THE SPECIFIC FEATURES OF THE VOICE AMONG OTHER GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES OF THE VERB

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Abstract: *According to certain linguists, the exclusive inclusion of voice in the morphological classes does not reflect its whole essence, since, unlike other categories of the verb, the voice also materializes at other levels of language (lexemic, syntactic), having specific features which mark it differently.*

Key words: *grammatical category, voice, mark.*

In traditional European grammars, *the grammatical category* represents a value (grammar significance) which, "for a given language, finds a clear flexional mark also according to which numerous classes of lexems (parts of speech) change its form during inflexion (*DŞL*, 2001: 94). The defining characters of the grammatical category laid down by in *DŞL* are: a) "it supposes a system of oppositions, correlating at least two terms" (for instance the singular vs. the plural; the active vs. the passive); b) "it correlates one or two distinctions on the significance level with one or two distinctions on the locution level". For a certain language and implicitly for Romanian, one cannot speak about the existence of a grammatical category or of a distinct term within the category, only on the basis of the differentiations of significance or of locution ones (for instance, the different forms of the future tense – *voi scrie / am să scriu / o să scriu* do not constitute distinct terms within the category, since all forms indicate a future action); c) "the same proportion from a correlation on the significance level and one of the locution level is repeatable for a numerous and homogenous class of words" (for instance, in Romanian the category of aspect is admitted by few linguists because the aspectual difference of some pairs of verbs do not justify the existence of the respective category having an isolated manifestation); d) "a clear grammatical marking corresponds to a distinction on the level of grammatical significances by flexional affixes, mobile or immobile" (2001: 94-95).

Among all grammatical categories, the voice elicited numerous theoretical debates, which have not reached yet the agreement of linguists or linguistic schools. The diverse interpretations denote the special attention paid to this concept. There are important differences of interpretation concerning the definition of voices and their domain of expansion and also as regards the number of voices.

The specific feature of voice consists of the fact that it is realized on several levels of the language and the facts situated at the interference of levels presents a distinct interest. According to several linguists, such a category can be expressed by varied means: morphological, syntactical and sometimes lexical. The correlation of the units of the language levels facilitate the determination of the initial voice (the active) considerably and to those formed by opposition with the active voice. The controversies on the voice are motivated by the lack of a common principle: sometimes this category is defined from a formal point of view and sometimes from the point of view of the

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content. The interpretations given to the voice had been determined by the same finding and namely, the fact that the voice is a category which differ from the other categories, having certain specific features presented by Gabriela Pană Dindelegan in *DGŞ*, in *DŞL* and then in *Gramatica limbii române* (2005).

A first characteristic is "the special nature of the category, having a predominat syntactic manifestation and a pragmatic effect" (*DŞL*: 174), since it implies the verb and its actants.

Traditionally, the category of voice had been interpreted only morphologically, externalized by the opposition between its passive and active forms. According to this interpretation, the voice is the grammatical category which externalizes the relation between the action expressed by the verb and the person or the object having the function of subject in the sentence. According to some grammarians, the inclusion of voice only in the morphological classes does not reflect its essence, since, unlike other grammatical categories, the voice is not realized only on the morphological level. That is why the investigation of the voice on several levels of the language proves to be very necessary.

Starting with the seventh decenny of the last century, certain linguistic schools, mainly the Sankt-Petersburg Linguistic School developed the semantical-syntactical concept of the voice. At the same time, *generative grammar* appeared in American linguistics based on the syntactical reorganization of the utterance, in relation to the active structure, unlike previous approaches of linguistic phenomena which took into consideration only formal categories. The study of the syntactical units in relation to the semantic ones contributed to a redefining of the concept of voice. In modern linguistics, the category of the voice is analyzed at the level of both significance and functions, which means that, voice includes distinct forms on the morphological and syntactical level.

Many linguists have observed the necessity of taking into consideration the syntactical factors in the description of different voices. The interdependence between the voice and the syntax of the sentence is evident in the different corresponding models among actants (parts of the sentence) and participants (members of the situation) indicating the lack of an actant in the passive non-agentive sentence, rendered implicitly. The syntactical approach of voice shows the voice oppositions based on their forms as well as on the syntactical links of the verb in the system of the sentence. Consequently, the voice becomes manifest by its own syntactical construction and represents a displacement of the elements and a reorganization of the syntactical structure in relation to its active structure.

Starting from this syntactical reorganization, the idea of generative grammar (standard variant, N. CHOMSKY, 1965) proposed another transformation for each voice, "capable of converting the basic active structure in a derived one: passive, reflexive, reciprocal, impersonal" (*DŞL*: 174). The linguist J. Lyons, underlying the relation between syntax and semantics, stated that two or more sentences with the same deep structure certainly have similar significances in the event of certain transformations of the locution, whereas they do not affect the significance. The American linguist N. Chomsky remarked the fact that the same meaning can be rendered in different ways. Thus, corresponding sentences in the active and passive voice have the same deep structure; they differ only in their surface structure. Most paired sentences in the active and passive voice are authentic equivalents, having the same content or being alternative 'forms" of a single message, especially when the locution which includes a verb in the passive contains a complement of agent. For

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instance, the sentences: *Vântul deschide poarta grădinii* and *Poarta grădinii este deschisă de vânt,* have the same significance. In the first sentence *vântul* is the grammatical subject and at the same time the logical subject, constituting the main element. The second sentence begins with the grammatical subject *poartă*, which does not have the function of a logical subject, too.

The syntactical concept of the voice has been developed, among other linguists by O. Jespersen. The Danish scientist Otto Jespersen discloses the similar content of the active and passive voices, without considering them absolute synonyms; the person or the object about something is told at the given moment becomes the subject of the sentence while the corresponding verb is used in the passive or active voice. The functional perspective of the sentence is also connected to the verbal voice. Being a morpho-syntactical category, the voice results from a special layout of the forms in the sentence. According to this layout, one can distinguish between the active and the passive perspective. The three elements of human activity can be ordered accordingly: the author, the action and its purpose but also the object affected by the action, the action and its author.

The voice has a *communicative* role and focuses the reader's attention on the most important element of the locution. The syntactical position of the subject constitutes a formal means of expression of the "focalization". In order to express the same thought, varied verbal means can be used, so that the message is as explicite as possible. Voices allow the speaker to express his point of view so that he can "focalize" the most important part of the sentence. The reorganization of the syntactical structure in terms of voice do not determine a change in the general significance, but only the emphasis of the initial element of the locution. However, as a result, the passive voice cannot follow exactly the construction of the active voice. The link between the process and the object can be expressed syntactically in a different manner: the active voice unites the the verb and the direct object and the passive one the verb and the subject, changing the attitude towards relations and the point of view according to which they are analyzed. The main difference between the forms of the two voices (active and passive) voice lies in the following: the active form shows that the process expressed by the verb starts from an object marked by the word which is correlated grammatically with the verbal form and is oriented from it externally and the form of the passive voice is, too, a process oriented towards the object denoted by the word correlated grammatically with the verbal form and is oriented to the extenal object.

The interpretation of the voice as a syntactical category is also justified by the opinions of many Romanian grammarians, which defined the notion by reporting it to the syntax of the sentence. Thus, the academician Al. Graur mentioned that "the term *voice* has the significance of *dispositio,* which marks the reflection of the action on the object, the lack of the object and of the subject, the special participation of the subject, the identity of the subject with the object" (1969: 227). This interpretation leads to the conclusion that "voice is the linguistic expression of the rapport between the semantic interpretation of the relation author-action-object and the syntactical relation: subject-predicate-object" (*Ibidem*). The first two are lexical-syntactical categories (Agent, Action, Pacient), and the others are syntactical categories.

In the opinion of C. Dimitriu, "*The content* of the grammatical category of the *voice* – found exclusively in the words which express "the action" *considered* as a process – is constituted by the grammatical relations which can be created among these words having the function of *predicate*, whose existence is obligatory, a *name- subject* appearing at most predicate-verbs and a *name-circumstantial object*, which can be

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found at most predicate-verbs, too" (1999: 21). Starting from the definition of the voice proposed by C. Dimitriu and by other grammaticians respecting the correspondence of the two levels (semantic and syntactical) "apt to render a situation and the potential of the verb" (*Ibidem*), models of sentences can be built. Besides, many Romanian grammar works affirm that voices mark the relation between the subject and the direct object without mentioning the form of the verb.

In the opinion of Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, laid in *GALR*, the specific feature of the voice lies in its grammatical and also in its *discursive-pragmatic* nature. Grammatically, the category of voice is characterized by a manifestation predominantly *syntactical*, "concerning both the verb and the whole of the sentence since it involves the verb and its actants (with the roles and the attributed syntactical functions): The Subject-Agent and The Object-Pacient. *Sintactically*, it expresses the relation Verb-Subject-Direct Object, respectively Verb -Subject, and, *pragmatically,* it realizes a displacement of the communication interest." (Vol. I: 480). Each voice "becomes manifest by its own syntactical construction and presents in relation to the active voice… a *reorganization of the syntactical structure* (as a syntactical hierarchy, respectively as a thematic hierarchy of the components)" (*Ibidem*). The effect of this reorganization consists of the orientation of the communication interest towars one of the three components of the sentence if the verb is ambivalent or two if the verb is monovalent. The thematized component and the component at the centre of the communication interest vary with each voice. Thus, the voice, through its syntactical-pragmatic dimension is one of the syntactical mechanisms which ensure the reorganization of locution and a different codification of the theme and of the rheme. In Romanian, there is a class of verbs (performative verbs) having syntactical-pragmatic relevance which represents a lexical modality to express communicative intention and constitutes the means of achieving the respective intention at the same time: (*te*) *acuz,* (*te*) *felicit*, (*îți*) *promit*, *(te) rog*, etc.

As a result of interpreting the voice as a syntactical and pragmatic category is the fact that, in *GALR*, the voice is analyzed briefly in chapter 2 volume I together with other grammatical categories but it is analyzed minutely in the second volume, destined to syntactical constructions.

The category of voice lies at the junction of grammar, vocabulary and phraseology. This implies that its analysis can be done only taking into consideration the interdependence with the semantics of all members of the active or passive constructions, the lexical and grammatical relations of such members. The idea of considering the voice a lexical-grammatical category is justified, given its structure, which includes two levels of the semes of the morphological forms: active and passive.

The active voice presents *an active subject* and the *centrifugal* action of the verb and the passive voice presents a *passive* subject and the *centripete* action of the verb. The description of the grammatical significance by means of the given seme (the active or passive subject) denotes the relative character of the semes of the voice, conditioned by the semantics of the verb, which determines a priori its valency (actantial/argumental structure). For instance, the grammatical opposition active-passive is underlined at the level of subjects by the fact that, in case of active subjects, coincidence(isomorphism) of the logical subjects with the grammatical ones becomes manifest and in case of the passive subjects, this coincidence is absent. In the passive voice, the places of actants are changed, the position of the grammatical subject being taken by the semantic object.

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Concerning the relation valency/voice one can observe a different distribution of the attention and of the perspective point adopted by the speaker with reference to the participants of an event. Voice refers to the roles of the "participants", having special forms and auxiliary words while valency is a virtual, intrinsic disponibility of any word, used in a certain syntactical combination (a certain context). For instance, the use of passive forms depends on the combinative features of the transitive active verbs. Except for the valency of the verb, the nature of verbs as regards transitivity or intransitivity is of great importance. The interpretation of voice as a lexical-grammatical category is also underlined by its connection to different lexical-semantic groups of verbs. Some verbs are intrinsically active (*a abdica, a absolutiza, a absenta, a boli, a ţopăi*), some are intrinsically reflexive (*a se abţine, a se afilia, a se acomoda, a se părăgini)*, and others intrinsically impersonal (*a burniţa, a fulgera, a ninge, a ploua, a tuna)*.

Another specific feature is represented by the "number of opposable terms, which, historically, meant the transition from a system with two terms (the active vs. the medium in Indo-European; the active vs. medio-passive in classical Latin) to a system more complicated and more refined of minimum three terms: the active, the passive and the reflexive in the Romance languages" (*DŞL*: 174). Moreover, many works assert with scientific arguments the existence in Romanian of other voices: reciprocal, dynamic and impersonal, the last being considered by *GALR* one of the three existing voices in the grammar of contemporary Romanian (active, passive and impersonal voices).

An important feature is that "unlike other grammatical categories which rally morphological classes (the parts of speech) on the whole, the voice do not rally all lexemes belonging to the class of verbs" (*Ibidem*), while, with some exceptions of defectivity, the other grammatical categories are common to the whole class of the verb.

The *Dicţionar de ştiinţe ale limbii* (2001: 174) contains the affirmation that voice had been abusively attributed to all verbs, being considered as active, all non-marked verbs and as reflexive, all verbs having a reflexive pronoun, regardless their participation at the oppositions of the voice.

In the opinion of Gabriela Pană Dindelegan expressed in *DŞL*, whole classes of verbs do not participate in the voice opposition: 1) *verbs without subject* (intrinsically impersonal) or with the subject realized by a subordinate clause or by verbal impersonal forms "*Ziua ninge, noaptea ninge, dimineaţa ninge iară*" (V. Alecsandri, *Iarna*, p. 21); "*Pare că şi trunchii vecinici poartă suflete sub coajă*" (M. Eminescu, *Călin* (*file din poveste*), p. 71); 2) *obligatory reflexive verbs*: "*Nu mă mir că dincolo de hotar s-a ridicat norodul de jos*" *(*Zaharia Stancu, *Desculţ*, p. 87*)*; *Nu se cade să-ţi vorbeşti de rău prietenii;* 3) *copulative verbs*: "*Lumea-i cum este ... şi ca dânsa suntem noi*" (M. Eminescu, *Epigonii*, p. 30); "*Părea un tânăr voievod / Cu păr de aur moale*" (M. Eminescu, *Luceafărul,* p. 138); 4) verbs *with uninominal subject* (non- personal): *Izvorul susură*.

Outside common restrictions for all voices, there are restrictions for each voice: some syntactical, some syntactical-semantic, according the lexical features of the subject and of the direct object. *GALR* restricts the class of verbs apt to participate at the voice oppositions and presents explicitly the conditions and restrictions of the participation. According to this paper, the availability of the verb to accept or not to accept the voice oppositions depend also on other factors, such as its selective features (the valency of the verb). For instance, passivization and impersonalization as manifestations of the voice oppositions, affect the class of the transitive verbs complementary (since only them can have the passive voice) and the class of intransitive verbs in case of impersonalization. The passive and the impersonal "have a

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common effect of hierarchical reorganization of the syntactical pattern, determining different syntactical organizations as compared to the basic pattern (the active one), while the reflexive keeps the syntactical hierarchy of the active construction unchanged" (*GALR*: 481), which determined its exclusion from the voices. Neither all the transitives participate to passivization nor do all intransitives participate to impersonalization.

The specific features discussed above add the fact that the voice is a category marked differently as compared to other grammatical categories of the verb. From the historical point of view, there was a transition "from the predominantly synthetical mark, from the Latin, to the exclusively analytical one, from the Romance languages" (*DŞL*: 174), since each voice stands out, besides its own manner of construction, "by extraverbal marks, marks having a common analytical nature" (*GALR*: 481): the *passive* voice with the auxiliary verb ***a fi*** and the participle, morphologically and syntactically independent, in obligatory agreement with the subject (unlike the invariable participle of the compound forms), and the *reflexive* voice with *clitic reflexive* (in traditional grammars).

The definition of the voice and of other grammatical categories must be done taking into consideration the most general elements from the expression level which allows delimitation. Thus, for the category of voice, on the content level, the most important part is the *verb* (predicate) and not the subject, the presence of the latter being in relation to the locutor. In the relation subject-verb (predicate) the locutor always interposes, whose attitude is rarely indifferent towards the subject, the predicate or the relation between the subject and the predicate. When the verb- predicate is at the first person, the locutor coincides with the subject. In the so-called *pro-drop* languages, such as Romanian, the nonlexicalization of the pronominal subject (subject included) is accepted.

Although Romanian inherited the category of voice from the Latin, it pertained to the specific of the Romanian language during its evolution. For instance, similarly to the Latin which included verbs having forms only at the *medium voice*, the deponents, the Romanian contains verbs which are permanently accompanied by reflexive pronouns, such as.: *a se cuveni, a se poticni, a se ivi, a se răzgândi, a se mândri, a se făli* and others.

Reporting the category of voice to the specific character of Romanian resulted in a reconsideration of the number of voices. The absence of a clear conception about the relation between form and content determined the manner of interpreting the verbs of the reflexive voice. The heterogeneous character of the verbs included in the reflexive voice determined the opinion that more voices should be in existence. However, in *GALR*, the reflexive is eliminated from the values of the voice due to its syntactical dissimilarity in Romanian and to the nonfulfillment of the defining chacteristics of the voice. Consequently, the last edition of *Gramatica limbii române* (2005), the category of the voice is limited to the oppositions: active-passive, active-impersonal.

Each of the voices delimited in Romanian include verbs which, with the same morphematic structure, belong to different classes from the point of view of the voice, while verbs with different morphematic structure belong to the same voice.

The category of voice implies great differences of manifestation from one verb to another. In Romanian , there are many verbs with forms for more voices, being or not accompanied by additional information which contradicts N. Goga's affirmation that

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"the verbs, both transitive and intransitive fall into one of the voices of Romanian language: active, passive or reflexive" (1957: 68).

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