APPOSITION AND INCIDENCE - TWO SYNTACTIC (NON) RELATIONSHIPS!?

Cipriana Elena Peica

Assistant Lecturer, PhD Student, "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: The typology of syntactic relationships is a complex and controversial issue in Romanian literature. The role of this paper is to highlight this issue once again and the purpose is to stress the often erroneous premises underlying the numerous classifications of syntactic relationships, for we believe that in the Romanian language there are only two types of syntactic relationships, namely the coordination relationship and the subordination relationship, all others are just variants and variations thereof; apposition and incident elements fall under the category of what we call language factual parentheticals.

Keywords: apposition, incidence, syntactic relationships, Romanian language factual parentheticals, syntax.

MOTTO:

"(...) whatever enters the parenthetical area – either incidental segments or explanatory segments – is not a function because, due to the very fact of being in brackets, it does not update valences."

(D. D. Draşoveanu)

In the approach proposed by us we will present each of the so-called syntactic *relationships*, i.e. the 'apposition' relationship and the 'incidence' relationship, out of the desire to outline a coherent picture based on which we will present our conclusions which we consider to be valid.

I. Appositive 'Relationship'

Iorgu Iordan and Vladimir Robu, in their work *Limba română contemporană (Contemporary Romanian Language)*, define the nondependent appositive relationship as a relationship of relative equivalence between two units by the same reference. The appositive relationship is considered to be a mediated relationship deriving from a subadjacent metalinguistic clause, in which one of the two units is defined by the other, which is considered to be the defining term. The authors believe that the appositive

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureş, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

relationship could be considered as equivalence between a *difiniendum* term and a *definiens* one, which have the same reference, thus revealing the nondependent nature and the relative possibility of mutual change in the positions of the two terms in the structure. The appositive relationship cannot be equated with coordination, from which it is distinguished by the reference to the same person/thing and the metalinguistic nature of the semantic and grammatical value, nor with subordination, from which it is distinguished by the bilateral nature of nondependence[1].

In *Gramatica limbii române(Romanian Grammar)*, Dumitru Irimia defines the apposition relationship as "the syntactic expression of the intersection of two or more semantic perspectives from which, at a given moment, the same extralinguistic reality is construed"[2]. The author believes that a grammatical equivalence is established between the terms of the apposition relationship.

The same theory on the typology of appositive relationships can be found in the new edition of *Gramatica limbii române(Romanian Grammar)* published in 2005[3] and in *Gramatica de bază a limbii române (Basic Romanian Grammar)* published in 2010, which defines apposition as a discourse and referential equivalence between two constituents, one of which is the base and the other one is the apposition[4]. The latter book believes that this relationship is distinguished from actual subordinate relationships by the following four elements:

1) From the semantic standpoint, the base is an entity associated with an individual-type denotation, while the apposition is a logical/semantic predicate which refers to the individual.

2) The appositive relationship may occur in any syntactic group (nominal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, verbal).

3) This type of relationship is achieved by juxtaposition, using apposemes or subordinating connectors.

4) Apposition is always isolated (prosodically by pauses and graphically by commas) and is always placed after the base.

[1] *Iorgu Iordan, Vladimir Robu, Limba română contemporană, Bucureşti, 1978, p. 556.*
[2] *Dumitru Irimia, Gramatica limbii române, Ediția a III-a revăzută, Iaşi, 2008, p. 578.*
[3] *Gramatica limbii române, Enunţul, vol. II, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2005, p.24.*
[4] *Gramatica de bază a limbii române, coordonator Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, Academia Română, Institutul de lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan – AL. Rosetti", Bucureşti, 2010, p.353-354.*

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

In *Sintaxa limbii române (Romanian Syntax),* Gh. Constantinescu-Dobridor defines the appositive relationship as a special one, different from the coordination and subordination relationships, highlighted using intonation, pause and punctuation. This relationship is established between two terms: the first one receives an explanation, it is the term explained by the second term, which functions as an apposition (**My friend,*the composer,*** was very happy.)[5].

Due to its content, to the clarifications that it makes, to the explained terms, the appositive relationships somewhat resembles the subordination relationship between an attribute and the noun to which it refers, which is why the appositive relationships has been and still is considered by elementary grammars as a subordination relationship (primarily attributive). Placing the apposition outside a noun attribute is justified, since there already is a nominative attribute, such as: ***Professor Petrescu****comes tomorrow.* (false apposition). Apposition cannot be equated with a nominative attribute or an object because, on the one hand, the two terms in the appositive relationship refer to one and the same person/thing, while in the subordination relationship each subordinate term represents a person, a thing, a real author, and on the other hand, either of the two terms in the appositive relationship may be absent from a statement, while in the subordination relationship only the subordinate term may be absent and the regent one must always be present[6], and finally because the order of the two terms in the appositive relationship is always the same: the apposition is always and compulsorily placed after the explained term.

The appositive relationship resembles the coordination relationship in terms of identical morphological value of the words, number, case and even gender agreement (which may exist, under certain conditions, between the terms thereof), and a certain symmetrical construction of the terms (which may be preceded by the same preposition):

*He met with John, Peter, his **brothers**.*

(with) John, Peter - coordination relationship

***brothers** – appositive relationship compared to the other two nouns (with) John, Peter*[7]

In *Probleme desintaxă a limbii române actuale (Syntax Issues of the Current Romanian Language),* Ion Diaconescu believes that apposition, just like coordination, is a

[5]Gh. Constantinescu - Dobridor, *Sintaxa limbii române*, Bucureşti, 1998, p.35.
[6] *Idem.*
[7] Gh. Constantinescu - Dobridor, *Sintaxa limbii române*, Bucureşti, 1998, p.36.

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

positional expansion either of a main clause, or of a subordinate secondary clause. More commonly, the appositive clause has a part of clause as its antecedent. When the antecedent is a previous sentence, the appositive clause becomes a contextual apposition. Two appositions which refer to the same antecedent may be in a coordination relationship (*He travels by train, by plane,* ***bywhat he likes*** *and* ***by what he may***)[8].

The author believes that, since the appositive relationship is a positional expansion of the antecedent to which it refers, ***it does not generate functions***. Therefore, the appositive clause cannot be analysed as a functional relationship, for it represents another aspect of the antecedent[9].

In *Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar)*, Dumitru Irimia considers apposition to be a syntactic function and develops an entire theory in this regard[10]. D. D. Draşoveanu argues and demonstrates that "whatever enters the parenthetical area – either incidental segments or explanatory segments – is not a function because, due to the very fact of being in brackets, it does not update valences. For the same reason, no real apposition is a function, because it merely repeats, copies, duplicates a given function."[11]

We are of the same opinion according to which apposition is in a non-relationship with its antecedent, it is not connected with it, it is not a contractor thereof. The explicit and material signs of this non-relationship are left and right pauses, isolating pauses marked in writing by a pair of commas or equivalent signs.

Consequently, there is no syntactic appositive relationship. The relationship between apposition and its antecedent is parenthetical, exclusively semantic.

II. Incidence 'Relationship'

In *Probleme desintaxă a limbii române actuale (Syntax Issues of the Current Romanian Language)*, Ion Diaconescu defines this relationship as *superordination* and believes that it is not an actual relationship, for two clause units do not belong to the same communication plane: one is as an expression of the communication act, and the other is an expression of the speaking subject's emotional or rational attitude towards what is communicated[12].

[8] Ion Diaconescu, *Probleme desintaxă a limbii române actuale*, Bucureşti, 1989, p.244-245.
[9] *Ibidem,* p.245.
[10] Dumitru Irimia, *Gramatica limbii române*, Ediţia a III-a revăzută, Iaşi, 2008, p. 580-587.
[11] D.D. Draşoveanu, *Teze şi antiteze în sintaxa limbii române*, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p.75.
[12] Ion Diaconescu, *Probleme desintaxă a limbii române actuale*, Bucureşti, 1989, p.245.

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

In their work *Limba română contemporană(Contemporary Romanian Language)*, Iorgu Iordan and Vladimir Robu use the name of mediated bilateral interdependence relationship, defined as the relationship that characterises the structure of a statement consisting of two units which belong to two speech planes: direct speech and the author's speech which reproduces the direct speech of another author - *Pupils, **says the teacher**, open your textbooks!* - and which make up syntactic structures characterised by syntagmatic relationships[13].

In *Gramatica pentru toţi (Grammar book for everybody)*, Mioara Avram considers ***incident constructions*** as being those elements which are syntactically unrelated and whose intervention disturbs the unitary character of a clause or of a sentence. These constructions represent a marginal stand-alone communication, which is in a different plane than that of the basic communication, either because the speakers are different, or because the sole speaker introduces in his communication addressing, attitudinal, explanatory elements[14]. The presence of an incident clause in an independent clause does not give this independent clause the status of a sentence, for the two communications are not part of the same syntactic unit. In a sentence, these clauses are not taken into account when calculating the number of units that make up the sentence, because they are elements of a parallel communication, "syntactically, they are not related into a sentence"[15].

In *Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar)*, Dumitru Irimia considers the incidence relationship to be the syntactic expression of the intersection of two or more planes within the same statement which thus becomes a complex statement[16]. The author believes that the terms involved in an incidence relationship are statements with different degrees of autonomy, which articulate within the limits of the statement unit.

Gramatica de bază a limbii române (Basic Romanian Grammar) published in 2010 describes a few situations where some components of a statement (words, groups of words, clauses) create pragmatic, discursive relationships with the other components. This is the case of incident constructions[17], where the structure of a clause is interrupted for the speaker to express a point of view, to provide further explanations in relation to what is

[13] Iorgu Iordan, Vladimir Robu, *Limba română contemporană*, Bucureşti, 1978, p. 555-556.
[14]Mioara Avram, *Gramatica pentru toţi*, Bucureşti, 1986, p. 326-327.
[15]D.D. Draşoveanu, *Elemente de analiză sintactică*, în D.D. Draşoveanu, P.Dumitraşcu, M.Zdrenghea, Analize gramaticale şi stilistice, Cluj-Napoca, 1965, p. 48.
[16]Dumitru Irimia, *Gramatica limbii române*, Ediţia a III-a revăzută, Iaşi, 2008, p. 588.
[17]*Gramatica de bază a limbii române*, coordonator Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, Academia Română, Institutul de lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan – AL. Rosetti", Bucureşti, 2010, p. 354-357.

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureş, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

stated, to connect ideas. There interruptions are not considered to be coordinated or subordinated in the syntactic plane, but rather in the pragmatic plane, in relation to the term having the same syntactic rank or to an unexpressed regent. These incident constructions are in the pragmatic plane also when their role is to ensure direct speech reporting (*Get out of here,**he said angrily,** because we might argue*.).

The same book states that **vocative** and **interjections of address** are incident elements in direct speech. **Metadiscourse adverbials –** *which are outside the verbal groups expressed by statements (their regents are, in fact, most often absent) in order to refer to the act of enunciation* - are classified as a special type of incident construction (*I think he doesn't feel well,* [I say this]***since we are talking about him***.). **Pragmatic connectors** are also considered to be incident elements (*Did you think we got rid of bad weather? **Well**, rain returns all over the country)*.

Gramatica limbii romîne (Romanian Grammar) published in 1966 discusses, under the general title of 'Syntactic Phenomena and Processes Common to Sentence and Clause', about *incident words* and *constructions*, namely those words and constructions that bring additional communication within a base communications[18].

In the new edition of *Romanian grammar* published in 2005, *incident words* and *constructions* are discussed in the chapter 'Deviant Syntactic Structures' of Part II 'Discursive organisation', which is dedicated to different aspects of speech. These phenomena include, in addition to ellipse, anacoluthon, repetition, also incident constructions in the section 'Incident Constructions'[19] and partly in the section 'Types of Speech' in the interpretation of direct speech[20].

D.D Draşoveanu argues and demonstrates that "whatever enters the parenthetical area – either incidental segments or explanatory segments – is not a function because, due to the very fact of being in brackets, it does not update valences."[21]

We are of the same opinion according to which incidence is in a non-relationship with its antecedent, it is not connected with it, it is not a contractor thereof. Accordingly, based on the principle that there is no syntactic relationship where there is no relationship,

[18]*Gramatica limbii române*, vol.II, *Ediţia a II-a revăzută şi adaugită*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti, 1966, p.422-427.
[19]*Gramatica limbii române, Enunţul*, vol. II, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 738-742.
[20]*Ibidem*, p. 819 - 820.
[21] *D.D. Draşoveanu, Teze şi antiteze în sintaxa limbii române, Cluj-Napoca, 1997, p.75.*

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureş, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

we conclude by saying that there is no syntactic relationship of incidence. The incidence relationship is parenthetical, exclusively semantic.

III. Conclusions

As regards the appositive 'syntactic relationship' and the incidence 'relationship', we may say that these *relationships* do not exist. As shown, apposition is in a non-relationship with its antecedent, it is not connected with it, it is not a contractor thereof. The explicit and material signs of this non-relationship are left and right pauses, isolating pauses marked in writing by a pair of commas or equivalent signs. It is therefore obvious that the relationship between apposition and its antecedent is parenthetical, exclusively semantic.

Regarding the incidence 'relationship', our conclusion is that incidence is also in a non-relationship with its antecedent, it is not connected with it, it is not a contractor thereof. Accordingly, based on the principle that *there is no syntactic relationship where there is no relationship,* we conclude by saying that there is no syntactic relationship of incidence; the incidence relationship is parenthetical, exclusively semantic as well.

Therefore, given that syntactic relationships cover grammatical relationships between two terms, we believe that we can speak ONLY of two syntactic relationships in the Romanian language: subordination relationship and coordination relationship; apposition and incident elements fall under the category of what we call *language factual parentheticals*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Avram 1986 – Mioara Avram, *Gramatica pentru toţi*, Bucureşti.

Constantinescu-Dobridor 1998 – Gh. Constantinescu-Dobridor, *Sintaxa limbii române*, Bucureşti.

Diaconescu 1989 – Ion Diaconescu, *Probleme desintaxă a limbii române actuale*, Bucureşti.

Draşoveanu, 1997 – D.D. Draşoveanu, *Teze şi antiteze în sintaxa limbii române*, Cluj-Napoca.

Draşoveanu 1965 – D.D. Draşoveanu, *Elemente de analiză sintactică*, în D.D. Draşoveanu, P.Dumitraşcu, M. Zdrenghea, *Analize gramaticale şi stilistice*, Cluj-Napoca.

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)

GBLR 2010 – *Gramatica de bază a limbii române*, coordonator Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, Academia Română, Institutul de lingvistică „Iorgu Iordan – AL. Rosetti", Bucureşti.

GLR 1966 - *Gramatica limbii române*, vol.I şi vol.II, *Ediţia a II-a revăzută şi adaugită*, Editura Academiei, Bucureşti.

GLR 2005 - *Gramatica limbii române, Enunţul*, vol. II, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti.

Iordan – Robu 1978 – Iorgu Iordan, Vladimir Robu, *Limba română contemporană*, Bucureşti.

Irimia 2008 – Dumitru Irimia, *Gramatica limbii române*, Ediţia a III-a revăzută, Iaşi.

Neamţu 2010–2011 - G.G. Neamţu, *Curs de sintaxa (*anul universitar 2010-2011), Universitatea „Babeş-Bolyai", Facultatea de Litere, Cluj-Napoca.

Peica 2015 - Apoziţia şi incidenţa – două (NON)raporturi sintactice!?, Revista de lingvistică şi cultură românească, https://limbaromana.org/numere/2015-4/

Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu Mureș, ISBN: 978-606-8624-03-7

BDD-V4031 © 2016 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.42 (2026-11-16 16:59:37 UTC)