Is the *Associative* a Simple- or Double-Subordinated Syntactical Function?

Mihaela SECRIERU
Anca CEHAN

I.1. In their definitions of the syntactical function associative, most grammarians[1] point out three elements: the morphological value of the superordinate clause element which is of a verbal type (verb, adjective, interjection); the syntactic function of the subordinate – adverbial or circumstantial[2] and the existence of a 'term' with which the associative co-occurs.

We can notice that the definitions underline only the dependency on the verbal superordinator while the second 'term' involved, the one that participates in the association (called "part of the clause that is referred to"[3] or "mediator"[4]) is "referred to"[5].

The question is whether this 'referring' is a syntactic relation, i.e. a *dependency*, so that the "mediator" could be considered a superordinate.

I.2. Considering the string *cu el* ("with him"; a potential associative circumstance) and trying to relate this to an obligatory subordinator such as the verb *a veni* ("to come"), we obtain the utterance *A venit cu el*, which satisfies the sender's intention. However, we can notice that *concomitantly with* verb subordination a "referring" to another unexpressed lexical term takes place, which is implied: *She came with him* (where *she = Maria, Ioana*, etc.) The "mediator" is seen as a syntactic function, the associative being interpreted as an association with the subject or the direct object.[6] This *association of functions* was noticed on the basis of quantitative criteria – the frequency of instances of the associative co-occurring with the subject or the direct object –, but also qualitative, as only the associations with the subject and the direct object can be considered to be *specific syntactic contexts* used for actualising the associative function[7]. However, the associative can co-occur with other functions, too:

---

[1] Avram, Mioara *Cu privire la definiția complementului direct de agent și a complementului sociative*, LR, XVIII, 1968, 5, p. 468-471; Trandafir, Gh., *Contribuții la definirea complementului circumstanțial sociative în limba română*, LR, XVIII, 1968, 2, p. 175; *Idem*, *Cu privire la complementul circumstanțial sociativ, atributul sociativ, propoziția circumstanțială sociativă și propoziția atributivă sociativă*, AUC, V, 1977, p. 27; Bulgăr, Gh., *Limba româna. Sintaxa și stilistica*, Bucureşti, 1968, p. 82; Şerban, V. *Sintaxa limbii române,* Bucureşti, 1973, p. 242; Iordan, I. Robu, V., *Limba română contemporană,* Bucureşti, 1978, p. 663; Dimitriu C., *Gramatica limbii române explicate. Sintaxa*, Iaşi, 1982, p. 296; Irimia, D., *Structura gramaticală a limbii române. Sintaxa*, Iaşi, 1988, p. 182.

[2] For the distinction between complement – circumstantial see Avram, M., 1968, p. 469-470.

[3] Dimitriu, C., *GES*, p. 296.

[4] Irimia, D., *Sintaxa*, p. 182.

[5] See also Şerban, V., *Sintaxa*, p. 298, n 1.

[6] *Gramatica limbii române,* Editura Academiei, ed. II, Bucureşti, 1966, vol II, p. 190.

[7] See also Avram, M., 1968, p. 471.

BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)

circumstantial agentive[8] (A fost condusă la gară **de sora sa împreună cu o prietenă** – She was seen to the station by her sister together with a friend of hers); indirect object ("... proprietarul era bucuros să scape **de chiriaşi cu casă cu tot**" = the owner was glad to get rid of both tenants and house, Sadoveanu, *Opere* VIII, 1956, p. 747, after Mioara Avram, 1968, p. 470); circumstantial addition (**Pe lângă Gogu cu Eugenia** au venit multi alţii = Besides Gogu and Eugenia many others turned up); circumstantial exception (Au venit toţi **afară de Gogu cu Eugenia** = Everyone turned up except Gogu and Eugenia)[9]; to these we could add replacive circumstance (**În locul lui Ion cu Maria** au venit Mircea şi Dana = Instead of Ion and Maria turned up Mircea and Dana) and the modifier (nominal, pronominal) (Privitor la venirea **Mariei cu Ion** nu pot face comentarii = Regarding Maria and Ion's turning up I can't make any comments). The "mediator" can have various syntactic actualisations, but from a morphological perspective, these have only nominal instantiations (nouns and noun substitutes); therefore, we could conveniently admit that the associative co-occurs with a *name*.

Considering again the example *Ea a venit cu el*, we notice that as the connection between the associative *cu el* and the "name" *ea* being just a "referring", it should lack structural (syntactic) and semantic implications in the sense that the absence of the "name" (the "omission test") should not affect the actualisation of the associative, which needs only one superordinate – the verbal one. However, the absence of the "name" renders *impossible the linguistic instantiation of the semantic and syntactic association content, materialised in the associative function*. The importance of the "name" with which the association occurs appears to be at least equal to that of the verbal superordinate. Consequently, the "name" builds together with the verb a semantic-syntactic basis and determines the relation of the associative with the "name" to be equal to that between the verb and the associative, i.e. to be a *syntactic relation*.

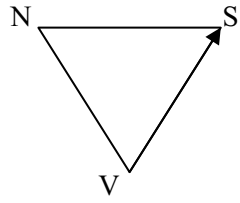
To establish what type of relation is performed between the associative and the name involved, we need to consider the correspondence between the *ontic-logic* and *linguistic* aspects. A structure like *Ea a venit cu el* presupposes the syntactic agglutination of two primary deep structures: /*Ea a venit*/ and /*El a venit*/ to which a temporal component of simultaneity is added, marked on the surface structure, but non-manifest at deep level. At deep level, both names are subjects and are attributed the same action. At surface level, one of the two names appears as subordinated by means of specific relating elements (*cu*, *împreună,* etc. = *with, together*) marking thus an *association*. The actual association of two ontological "objects" or that of two logical "notions" is realised as linguistic subordination.

Note: The ontological association can also be expressed at linguistic level by copulative coordination. Consequently, the linguistic strings marked by "association" (using formally such elements as *cu*, *împreună,* etc.) have been interpreted, depending on the topical distance to the nominal elements, as different syntactic realisations. In post-verbal position, as in the example *Ea cu el au venit*, the function is interpreted as part of the multiple subject coordinated by the conjunction *cu*[10], due to number and person agreement with the predicate verb.

[8] Trandafir, Gh., *Contribuţii*, p. 175.
[9] Both examples are after Mioara Avram, 1968, p. 470.
[10] See also Dimitriu, C., *Gramatica limbii române explicată. Morfologia*, Iaşi, 1979, p. 368, n.208.

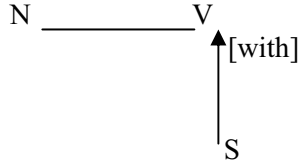
BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)

Compared to the ontic and logical dimensions, where the associated "objects" and "notions" are equal, in the linguistic dimension these appear to belong to levels of different syntactical importance. This means that the associative markers (*cu, împreună cu, în alianță cu, cu tot cu, cu... cu tot, dimpreună cu = with, together with, in alliance with, including, ...as well*) cannot be imposed by the subordinating verb (as at logical level the verb is "a developing key" = *notă în desfăşurare*[11] of both notions), but by the "name", the relationships being represented as:



where N = name, S = associative, V = verb.

Neither at linguistic-syntactic level can the verb associate with its subordinate, although the relationship of the terms is the following:



In our opinion, the associative markers are the expression of the *rection imposed by the "name" on the associative* (by *rection* we mean the property of a governing word of imposing a certain flectional form or prepositional construction). *Rection* operates in the process of passing from deep structure level to surface level. However, although the "name" imposes on the associative its linguistic expression, only the relationship between the verbal superordinator and the associative is considered to have grammatical importance and leads to a functional algorithm. This interpretation is imposed by the fact that in order to admit that two subordinators of different types (nominal and verbal) generate one function – of a circumstantial type, and not two functions cumulated by the same term (as in the case of the complement), we need to admit that a nominal superordinator generates a function of a circumstantial type – which is against the morphological superordinators rule (superordinators of the noun - determiner or verb – object types). While the verbal superordinator establishes a semantic and syntactic dependency with the associative, the "name" imposes only the form but not the determiner function. This leads to the conclusion that the subordination of the associative by the verbal superordinator at syntactic level is *active*, *syntagmatic* and *functional*, that is generative of syntactic functions, while the relation of the associative with the "name" is active at logical level but passive at syntactic level,

[11] Cf. Ivănescu G., *Gramatica şi logica*, I, AUT, 1960, p. 264. In Romanian linguistics, there is another opinion on this aspect, i.e. that both the verb, the adjective and the adverb are notional (see Dimitriu, C., GEM, p. 8 ff.)

BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)

behaving as a "latent relationship"[12], in the sense that the name "requires another part of sentence and cannot be removed without the sentence ceasing to exist".[13]

However, as the associative has *structural* (the existence of an associative in an utterance presupposes the existence of a syntactic-semantic basis made up of two terms), *semantic* (communications containing an associative cannot exist without two terms) and *syntactic* implications (only two terms can generate an associative[14]), we consider that "referring"[15] is a misnomer due to the relation of the associative with the "name" and we interpret it as a dependency – a relation of subordination, which could be called *asymptomatic dependency*, as it does not show the symptoms of "classic" dependency, which generates syntactic functions.

Conclusions

1. If the previous demonstration is accepted, it means that in the syntactic system of Romanian there is a syntactic function placed in between the simple- and double-subordination functions, represented by the associative.

2. The distinction between the double-subordination functions and the associative lies in the fact that the associative does not cumulate the functions imposed by the two superordinators and the dependency on one of them – the nominal one – is *asymptomatic*.

References

Avram, Mioara *Cu privire la definiția complementului direct de agent şi a complementului sociativ,* LR, XVIII, 1968, 5, p. 468-471.

Bulgăr, Gh., *Limba română. Sintaxa şi stilistica*, Bucureşti, 1968, p. 82.

Dimitriu C., *Gramatica limbii române explicate. Sintaxa*, Iaşi, 1982, p. 296.

Iordan, I. Robu, V., *Limba română contemporană,* Bucureşti, 1978, p. 663.

Irimia, D., *Structura gramaticală a limbii române. Sintaxa*, Iaşi, 1988, p. 182.

Secrieru, Mihaela, *Elemente de sintaxă sincronică comparată*, Iaşi, 2000.

Şerban, V., *Sintaxa limbii române,* Bucureşti, 1973, p. 242.

Trandafir Gh., *Cu privire la complementul circumstanțial sociativ, atributul sociativ, propoziția circumstanțială sociativă şi propoziția atributivă sociativă*, AUC, V, 1977, p. 27.

Trandafir, Gh., *Contribuții la definirea complementului circumstanțial sociativ în limba română,* LR, XVIII, 1968, 2, p. 175.

[12] The term was suggested by Stati, S., *Elemente de analiză sintactică*, Bucureşti, 1972, p. 26.

[13] Stati, S., *Dependența semantică a propozițiilor şi rolul lor sintactic*, SC, II, 1957, p. 141-149.

[14] For structures of the type *Se pleacă cu profesorul (="? One is leaving with the teacher"),* which appear to be exceptions, we notice that due to the reflexive form of the verb, this annihilates its own relationships: "choosing as focus the activity itself, the reflexive can leave on a secondary plan the relationships with the participants; hence its capacity of being used in constructions which eliminate any reference to verb arguments or at least, the agentive reference." (Cf. Manea, Manoliu, M., "Reflexivul pasiv versus pasiv canonic în română", in *Gramatică pragmasemantică şi discurs*, Bucureşti 1993, p. 91-92).

[15] Dictionaries (*Dictionnaire de linguistique* par Jean Dubois et d'autres, Paris, 1973, *Dictionnaire de la linguistique*, Georges Mounin, PUF, Paris 1974) list for the term 'referring' the meanings "a linguistic sign which sends to an extra-linguistic reality" and "to relate to". At syntactic level, the term ""eferring" can be translated as "relation/relating".

BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)

Le sociatif est-il une fonction simplement ou doublement subordoneé ?

En définissant le sociatif; la majorité des spécialistes ont pris en consideration trois éléments morphologique: du régent qui est de type verbal (verbe, adjectif, interjection), la qualité syntaxique du subordonné- de complement/circonstanciel, et l'existence d'un terme auquel s'associe le sociatif. En admettant la démarche présentée par nous, ill en résulte que, dans le système syntaxique du roumain, il y a une fonction syntaxique située à mi-chemin entre les fonctions simplement et doublement subordonnées, fonction représentée par le circonstant sociatif. La distinction entre les fonctions doublement subordonnées et le circonstant sociatif est que le circonstant sociatif ne cumule pas les fonctions imposées par les deux régents différents, vu que la dépendance par rapport à l'un des régents-celui de type nominal- est *asymptomatique*.

"Alexandru Ioan Cuza University", Iaşi
Romania

BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)

BDD-A809 © 2007 Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide”
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-26 16:59:27 UTC)