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OBJECT COMPLEMENT/VS/ SUBJECT COMPLEMENT IN ROMANIAN

Abstract: *In this article, we propose to detect features identifying the characteristics the object complement and the subject complement highlighting the differences between the two types of syntactic functions.*

Key-words: *object complement, subject complement, double dependency.*

At a syntagmatic level, the object complement is actualized essentially as an adjective which is doubly dependent, on the one hand, on a verb head, and on the other, on a noun head (either a subject or a direct object). Our usage of *double dependency* draws on the notion elaborated by Valeria Guţu-Romalo in her *Syntax of the Romanian Language: Problems and Interpretation* (Bucureşti, EDP, 1973). According to the Romanian linguist, double dependency is necessarily a threefold relationship, where the occurrence of term C depends on the occurrence of another two terms, A and B, while the reverse does not obtain. Thus:

A B **C**

The dependency of the adjective – which operates as an object complement – on the noun head (either a subject or a direct object) is manifested formally in the gender and number concord along the direction centre → adjunct, while the dependency on the verb head consists in the latter's imposition of the Nominative case on the adjective through rection.

We can notice from the above-mentioned the presence of certain peculiar features which the object complement shares in common with the subject complement, namely:

- the presence of the adjective as defining actualization;
- its occurence in structures which are obligatorily threefold.

However, beyond these commonalities, we should pay attention to the following features which distinguish the object complement from the subject complement:

1) if for the subject complement, the threefold relationship concerns dependency on a nominal – subject and a verb, the object complement can occur in two structure types:
- either: *subject – verb – object complement*;
- or: *direct object – verb – object complement*.
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2) the verb head is not a copular verb, like in the case of the subject complement, but a non-copular verb;

3) the subject complement occurs in non-derivative sentences (primary, or base), while the object complement occurs in structures derived from two-clause base structures, i.e. structures consisting of clause units which are either coordinated, or in dependency.

The transition from the two-clause deep structure to the object complement surface structure entails the possibility of the operations of amalgamation and ellipsis. When the deep structure consists of two coordinated clauses, the amalgamation results from the transformation of elision of the second clause

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constituents which are the referential equivalents of first clause elements. Conversely, when the deep structure features dependency between the two clauses, then the amalgamation results from the transformation of "rising up" the subject of the subordinate clause to the position of either subject or direct object in the main clause.

E.g.: - *"Luna pare de omăt" < Pare că luna este de omăt.*

- *("The moon looks like snow" < It looks like the moon is [made] of snow.)*
- *El ne crede supăraţi < El crede că noi suntem supăraţi.*
- *(He thinks us upset < He thinks that we are upset.)*

4) if, for the adjective – subject complement, the Nominative case is imposed by its neighbouring verb head, the Nominative case of the adjective – object complement results through case rection imposed not by the surface structure verb but by the deep structure verb. Most often, the latter is the copular verb *a fi / to be*, but non-copular verbs may occur as well: either existential *a fi / to be* (*Îl ştia acolo < Ştia că el este acolo / They knew him there < They knew he was there*), or verbs in the passive voice, formed with the auxiliary *a fi / to be* (*Salcâmul trebuia tăiat < Trebuia ca salcâmul să fie tăiat / The acacia tree had to be cut down / * It had the acacia tree to cut down*).

5) the differences between the subject complement and the object complement are also manifested at paradigmatic level, in so far as, unlike the former, the object complement can also be actualized as gerunds with no concord (*A plecat cântând / She left singing*), place adverbs (*Te credeau deja acolo / They thought you already there*) or prepositional phrases with locative meaning (*Vă ştiam la munte / We knew you in the mountains*).

In her *Syntax of the Verb Phrase* (Editura Aula, Braşov, 1999), G. Pană Dindelegan identifies 10 types of constructions featuring an object complement. The classification criteria she uses are the nature of the base structure from which the constructions derive and the nature of the transformation rules applied, i.e., the inner organization of the base structure.

1) The first type derives from a primary structure consisting of two coordinated main clauses, through succesively applying the transformations of elision of the copular verb *"a fi" / "to be",* of elision of the subject of the second clause (given its referential identity with the subject of the first clause and, implicitly, the possibility of its semantic retrieval); of elision of the coordinating conjunction which secures syntactic cohesion between the two main clauses.

Prototypical example: *Ei privesc îngânduraţi < Ei privesc şi ei sunt îngânduraţi/ / They look [about] thoughtful < They look [about] and they are thoughtful.*

2) The second type has in its base structure a direct object clause, while the verb head is a copula. The transformation rules applicable here are the transformation of rising up the subject of the subordinate clause to the position of direct object in the main clause and the transformation of elision of both the copular verb and the conjunction of the subordinate clause.

Prototypical example: *Ei l-au declarat admis < Ei au declarat că el este admis. / They declared him admitted < They declared that he was admitted.*

3) The third type derives from a primary structure which also features a direct object clause, yet the subject of the subordinate clause and the subject of the main clause are co-referential. The structure is affected by the transformations of copula and conjunction elision in the subordinate clause and reflexivization, respectively.

Prototypical example: *Ea se vede amuzantă < Ea vede că ea este amuzantă < Ea vede pe ea că este amuzantă < Ea vede pe ea amuzantă. / She sees herself amusing < She sees that she is amusing < She sees herself that [she] is amusing < She sees herself amusing.*

4) The fourth type derives from a deep structure containing a subordinate clause with its head a copula that governs a subject co-referential either with the subject, or with the direct object of the main clause. The transformation rules which act on this structure are copula elision, elision of the subordinating conjunct and elision of the subject of the subordinate clause, which is semantically retrievable.

Prototypical example: *Ei l-au învăţat alintat. / * They have made him spoilt.*

5) The fifth type, illustrated by an example such as:

- *Ei l-au ales pe Ion <u>preşedinte</u>. / They elected John <u>president</u>.*

describes a more complex case, in that it allows recourse to as many as three derivative courses, all equally acceptable, namely:

a) the base structure includes a binal subordinate clause:

- *Ei au ales pe Ion ^ ca Ion să fie preşedinte / They elected John ^ so that John is [their] president;*

b) the base structure includes a qualifying relative clause:

- *Ei au ales pe Ion ^ care Ion este preşedinte / They elected John ^ John who is [their] president;*

c) the base structure includes an identification relative clause:

- *Ei au ales un preşedinte ^ care preşedinte este Ion / They elected a president ^ president who is John.*

6) The sixth type has in its deep structure a time clause, with a copular verb head and a subject co-referential either with the subject of the main clause (*Ea s-a căsătorit când era tânără / She married when she was young*), or with the direct object (*O ştiam tânără < Eu o ştiam când ea era tânără / I knew her young < I knew her when she was young*). The transformations applied here are copula elision, conjunct elision and the elision of the subject of the subordinate clause.

7) The seventh type of structures with an object complement, illustrated by:

- *Maşina o are <u>nouă</u> / His is a new car.*

derives from a relative base structure to which are applied the transformations of relativization (*el are maşina ^ care este nouă / he has the car ^ which is new*), of elision of the copular verb of the subordinate clause (*el are maşina ^ care nouă / he has the car ^ which new*) and the elision of the relative pronoun conjunct (*el are maşină <u>nouă</u> / he has a <u>new</u> car*).

Optionally, the transformation of object repositioning may also occur (*Maşina o are <u>nouă</u> / His is a <u>new</u> car*).

8) The eigth type is illustrated by structures such as:

- *El a pierit <u>răpus</u> de durere / * He died <u>killed</u> of grief.*

which derive from a causal structure to which have been applied:

→ the transformation of passivization: *El a pierit ^ fiindcă durerea l-a răpus > El a pierit ^ fiindcă a fost răpus de durere / He died ^ because grief killed him > He died ^ because he was killed by grief.*

→ the transformation of elision of the causal conjunct and of the passive auxiliary <u>*a fi*</u> / <u>*to be*</u>*: El a pierit ^ el răpus de durere / He died ^ he killed by grief.*

→ the transformation of elision of the subject of the subordinate clause, co-referential with the subject of the main clause: *El a pierit răpus de durere / * He died <u>killed</u> of grief.*

9) The next type can be illustrated by sentences such as:

- *Ele (îmi) păreau <u>amuzante</u> / They appeared <u>funny</u> to me.*

which derive from a base structure containing the impersonal verb <u>a apărea</u> / <u>to appear</u> (viz., to strike as), to which is applied the transformation of personalization, through the rising up of the subject of the subordinate clause to the position of subject of the main clause, followed by the transformation of conjunct and copula elision (*Îmi părea că ele sunt amuzante > Ele îmi păreau că sunt amuzante > Ele îmi păreau <u>amuzante</u> / It appeared to me that they were funny > They appeared to me to be funny > The appeared <u>funny</u> to me*).

10) The final type uses structures such as:

- *Cartea merită <u>citită</u>. / The book is worth <u>reading</u>.*
- *Salcâmul trebuia <u>tăiat</u>. / The acacia tree had <u>to be cut down</u>.*

which derive from a primary structure having an impersonal verb (*a merita / to be worth, a trebui / to have to, etc.*) that governs a subject clause (*Merită să fie citită cartea / It is worth reading the book; Trebuie ca salcâmul să fie tăiat / * It has to cut down the acacia tree*).

The transformations applied here are:

- passivization: *Trebuia ^ salcâmul să fie tăiat de către oricine / * It had ^ the acacia tree to be cut down by anyone;*
- agent non-definition / elision: *Trebuia ^ salcâmul să fie tăiat / * It had ^ the acacia tree to be cut down;*
- rising up the subject of the subordinate to the main clause: *Salcâmul trebuia să fie tăiat / The acacia tree had to be cut down;*
- passive auxiliary and conjunct elision in the subordinate clause: *Salcâmul trebuie tăiat / The acacia tree has to be cut down.*

The existence of different structure types signals the fact that the object complement's is a syntactic role defined by ambiguity, by the possibility to interpret the same structure in several ways. Beyond the ambiguity apparent at system level, which concerns the existence of different ways of generating structures that include the object complement, ambiguity is also entailed in particular cases.

In the latter case, we must include *both* structures that are ambiguous as regards the semantic relationship between the adjective and the other components, which permits two or more derivative courses at once, each belonging to a different structure type:

Văd că el este tânăr / I see he is young (type 2)

such as *"Îl văd tânăr"*
"I see him young"

Îl văd când era tânăr / I see him when he was young (type 6)

and ambiguous structures as regards the referent of the subordinate clause subject:
Ea îşi aminteşte de mine când eu eram tânără / She recalls me when I was young.
such as *"Ea îşi aminteşte de mine tânără"* *"She recalls me young"*

Ea îşi aminteşte de mine când ea era tânără /
She recalls me when she was young.

Besides, ambiguity is also typical of type (5) structures, which, as we have already mentioned, permit three different derivative courses, but also of structures where the object complement is a gerund, given the multiple semantic values of this verbal mood. Also ambiguous are the structures whose object complement is governed by a verb that can also actualize a copular value:

- *Ea arată palidă / She looks pale.*
- *Fotografia o arată palidă / The picture shows her pale.*

Apart from the confusion between the object complement and the subject complement, we should also beware of the confusion with diverse adverbials. The criterion we should rely on in parsing such cases is the presence / absence of double dependency.

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