POSSESSIVE AND SECONDARY OBJECTS – NEW SYNTACTIC POSITIONS?

Ştefan GĂITĂNARU*

Abstract*: The present paper proves that the separation of the secondary object from the direct object and, similarly, the separation of the possessive object from the indirect object were based mainly on differences. Because the similarities are more important, the conclusion that the category imposed by transitivity has two positions (the proper direct object and the secondary direct object), like the one imposed by the dative (the proper indirect object and the possessive indirect object), has been drawn.*

Keywords*: passivization, possessor, transitivity.*

1. Analyzing the syntactic status of the bi-transitive verbs, certain researches (Guţu Romalo, 1973: 170) have pointed out the differences between the direct object of the person and the direct object of the object, proposing to consider them as two separate syntactic functions, unlike the previous grammar studies.

The same thing happened with the syntactic behavior of the possessive dative, identified not as an indirect object or as a pronominal attribute in the dative, but as a separate syntactic function, the possessive object.

The present paper proposes a review of the arguments invoked for and against these separations and it proposes an approach arguing that the syntactic position of direct object has two actualizations (the proper direct object and the secondary direct object) and so does the indirect object (the proper indirect object and the possessive indirect object).

2. The descriptive history of the secondary object is a long-lasting one: the bi-transitive verbs existed in Latin, too.

2.1. The traditional grammar studies described these verbs and invoked the principle according to which transitivity means directly relating to the object (direct object).

This fact is also pointed out in GALR, where, analyzing the transitive valence in two contexts (*El a anunţat ora plecării – El m-a anunţat ora plecării*), the authors assert: "This particularity of construction explains the interpretation of the secondary object as the second direct object, the inanimate one, in the structures considered as having two direct objects, one of the being and another of the thing or the action, in traditional syntax" (GALR, II, 2008: 413-414).

2.1.1. The Academic Grammar in 1963 mentioned: "There are verbs that can have two direct objects, usually one of the being and another of the thing or the action" (GLR, II, 1963: 157). The particular situation of the verb *a trece* is also invoked, as it imposes two inanimate nouns: *Mărfurile le trece Dunărea.*

2.1.2. Mioara Avram forms a list of the verbs with double transitivity: *a anunţa, a avertiza, a înştiinţa, a vesti; a asculta a examina, a întreba; a învăţa, a sfătui; a pofti, a ruga; a costa a plăti; a traversa, a trece* (Avram, 2001: 372; cf şi ELIR, 2001: 587).

* University of Piteşti, stefan_gaitanaru@yahoo.com

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2.1.3. Bi-transitivity is presented also analytical by Ion Diaconescu: a *învăţa pe cineva, a ruga pe cineva; a învăţa ceva, a ruga ceva* (cf. Diaconescu, 1984: 344).

2.1.4. Rodica Nagy points out that the structures are pretty diversified (*A învăţa pe cineva ceva; A învăţa de la cineva ceva*), arguing for "maintaining the secondary object within the category of the direct object" (Nagy, 2005: 265).

2.2. The studies that recommend the separation invoke several features.

2.2.1. Thus, in 1973, V. Guţu Romalo invoked "the possibility of substitution and doubling by means of the forms of personal pronoun for the two components that are considered to be direct objects (…); only one of them, that of being, admits the substitution with the personal pronoun in the accusative and the double actualization" (GuţuRomalo, 1973: 170).

The problem of substitution by a clitic is not general even with the direct object of the mono-transitive verbs. Thus, structures such as *Invit pe cineva – Îl invit* can occur; but *Cumpăr ceva – *Îl cumpăr*.

The doubling by a clitic just with one is natural, as the rule of heterogeneity asserts that, in a sentence, only different clitics, i.e. dative and accusative clitics, can occur: *Mi-l văzu, Ţi-o aduce...*

In a sentence such as *Invit pe băiat şi pe fată, Îi invit* is possible, but **Îl şi o invite* is not; while *Dau băiatului cartea – I-o dau...*

2.2.2. Subsequently, other differentiating features were invoked: "b) the SecObj and Pas constituents are incompatible; c) the occurrence of the secondary object preceded by the preposition *pe* is impossible; d) the coordination of the direct object and the secondary object is impossible" (Pană Dindelegan, 1974: 19-20).

The assertion that the sentence with a secondary object does not present the passive transformation is not true. The secondary object would be expected to become a subject, while the subject would become an adjunct with *by*. But the secondary object is a name of a thing and this turns the adjunct with *by* in its inanimate variant, in an instrument adjunct. In its turn, the object of the person becomes agent. Considering these, it can be noticed that the passive transformation occurs: *Profesorul îl învaţă pe elev lecţia – Lecţia este învăţată de către elev prin intermediul (cu ajutorul) profesorului.*

As it can be noticed, the rule is: the secondary object becomes subject; the first object becomes agent, while the subject becomes instrument.

The fact that the secondary object can not be preceded by *pe* may be explained by obeying the opposition personal-impersonal, which occurs also with the proper direct object: *Văd ceva; Văd pe cineva* (**Văd pe ceva*).

2.2.3. An argument which seemed to be strong was the principle of uniqueness: "there can be only one *nomen* which engages the same grammatical relation with the verb (…) In Charles Fillmore's case theory, which postulates that each semantic case occurs only once in an argument position" (Pană Dindelegan, 1974: 124). This principle seems to be violated by doubling the direct or the indirect object, not by the structures with bi-transitive verbs: two different thematic roles, two different referents, two different syntactic functions. The mistake consisted only in sharing the same name, but even the traditional grammar studies considered that there is a direct object of the person and another of the object.

These assertions, especially those referring to Fillmore, prove exactly that the principle of uniqueness can not be applied: in a sentence such as *Profesorul îl învaţă pe elev lecţia*, the two objects (*pe elev* and *lecţia*) represent different cases (roles): *pe elev* is Benefactive, while *lecţia* is Theme. This fact is mentioned also in GALR: "Between

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the secondary object and the direct object there is a difference regarding the thematic roles assignment: Theme for the secondary object, Goal for the direct object (*El anunţă pe cineva ceva*)" (GALR, II, 2008: 414).

The impossibility of coordinating the two direct objects is real, but this does not prove the functional difference. If they are different does not mean that they could not be coordinated: *Să vii aici şi acum; Oricine şi oriunde poate să citească un ziar....* (cf. şi Avram, 2007: 45-48). Besides, there are rather frequent sentences where both the principle of uniqueness and the principle of coordination are violated: *De câteva luni se întâlneau zilnic la facultate; *De câteva luni şi zilnic se întâlneau la facultate.*

2.2.4. At this point of the argumentation, a review could be done: the two functions have a common element that is transitivity, a fundamental feature, which presupposes the direct relation with an object; the passive transformation which engages both positions, with different syntactic reorganizations, is added to it.

On the ground of these fundamental features, one may decide to include the two actualizations as subspecies of the same syntactic function. They differ because they express different referents that represent different thematic roles.

Therefore, there are two types of direct object: proper direct object and secondary direct object. This solution corresponds to the language structures, considering also the hierarchy of the features.

3. The history of the theories about the possessive dative is also pretty diversified, both in traditional grammar studies and in the contemporary studies.

3.1. The traditional theories brought more or less convincing arguments for considering it either a pronominal attribute in the dative or indirect object.

3.1.1. Thus, GLR, 1963/1966 considers several structures: *Mi-ai vândut maşina; Viaţa-mi fu o primăvară; Deasupră-mi teiul sfânt...*

Only the first type of examples raises problems regarding its syntactic status and, as it has already been mentioned, it has been considered to be an attribute, due to its secondary possessive meaning. GLR seemed to have considered the main, logical meaning, expressed by the question addressed to the verb, so it consider this syntactic position to be an indirect object. But it is mentioned that this solution is valid only for those constructions that admit the occurrence of the noun or of the non-clitic pronoun correlated with the clitic: *Mie mi s-a rupt fermoarul; Băiatului i-au plecat părinţii* (cf. GLR,I, 1963: 143). So, "in the verb group, the dative clitic (with a possessive meaning) is considered to be either an indirect object (if it may be doubled by non-clitic pronominal forms in the dative or by a noun in the dative) or an attribute (if doubling is not possible) (Rădulescu Sala, 2006: 358).

3.1.2. In *Sinteze de limba română* there is a specification: "the distinction between the clitic dative forms of the personal pronouns and the reflexive pronouns, functioning as pronominal attributes, on the one hand, and those functioning as indirect objects, on the other hand, is made most of the times considering the definite determination of the noun that accompanies the verb, which implies an attribute function" (Diaconescu, 1984: 337).

3.1.3. Mioara Avram considers that "from a formal point of view, the personal pronoun in the dative is a verb determiner, more precisely an indirect object, which is proved by the possibility of doubling the clitic form by a non-clitic pronoun or by a noun, with most of the constructions" (Avram, 2001: 161-162).

3.1.4. Also Dumitru Irimia considers the article to be a criterion of differentiation: "Sometimes, the attribute actualized by the possessive dative form of the personal or reflexive pronoun differs from the indirect object due to the article

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accompanying a noun in the sentence, which indicates this way its position of regent of the pronoun, at the expression level" (Irimia, 2008: 548).

3.2. The recent researches decided to move this construction out of the pronominal attribute area, but they also decided to separate it from the indirect object, however not in all the situations, so they consider it a new syntactic function, named possessive object.

3.2.1. G. Pană Dindelegan shows that, among other things, it is characterized by: "the impossibility of doubling the clitic by the non-clitic dative form or by other dative nominal form" (Pană Dindelegan, 1994: 129), as well as that "unlike the substitution group of the indirect object, with actualizations at the simple sentence and complex sentence level, the possessive dative does not belong to a substitution group, as it is the only element admitted in this position" (*ibidem*).

The author approaches the problem of the coexistence of a prototypical indirect object and a possessive dative (*Îşi prezintă demisia directorului; Îşi trimite leafa sinistraţilor*), as well as the impossibility of their coordination.

It is pointed out that, if this were an indirect object, it would be a special type, as well as the attribute function which the author prefers. The third possibility is to consider it a separate syntactic position, in a ternary structure.

The question is what this syntactic position would become if the structures where the clitic is correlated with the other nouns were excluded.

3.2.2. The aspects which are relevant in these studies are: the role of the article in differentiation and the correlation clitic – non-clitic form/noun in the dative.

3.2.3. GALR and GBLR accept both the non-clitic forms and nouns in the substitution group of the possessive object, thus conferring a certain consistency to that function: "The possessive object may also be expressed twice by a non-clitic/noun and by a clitic of the co-referent personal pronoun, both in the dative" (GALR,II, 2008: 463).

Eight contexts in which the possessive pronoun may occur are identified: "In seven of the eight contexts which are considered, also/only personal pronoun clitics may occur. In six contexts, these may be doubled" (*ibidem*).

3.2.4. In a study from 2006, Marina Rădulescu Sala deals again with the problem of the article, especially referring to the situation when the object has the syntactic function of a predicative: "Therefore, we did not include the situation when it would be involved in a relation with a noun functioning as a predicative in the possessive object" (Rădulescu Sala, 2006: 363).

The clitic in such rather frequent contexts (*El mi-este prieten; Ion mi-a devenit vecin; George i-a rămas duşman*) behaves the same like when it expresses the possessive of other syntactic positions (*El mi-este prieten mie – El este prietenul meu*...). However, the fact that "the noun with which the possessive object engages the possessive relation must be strongly determined, most of the times by the definite article (except the situations when the noun is preceded by the preposition that blocks the presence of the article)" (*ibidem*) is taken into account.

Blocking the article (zero article) characterizes several situations in Romanian (expressions: *mi-e foame, mi-e frică*...; the prepositional group, except for the preposition *cu: Merg în oraş; Stau la ţară,* dar *Vine cu maşina*; partitive structures *Mănânc ciorbă*), including the syntactic position of predicative *El este student* – cf. engl. *He is a student*.

Thus, the problem becomes current again: *I-am adus cartea (lui) – I-am adus o carte (de-a lui); Mi-am luat o carte din sufragerie* ...

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Such sentences and not only they (*Îşi vede de copii; Îşi poartă de grijă*...) should be taken out of the area of the possessive object.

The second issue regards the doubling/tripling the possessive object. This object is known to occur due to a movement of the Possessive expressed by Gpos (=noun in the genitive or pronoun/possessive pronominal adjective): *Am pierdut casa mea – Am pierdut casa-mi – Mi-am pierdut casa.*

However, it has been asserted that, if the area is extended from the reflexive clitic (or the personal one co-indexed with the subject) to the personal one, "implicitly we have to admit other noun actualizations, besides the actualization by a clitic, including clausal actualizations at the complex sentence level" (Rădulescu Sala, 2007: 192).

Thus: *Îi revine averea – Lui (vecinului) îi revine averea; Lui îi revine averea sa- Cui ştiu eu îi revine averea; Mie să-mi aduci batista mea...*

It has been indicated that such sentences are emphatic, but it is necessary to mention that all the non-clitic forms of the personal and reflexive pronouns are emphatic and they lead the communication interest towards a certain direction.

The principle of uniqueness, which states that "a verb assigns its adjuncts a syntactic function (and a semantic role) only once" (Rădulescu Sala, 2006: 361), does not function with these sentences where a semantic role (Possessor) is assigned both by the verb and by the noun.

Some sentences with a Possessor expressed by the clitic, as well as by the Gpos are usual: *Poezia romantică îşi are farmecul ei; Fiecare om îşi are grijile lui; Orice meserie îşi are secretele ei* (cf. Rădulescu Sala, 2007: 195). However, it is necessary to show that, when the Gpos is present, the Possessor meaning of the clitic is diminished and it moves towards other semantic roles.

Besides, there are also other types of sentences where other semantic roles occur more clearly: Experiencer (*Mi-am întors ochii; Mi-au îngheţat picioarele; Mi s-a făcut părul măciucă; Îmi bate inima...*), Stimulus (*Îţi ştie de frică; Îi admiră opera; Îţi plâng de milă*, Agent (*Ţi-am corectat lucrarea, Le-am trecut notele...*).

For this type of examples, the name of possessive object has a pretty reduced degree of adequacy.

3.2.5. The indirect object and the possessive object have common fundamental characteristics: they are in the dative; they admit doubling process, in different degrees; both of them occur in ternary structures with specific dependencies. Moreover, there are many contexts where the advancement of the Possessive under the verb dependency diminishes or changes the thematic role (the situations without article, doubling, the semantic diversity).

It is simpler to consider that there are two types of indirect object in Romanian: the proper indirect object and the possessive indirect object, because the partial separation that has been done so far has been argued rather semantically than formally.

4. The studies that insisted on establishing these syntactic positions as new functions are based rather on differences than on the fundamental unifying features. This represented a good opportunity to describe the diversity of language structures thoroughly.

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