from the press, from subtitles (the syntax of the titles and subtitles from the press is peculiar, many syntactic relations are not expressed for space or stylistic reasons): *soră seropozitiv* 'the sister of the seropositive patient', *rudă victimă* 'the victim's relative' (examples from Croitor, Dinică *et al.* 2009: 506).

- c. *\*fanatic aplicații*  
fanatic application.PL.NOM≡ACC
- d. *\*fanatic pregătire fizică*  
fanatic preparation.NOM≡ACC physical

We should note that the genitive in structures like (3) can be unmarked only if the noun *fan* does not have the definite article; the presence of the definite article requires the presence of the genitives markers:

- (11) a. *\*Nu sunt fanul ciocolată.*  
not be.PRES.1SG fan.DEF chocolate.NOM≡ACC
- b. *Nu sunt fanul ciocolatei.*  
not be.PRES.1SG fan.DEF chocolate.DEF.GEN  
'I don't really like chocolate.' (for a–b above)

The second type of structures with unmarked genitives from contemporary Romanian is presented in (12). These examples are taken from longer sentences where the DP occurs in argument or adjunct positions:

- (12) a. *Mihai Polițeanu, membru fondator Inițiativa*  
Mihai Polițeanu member founding initiative.def.NOM≡ACC  
*România* (gandul.ro, <https://bit.ly/2UpQkBF>)  
Romania.NOM≡ACC  
'Mihai Polițeanu, founding member of The Romania Initiative'
- b. *vedeta Realitatea Tv* (capital.ro, <https://bit.ly/3lxjUAR>)  
star.DEF Reality.DEF.NOM≡ACC TV  
'the star of Reality TV'
- c. *telespectatorii Prima TV* (primatv.ro, <https://bit.ly/3lyONVR>)  
spectator.PL.DEF Prima.NOM≡ACC TV  
'the spectators of Prima TV'
- d. *de la cititorii Libertatea* (libertatea.ro, <https://bit.ly/35sIFsy>).  
from reader.PL.DEF Liberty.DEF.NOM≡ACC  
'from the readers of Libertatea [newspaper]'
- e. *cititorii Gândul* (zf.ro, <https://bit.ly/36zHg7>).  
reader.PL.DEF thought.DEF.NOM≡ACC  
'the readers of Gândul [newspaper]'
- f. *Mihaela Geoană, Președinte Fundația*  
Mihaela Geoană president foundation.DEF.NOM≡ACC  
*Renașterea* (raportuldegarda.ro, <https://bit.ly/32GmLjN>).  
rebirth.DEF  
'Mihaela Geoană, the president of The Rebirth Foundation'

In all the examples above, the unmarked genitive is a flexible proper noun (re-categorised from a common noun) which denotes an institution, a company or an organization and has a genitive form in its paradigm (*Inițiativei România, Realității TV, Primei TV, Libertății, Gândului, Fundației Renașterea*). We believe the preference for the use of the unmarked form in (12) is extra-syntactically motivated: the need to preserve the form under which the name of the company / organization is known to the public. The same tendency to turn the proper name into an invariable one is evidenced in (13), where the proclitic, analytic genitive marker *al* is expressed, but the noun preserves its nominative-accusative form, instead of the genitive form which is generally present in the language after the marker *al*<sup>9</sup>:

- (13) a. *Noul director al Realitatea*  
 new.DEF manager AL.M.SG Reality.NOM≡ACC  
*FM* (paginademedi.ro, <https://bit.ly/2IFHm0C>).  
 FM  
 ‘The new manager of Reality TV’
- b. *Mai mulți cititori ai Libertatea*  
 more many reader.M.PL AL.M.PL Liberty.NOM≡ACC  
*au semnalat [...]*. (libertatea.ro, <https://bit.ly/3f4cDpR>).  
 have pointed out  
 ‘Several readers of Liberty [newspaper] have pointed out...’
- c. *la punctele de contact ale Electrica*  
 at point.N.PL.DEF of contact AL.N.PL Electrica.NOM≡ACC  
*Furnizare SA*. (electricafurnizare.ro, <https://bit.ly/38FE7RH>).  
 supply SA  
 ‘at the customers desks of Electrica Suppliers’

Similarly to all the structures with unmarked genitives in Romanian, the two nouns must be adjacent, juxtaposed in a strict order. The complement noun cannot be placed before the noun (such a word order would require both inflectional markers and the presence of the pronoun-determiner *al*), nor can it be separated from the noun by modifiers:

- (14) a. *\*vedeta apreciată Realitatea TV*  
 star.DEF esteemed Reality.DEF.NOM≡ACC TV  
 ‘the esteemed star of Reality TV’
- b. *\*cititorii în vârstă Gândul*  
 reader.PL.DEF in age thought.DEF.NOM≡ACC  
 ‘the older readers of Gândul [newspaper]’

<sup>9</sup> See the example in the first paragraph of this article: *școala nouă a elevului* ‘the boy’s new school’.

The preferred strategy for expressing genitive case in structures like (12) is the insertion of a hypernym in the genitive case, such as *mișcării* (movement.DEF.GEN), *postului* (tv station.DEF.GEN), *ziarului* (newspaper.DEF.GEN):

- (15) *vedeta postului Realitatea TV*  
 star.DEF TV station.DEF.GEN Reality.DEF.NOM≡ACC TV  
 ‘the star of the TV station Reality TV’

The structures with juxtaposed nouns unmarked for case are quite frequent in the press, especially in titles and subtitles. In the literature, this pattern was described for nouns denoting functions of people, as an influence of the bureaucratic language: *Anca Oprea, director Grădina Zoologică* ‘Anca Oprea, the manager of the Zoological Garden’; *președinte Autoritatea Națională pentru Protecția Familiei* ‘the president of the National Authority for Family Protection’; *președinte Patronatul Național al Viei și al Vinului* ‘the president of the National Patronage of Vineyard and Wine’ (Croitor, Dinică *et al.* 2009: 506). However, a survey of the online press shows that these structures are more extended than it was previously described and they frequently involve names of companies and organizations:

- (16) a. *Clienții Astra Asigurări vor rămâne cu mașinile în service* (money.ro, <https://bit.ly/2ICKOt1>)  
 ‘The clients of Astra Insurances will remain with their cars in the service.’  
 b. *Cum contactez Serviciul de Relații cu Clienții Telekom România?* (telekomro.custhelp.com, <https://bit.ly/3puE2Gj>)  
 ‘How can I contact the Customers Department of Telekom Romania?’  
 c. *Ce spun oficialii Orange despre achiziția fostului Romtelecom după ani de zile în care au negat aceste planuri* (zf.ro, <https://bit.ly/3lz4xb8>)  
 ‘What the officials of Orange company say about the acquisition of the former Romtelecom after denying these plans for years’  
 d. *Murielle Lorilloux a fost numită CEO Vodafone România în 2017.* (vodafone.ro, <https://bit.ly/3nqPtwQ>)  
 ‘Murielle Lorilloux was appointed CEO of Vodafone Romania in 2017.’  
 e. *În intervalul 15 martie – 8 iunie, medicii Vier Pfoten au sterilizat și tratat un număr de 711 animale fără stăpân.* (totb.ro, <https://bit.ly/35Bgh7P>)  
 ‘Between March 15 and June 8, the doctors from Vier Pfoten sterilised and treated 711 homeless animals’  
 f. *Oficiul poștal Drăgănești Vlașca a funcționat în clădirea Romtelekom [...].* (ziarulteleormanul.ro, <https://bit.ly/38JzOEY>)  
 ‘The post office from Drăgănești Vlașca functioned in the building of Romtelekom’

g. *Pentru a vizualiza sediile Electrica Furnizare din județul dumneavoastră, vă rugăm să selectați din lista de mai jos.* (electricafurnizare.ro, <https://bit.ly/2lBe8A8>).

‘In order to see the headquarters of Electrica Supplier from your county, please select from the list below’

In this article, we described two types of unmarked genitives from contemporary Romanian: an idiomatic structure involving the relational noun *fan*, whose complement noun can be unmarked, and a structure with the ‘invariabilisation’ of proper names denoting organizations, companies or institutions, triggered by extra-syntactic factors (the need to preserve the name which is known to the public).

## REFERENCES

- Croitor, Dinică *et al.* 2009 = Blanca Croitor, Andreea Dinică, Adina Dragomirescu, Carmen Mîrzea Vasile, Isabela Nedelcu, Alexandru Nicolae, Irina Nicula, Marina Rădulescu Sala, Rodica Zafiu, *Tendințe morfosintactice ale limbii române actuale manifestate în mass-media audiovizuală*, în *Dinamica limbii române actuale. Aspecte gramaticale și discursive*, coord. Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, București, Editura Academiei Române, 2009, p. 493–512.
- Dobrovie-Sorin and Giurgea 2013 = Carmen Dobrovie-Sorin, Ion Giurgea (eds), *A Reference Grammar of Romanian*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013.
- GBLR = Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (coord.), *Gramatica de bază a limbii române*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2010.
- MDA = *Micul dicționar academic*, 4 vol., red. resp.: acad. Marius Sala și Ion Dănilă. Volumul I: A–C, 2001; volumul al II-lea: D–H, 2002; volumul al III-lea: I–Pr, 2003; volumul al IV-lea Pr–Z, 2003 (și ediția în 2 vol., 2010), București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic.
- Pană Dindelegan 2013 = Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (coord.), *The Grammar of Romanian*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Pană Dindelegan 2016 = Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (coord.), *The Syntax of Old Romanian*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016 (versiunea în limba română: *Sintaxa limbii române vechi*, București, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, 2019).
- Stan 2013 = Camelia Stan, *O sintaxă diacronică a limbii române vechi*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2013.

## DOUĂ TIPURI DE GENITIV NEMARCAT ÎN ROMÂNĂ CONTEMPORANĂ

(Rezumat)

În acest articol prezentăm două tipuri de structuri în care cazul genitiv nu este marcat: (a) sintagme cu substantivul relațional *fan*, în structuri ca sunt *fan ciocolată*; nemarcarea genitivului în astfel de structuri este facilitată de sensul relațional al substantivului *fan* și de

juxtapunerea complementului său; întrucât alte substantive relaționale nu acceptă nemarcarea cazului complementului, considerăm că structurile de tip fan ciocolată sunt de tip idiomatic; (b) sintagme cu nume proprii de organizații, companii, instituții, substantive flexibile care au disponibilitatea de a marca genitivul; considerăm că nemarcarea cazului în aceste structuri are explicații extrasintactice: dorința de a nu altera numele sub care este cunoscută publicului larg compania, organizația sau instituția; se ajunge astfel la o invariabilizare (parțială) a numelui propriu.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** genitiv, marcarea cazului, invariabilizare, relațional, posesie.

**Keywords:** Genitive, case marking, ‘invariabilisation’, relational, possession.

*Institutul de Lingvistică al Academiei Române  
„Iorgu Iordan – Alexandru Rosetti”,  
București, Calea 13 Septembrie, nr. 13*