II. CONFLUENCES

THE REORGANIZATION OF THE DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECTS IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE

Ștefan GĂITĂNARU
Universitatea din Pitești
stefan_gaitanaru@yahoo.com

Abstract:
The present study, continuing some previous research, highlighted the semantic-syntactic characteristics of the two syntactic positions. Based on the hierarchy of these arguments (transitivity and dative rection), it was found, in a different way from the normative grammar, the existence of several types of actants in the direct and indirect objects. Thus, direct objects are of three types (proper, secondary and internal), and the indirect object of two (proper and possessive).

Keywords: Rection, doubling, clitic, thematic role, transitivity.

1. The concept of transitivity

In the old grammars, the concept of transitivity, in the broad sense of translation, had two forms of manifestation. For the verbs of movement it was used the preposition *trans* (*trans Rhenum transducere = a trece dincolo de Rin*). There were also verbs that expressed this transition in a direct way, through case rection, without preposition, the "transition" being matrixly imprinted in their semantic, argumentative structure. The subject transfers the effects of its action on an object.

This remains valid for the current period, too, the transitive verbs being "verbs that change the process from subject to object" (DSL, 2001: 552).

Verbs that have this characteristic are part of the broader subclass of the action verbs ("Transitivity as a reflection of the emergence of the verb action from subject to object is a defining semantic characteristic of the action

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

verbs" - Evseev, 1974: 61), in which both semantic marks (change and agentivity) are performed positively (cf. GALR, I, 20078: 326).

In a broader sense, the fulfillment of the thematic role can represent a transformation or an attribution, which implies the existence of some necessary actants, "linked to the verb through a relation of case rection" (Pană Dindelegan, 1999: 37): the subject has the nominative case, the direct object belongs to the accusative and the indirect object to the dative case. The relationship between the direct and indirect transitivity has been analyzed by grammarians (cf. Iconaru, 2019: 23).

The first deduction is that between the direct object and transitivity there is a relationship of mutual presupposition, the transitivity being defined by the direct object, and the direct object by transitivity.

The second deduction links the indirect object to the case rection of the dative. But, in the particular case of the Romanian language, the dative also presupposes other syntactic functions: the attribute, in determining some deverbal nouns (*Acordarea de premii* ***campionilor***) or other functions, usually archaic, in which the old language used the personal pronominal conjuncts, instead of the possessive ones (*viața-**mi**, deasupra-**mi***...).

In Latin there are double-transitive verbs (*docĕo = a învăța; interrogo = a întreba; rogo = a ruga; traduco = a trece*...), which are formed with two direct objects: "Of these two objects, one is expressed by a person's name, and another by a name of objects (Bujor, Chiriac, 1971: 170). Similar statements have been made in some modern grammar studies: "The secondary object corresponds to the second direct object, to the non-personal object, in the constructions with a double direct object or which are double transitive" (Pană Dindelegan, 1999: 64).

The spheres of these verbs only partially coincide in the two languages. In Romanian, they were grouped into illocutionary (*a anunța, a întreba, a ruga, a sfătui*) and didactic (*a asculta, a învăța, a examina*) (Irimia, 2008: 470; cf. and Iconaru, 2019: 25). In both languages, even if it is not part of the two groups, the verb *a trece* (*Flumen Helvetii copias traduxerant = Helveții si-au trecut trupele fluviul; Am trecut-o pe bătrână strada*) is to be found.

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

2. Degrees of transitivity

These (strong transitivity and weak transitivity) do not belong to the gradation category, because they do not imply a higher or lower intensity of the direct transition, instead they were calculated according to the constructions and transformations that accompany them in the different types of statements. Thus in the sentences *Vreau ceva* and *Îl vreau pe profesor*, the transition is just as direct, even if the transformations and marks differ. The difference is given rather by the belonging to the personal gender of the noun by which the second object is expressed. The involvement of the personal gender with its delimitations and exceptions should therefore be taken into account.

The strong transitivity is marked by the clitic doubling and, also, by the transformation of passivisation. The passivisation was considered a "fortification" of transitivity, but, in fact, it intransitivizes the verb, the object taking over the nominative rection, and the subject becoming a prepositional object (the agent). In the newly formed statement, the verb is no longer transitive: *Elevul învață lecția – Lecția este învățată de elev*.

3. The typology of the direct object

According to the way in which the syntactic valence of transitivity is fulfilled, the direct object is of three types: proper direct object, secondary direct object and internal direct object.

3.1. Similarities. It should be emphasized from the beginning that the fundamental features of the proper direct object are to be found in the other two types, too. Thus: "The direct object function is an actantial function, imposed by a compulsory transitive verb, which requires a direct object. The transitive verb imposes form restrictions (the non-prepositional accusative or marked by the preposition *pe*) on the noun selected as a subordinate term" (GALR, II, 2008: 392).

It is to be noted that in this statement it is followed the rule according to which transitivity is defined by the direct object and the direct object by transitivity. In a statement like *El anunță ora plecării*, the noun *ora* is the proper direct object, that satisfies the transitive valence of the verb. The involvement of a second actant, allowed by the argumentative structure of the

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

verb, changes the proper direct object into a secondary one: *El ne anunță ora plecării*. The noun *ora* becomes a secondary direct object. It is direct because it is required by a transitive verb and is expressed by a noun in the accusative case; it is secondary, because it can only appear as a second object, in the presence of the personal direct object. When it appears alone, as it was seen in the above statements, it is itself a direct object.

Similarly, in a statement like *El își trăia acolo* ***un trai*** *liniștit*, the noun *un trai* is also a direct object, respecting the fundamental characteristics of the substitution class that it represents. It was considered by some studies (Creția, 1956: 115-121; Dimitriu, 2001: 1387 – 1393) a special object, since the noun by which it is expressed, being part of the semantic sphere of an intransitive verb, transitivizes it. The inclusion in the sphere of the direct object as its subtype also allows its occurrence under the regency of some typical transitive verbs: *El își mânca* ***mâncarea*** *fără sare*.

3.2. Differences. There are two types of differences at the level of the secondary features, which have been given more importance than the fundamental ones, by virtue of which special syntactic positions have been established: direct object - secondary object and direct object - internal object.

3.2.1. The differences between the direct and the secondary object tend to remove the latter from the class of the first, but they cannot remove it from the class of transitivity.

Thus, it was shown that it does not accept the realization *pe + nume.* Leaving aside the fact that there are many realizations of the direct object without *pe*, the situation is justified: it is not the object of the person, but of the thing, which means that it has the restrictions of the non-personal gender. It is expressed by a name of objects, which even in the direct object class is without *pe: *O mănânc* ***pe ciorbă****; *O văd* ***pe carte.***

Usually, the secondary object can be replaced by a non-personal pronoun: *Profesorul mă învață lecția /* ***ceva***. It cannot be replaced by a pronominal clitic because the pronominal clitic is personal. Therefore, a direct object expressed by *ceva* cannot receive the clitic doubling or substitution: *Cumpăr ceva – *Îl cumpăr (pe ceva).* Moreover, between the three aspects of the clitic doubling (compulsory, optional and forbidden), such pronouns are forbidden.

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

They have a grid of different roles (subject, beneficiary), which is normal because they satisfy different syntactic valences. For this reason, they do not accept coordination either, as it implies a cumulation (an association) of realizations on a single line of valence.

In an older study, it was shown that it does not establish a relationship with the passive, being indifferent to this transformation (Pană Dindelegan, 1999: 64). The statement needs to be reconsidered. A statement like *Profesorul îl învață pe elev lecția* can be passivized by reorganizing the actants: *Lecția este învățată de elev prin intermediul profesorului*. (The agent is followed by the adverbial modifier of instrument).

As it can be seen, certain differences are only natural manifestations of the name of objects in the context of the double transitivity.

The fundamental characteristic (the transitivity and the noun in the accusative) includes it in the class of the direct object, as its subtype. The differences do nothing else but delimit the types between themselves.

4. The internal direct object

The internal direct object is not established by the normative grammar as a separate syntactic function, although it is accepted that the respective verbs "have an intermediate status between transitive and intransitive, because, although the nouns are directly, non-prepositionally related to the verb, they do not satisfy the semantic-syntactic conditions of transitivity"(GALR, II, 2008: 395). The situation is explained semantically: for the transition to be made directly, there should have existed something in common to ensure the change. Or, this was precisely the common semantic sphere of the verb and of the object. The transition was made under these conditions, the verb becoming a transitive one. (By passivization, for example, the verb becomes intransitive). The nominal realization (name of objects in accusative, without preposition) is similar to that of the secondary direct object.

The constitution as a separate function invoked the fact that such an object can not also appear after interjections (like the proper direct object); the status of special transitive verbs of the few regent verbs; the fact that it is

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

not achieved at the sentence level (however: *Şi-a trăit ce viaţă i-a mai rămas*); the semantic restriction of the nouns (Dimitriu, 2002: 1389).

In other studies, the direct objects are of two types: external (the name-object does not also denominate the action) and internal direct objects, in which this fact occurs (cf. Creția, 1956:116).

One should return to the solution of the traditional grammar, which considered this syntactic realization an internal direct object (GLR,1966,II: 157).

5. The dative case

The possessive object has been fundamentally differentiated from the indirect one, even if they have a common feature: the dative case.

5.1. Similarities. The indirect object has as a defining feature the case rection of the dative, each time being expressed by a nominal (noun, pronoun, numeral) in the dative, or in the equivalent prepositional constructions with the accusative. Since 1973, it has been delimited by the prepositional constructions, reorganized as a prepositional object (Guțu Romalo, 1973: 175). The recommendation of the dissociation between the indirect object in the dative and the prepositional indirect object suggested by some grammarians (Pană Dindelegan, 1994: 127) was not even imposed in school grammar.

According to the regency, but also to the similarity between the two thematic roles (beneficiary - possessor), the possessive object should be considered a type of indirect object. Among the similarities (the verb / interjection dependence, similar substitution classes, clitic doubling and ternary structure) the normative grammar does not enumerate – it should have had in the first place - the rection of the dative case.

5.2. Differences. In terms of important differences (they are partial similarities) the *Academy Grammar (Gramatica Academiei)*, remarks the rule of doubling: for the indirect object it is obligatory and optional, for the possessive one it is only obligatory**.** The criterion of uniqueness, which shows that a verb cannot assign two syntactic functions simultaneously, forgetting about the bitransitive verbs, but also about the semantic relationship between attribution and possession is also invoked. It is true that verbs that require the dative case are constructed with the indirect object, but they can also be made

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

with a possessive object. Thus, in a statement like ***Ți**-am adus cărțile*, the pronoun is an indirect object if one continues with *mele*, but it is a possessive object if one continues with *tale*. From here it can be noticed that, in essence, the two objects are indirect, the similarity between the two thematic roles (beneficiary and possessor) being obvious.

The differences exist and are able to justify that the two syntactic positions are two types (variants) of a fundamental feature (the rection of a name in the dative case).

6. Conclusions

The recent grammar research has signaled in the problem of the two syntactic positions (direct and indirect objects) a whole series of functional features that they have grouped as similarities and differences. By virtue of the latter ideas they have established the existence of different positions. The problem that was in discussion is related to the ranking of these features according to their importance and the decisions that had to be made accordingly: group the positions according to the fundamental characteristics and distinguish them as different types of the same syntactic position or give priority to the secondary features and place them in different chapters of the syntax. The present study has opted for the second solution. Thus the direct object is of three types (proper, secondary and internal) and the indirect object of two types (proper and possessive).

Bibliography

BUJOR, I.; Chiriac, Fr., 1971, *Gramatica limbii latine*, București: Editura Științifică.

CREȚIA, Petru, 1956, „Complementul intern", in: *Studii de gramatică a limbii române, I*, București: Editura Academiei Române.

DIMITRIU, Corneliu, 2002, *Tratat de gramatică a limbii române, II, Sintaxa*, Iași, Editura Institutul European.

DȘL, BIDU-VRÂNCEANU, Angela; CĂLĂRAȘU, Cristina; IONESCU-RUXĂNDOIU, Liliana; MANCAȘ, Mihaela; PANĂ DINDELEGAN, Gabriela, 2001, *Dicționar de științe ale limbii*, București, Editura Nemira.

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)

EVSEEV, Ivan, 1974, *Semantica verbului*, Timișoara: Editura Facla.
GALR, II, 2008, GUȚU ROMALO, Valeria (coordonator), *Gramatica limbii române, I, Cuvântul, II, Enunțul,* București, Editura Academiei.
GLR, II, 1966, GRAUR, Al.; AVRAM, M.; VASILIU, L., (coordonatori), *Gramatica limbii române, II*, București: Editura Academiei.
GUȚU ROMALO,Valeria,1973, *Sintaxa limbii române. Probleme și interpretări*, București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
ICONARU, Angelica, 2019, *Criterii semantico-sintactice în morfologia verbului*, Craiova: Editura Sitech.
IRIMIA, Dumitru, 2008, *Gramatica limbii române*, Iași: Editura Polirom.
MANEA, Dana, 2001, *Elemente de gramatică funcțională, I. Predicația*, București: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Romano-Catolice de București.
PANĂ DINDELEGAN, Gabriela, 1994, *Teorie și analiză gramaticală*, București: Editura Coresi.
IDEM, 1999, *Sintaxa grupului verbal*, Brașov: Editura Aula.
IDEM, 2003, *Elemente de gramatică. Dificultăți, controverse, noi interpretări,* București: Editura Humanitas.

BDD-A31574 © 2020 Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-15 20:45:23 UTC)