The Issue of the *Linguistic Structure* Concept in Contemporary Romanian Syntax

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Abstract

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While it is fundamental for the *linguistic system* concept to be considered as a set of stable and interdependent structural rules, it is fundamental for the *linguistic structure* concept to be considered as a *scheme of functional relationships*, because the structure rules and the relationships are structural rules and relationships only if they ensure certain functions. This means that any minimal unit of a system belongs to that system if it has a function in a scheme of relationships, and it fulfils such function only if it belongs to a proper system.

The concept of *relationship* has been theorised and clearly defined by Ferdinand de Saussure. In modern linguistics, this is a key point because everything in a natural language is based on relationships, starting with the *linguistic sign* – which is the result of a relationship between a *signifier* and a *signified*.

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1. Research Methodology

In our linguistic analysis, we used mixed-method approach which can illustrate with example how qualitative methods as bibliographical research, analysis, observation and interpretation can contribute to linguistic research.

2. Introduction

When we analyse a statement, we find a number of units arranged in a certain order. Each part of that statement achieves its communicative function due to the complex of relationships between that part and the multitude of elements from which it was selected, and also due to complex of relationships with the other parts of the statement.

The relationships between each element of the statement and the elements of the group from which it was selected are called **paradigmatic relationships.** Ferdinand de Saussure considers them relationships between words *in absentia* (Saussure, 1971: 171). The relationships between each component and the other components of a statement are called **syntagmatic relationships**, their words co-exist *in praesentia* (Saussure, 1971: 171).

Therefore, any language knows two ways of organising its units: a paradigmatic one, which translates as selection, and a syntagmatic one, which is reflected in the arrangement in a certain sequence.

3. *Statement* and *linguistic structure* (relationships)

The central issue of syntax is both the *statement* – as a syntagmatic structure analysable in components, and especially the determination of the *minimum functional units* which are the components of the statement and between which relationships are established. *Relationships* are underlying elements of any communication; achieving a communication necessarily involves the existence of relationships (Guţu Romalo, 1973: 35). These relationships are the ones that give a statement *a communicative value*. If these relationships do not concern the organisation or the structure of a statement, then they are *external* to that statement.

In addition to *external relationships*, there are internal relationships between the components of a statement, which are intrinsic to the statement. They characterise only statements made up of two or more words in which they connect to each other the components of a statement (Guţu Romalo, 1973: 35-36).

A *syntactic relationship* is the syntagmatic relationship which involves two or more minimal component units of a statement's structure (Iordan & Robu, 1978: 546-547). The syntactic relationship is the internal relationship whose role is to structure the statement and give it the character of an organised whole that carries information.

As already mentioned, the specificity of the *syntactic level* is based on the requirements of the communication process which impose the *statement* as a fundamental unit, and the *clause* as a minimal unit. According to the communicative aspect - which is also called assertive, predicative, enunciative - the base unit of syntax is the statement understood as completed communicative unit. A *statement* is a

finite, relatively autonomous structure, whose syntactic identity is defined by the unit of meaning, by the unit of structure and by the prosodic unit (Irimia, 2008: 378-379).

While the prosodic unit and the semantic unit are ensured by the conduct of predication, the structure unit varies according to the specific achievement of predication and the syntactic expansions that it directs or even conditions.

4. *Syntagm* – the minimal and maximal unit of the syntactic level

The structure unit of the statement is ensured by incorporating the lexical level of the language system in the syntactic level through syntactic relationships. The transition of the word from *lexical unit* to *syntactic term* is achieved through **syntagm**, which is the **minimal and maximal unit of the syntactic level**. Within and due to the relationship, lexemes receive new roles and the status of **terms** of the syntagm (Draşoveanu, 1997: 25-26).

The following example is illustrative:

Ştie pentru că învaţă, / He knows because he learns.

- ❖ Ştie/(he) knows = lexeme; it has a qualifier (lexical) meaning; it has the meaning of ***effect***.
- ❖ învaţă/(he) learns = lexeme; it has a qualifier (lexical) meaning; it has the meaning of ***cause***.
- ❖ pentru că/because= connective; it has no qualifier (lexical) meaning, but a ***relational meaning***.

It is noted that a lexeme becomes *term* only at syntactic level and as a result of the relationship; the *relationship* is the one that creates terms and not vice versa, the relationship is the creator of the terms of a syntagm understood as a **binary structure** (Draşoveanu, 1997: 25-26). The relationship is the one from which the content of the terms emanates – the content is an element extrinsic to lexemes; the relationship also serves as organiser of the terms of the relationship. What the definitions of coordination and subordination have in common is that they all take into account, one way or the other, the terms of a relationship (Draşoveanu, 1997: 40). "Syntactic relationships give a statement the character of an organised whole: they place the components of a statement in different ways one from the others" (Draşoveanu, 1997: 45).

If we generalise, we can say that every syntagm is based on a relationship, it is generated by a relational meaning.

The term syntagm has a broader meaning that includes any binary group of elements united by the relationship of dependence (Saussure, 1971: 127). Three meanings are of interest in syntax (Iordan, 19956: 517-518):

a) a group of words that forms, in a given statement, a unit of meaning and has the role of rhythmic-intonation unit;

b) combinations of two parts of clause (including or excluding the subject + predicate group)

c) any binary syntactic group consisting of a determining and a determined part, regardless of the complexity of the terms.

According to the last meaning, a statement is a syntagm made up of terms which are also syntagms whose terms are also syntagms, and so on, and the components of a statement are a chain of syntagms. This concept develops Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas.

As regards the concept of *syntagm,* there is no concordance of views; interpretations differ greatly in literature.

Along with the part of clause, the clause and the sentence, the *syntagm* is considered by many authors to be one of the syntax units. In *Sinteze de limbă română. Sintaxa (Syntheses of the Romanian Language. Syntax)*, Corneliu Crăciun considers the *syntagm* or the *group of words* as an intermediary unit between the clause and the word/part of clause, which should not be defined in terms of subject and predicate, but in terms of coordination and subordination relationships between the components of a statement, excluding the *predicate-subject*, *predicate-object, predicate-floating predicate* relationships. The author defines *syntagm* as "a group of words which, compared to the rest of the communication, are characterised by a semantically flexible unit whose components are in coordination and subordination relationships" (Crăciun, 2001: 13). The same author says that the syntagm may appear as a unit of two terms – simple syntagm - or as a unit of three or more terms – complex syntagm, specifying that the complex syntagm is made up of several simple syntagms.

In *Teze şi antiteze în sintaxa limbii române (Theses and Antitheses in the Syntax of the Romanian Language)*, D. D. Draşoveanu offers a vision of the concept at issue - *syntagm,* which we consider fair and complete. "**The syntagm is only binary** due to the linearity (one-dimension) of the chain of speech which, according to Saussure, requires consecution in the arrangement of consecutive elements and, thus, binarity." (Draşoveanu, 1997: 39) The author believes that syntagms phenomenalise as such – syntagms per se –or in clauses and sentences. Therefore, the *syntagm* – the group made up of two terms and the relationship between them – is the ***relational unit*** of syntax, the ***only*** unit, ***both minimal and maximal*** (Draşoveanu, 1997: 36). All that is beyond and above the word is syntagm. Clause and sentence may be defined in terms of the syntagm – as they are in fact syntagms: a *clause* is a syntagm in which the relateme is the verb agreement flective, and a *sentence* is a syntagm in which the relateme is an inter-clause connective (Draşoveanu, 1997: 34). The syntagm is the general that is particularised both in clauses and in sentences. From a relational standpoint, a syntagm cannot be inferior to a clause or a sentence; they are all phenomenalisations of the same general (Draşoveanu, 1997: 32).

Any structure requires a certain number of units or component elements, arranged based on relationships and characterised by a specific functionality. *Unit, relationship, function* are three entities falling within the definition of the dynamics of a syntactic structure. Relationships are established between units and the study of relationships reveals the typology of syntactic units (Diaconescu, 1989: 15).

Syntactic relationships are connected to the combinations of words into syntactic units, but we cannot say that these – the syntactic relationships –may be found in all combinations of words; there are two types of exceptions in this regard: the category of non-notional words and the category of words that includes words with semantic information and those occurring in free combinations of words (Iordan, Robu, 1978: 553), but belong to different groups of words in a clause, a sentence or a text (Dimitriu, 2002: 1127-1129).

From our point of view, syntactical relationships concern the grammatical relationships existing between two terms. The *relationship (syntactic relationship)* is the new element that is specific to the syntactic level; it is a separate independent entity, a linguistic sign objectively equipped with

expression and *content*. The *content of a relationship* is the relational meaning; it represents the element that puts in antinomy two other meanings which are non-relational, for they are lexical meanings. The *expression of a relationship* consists not only of *connectives,* but also of *relational flectives* - understood in accordance with the meaning of flective as form, relational organiser of an idea, because "relational flectives and connectives are at the same level that they share in a different way, and the proportion causes the degree of analytism/synthetism of the language". D.D. Draşoveanu named these two elements of expression - *flectives* and *connectives* - with the generic term of **relatemes**;with their help, he defined the *inter-lexematic syntagmatic relationship* as **"the solidarity between a relational meaning and a relateme"** (Draşoveanu, 1997: 28-29). The grammatical and **non-relational** opponent of the word relateme is the non-relational/opposing flective, which is called **opposeme**. Relatemeand opposeme have a generic and superordinate term, i.e. **grammeme,** which is the direct opposite of lexeme (Neamţu: 2010-2011).

Therefore, by generalising, we will say that the expression of a relationship consists not only of connectives, but also of flectives (some of them called relational flectives). Connectives and relational flectives are the last of the inventory of segmented means used to create relationships. Other suprasegmental means may be added insignificantly (intonation, word order and zero means), generically known as **adherence**.

5. Results

In conclusion, in light of what we presented and demonstrated above, a linguistic structure, a relationship represents the solidarity between a relational meaning (content of the relationship) and a relateme (expression of the relationship); it is therefore a linguistic sign with expression and content. In terms of expression, it is part of the chain of speech as a distinct segment with a certain development, a certain length, which supports the initial statement that while it is fundamental for the *linguistic system* concept to be considered as a set of stable and interdependent structural rules, it is fundamental for the *linguistic structure* concept to be considered as a *scheme of functional relationships*, because the structure rules and the relationships are structural rules and relationships only if they ensure certain functions. This means that any minimal unit of a system belongs to that system if it has a function in a scheme of relationships, and it fulfils such function only if it belongs to a proper system.

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