
Alexandru Nicolae’s book is an excellent approach to word order in old Romanian, focused on clausal structure and verb movement. It is, in the first place, a diachronic syntax of old Romanian, with many references to the syntax of modern Romanian, because, as mentioned by the author, the proper way to investigate the syntax of an older stage of a language is to first understand and describe the syntax of the contemporary stage.

The book is structured in five chapters. The first one, “Introducere” [Introduction] (pp. 1–5), is a brief presentation of the structure of the book and of the main research objectives. The preliminary assumption is that word order in old Romanian differs from modern Romanian in several important ways; certain effects of word order variation derive from verb movement and the structure of the clause (phenomena discussed in the book under review), whereas others are related to the nominal phrase and discontinuous structures (phenomena to be discussed in a future research).

The second chapter, “Variatie și schimbare de topică în limba română. Cadru teoretic. Metodologie” [Variation and word order change in Romanian. Theoretical framework. Methodology] (pp. 7–36), briefly introduces the main word order variation phenomena in old Romanian and the diachronic changes related to word order. There are two main phenomena to be investigated in this book. The first one is auxiliary and clitic inversion interpreted as a reflex of the residual relaxed V2 syntax of old Romanian, similar to the other old Romance languages. In this system, the verb frequently moves to C, precisely to FinP, whereas in the modern language the verb generally moves to I. The main difference between (old and modern) Romanian and other Romance languages is the way in which the verb moves: as a phrase, in Romanian, and as a head, in other Romance languages. The second one is the dislocation of verb forms analysed as an instance of low verb movement. Therefore, the two main goals of the book are: (i) the analysis of inversion in old Romanian and (ii) the analysis of dislocated/scrambled verb forms in old Romanian. There are other phenomena related to word order variation which are only introduced in this chapter whose analysis is the objective of future research: changes related to the word order in the nominal phrase (definiteness marking and the low position of the definite article, the non-specialization of prenominal and postnominal demonstratives, the ambiguous grammar of cel as demonstrative and article, and the structure of the prenominal domain) and to the discontinuous structures which characterize old Romanian but were jettisoned in the transition to modern Romanian.

A separate section is dedicated to the theoretical framework used in this research. The author settles as framework the Minimalist Program and explains several theoretical concepts adopted in the book: Agree, Merge, the distinction between interpretable and valued features, the EPP feature, syntactic phases and peripheries, the head parameter and roll-up movement, and (discourse) configurationality. The last section deals with the methodology: the author adopted the largely accepted periodization of old Romanian (1521–1640 and 1640–1780), he used a large corpus from both periods and he combined the qualitative analysis (for most of the cases) with the qualitative analysis (mainly for several controversial aspects). At the end of the chapter, the author highlights the fact that the Romance perspective is always favoured in his research; the often claimed Slavonic influence is not denied, but rather understood as consolidating already existent features, not as being the main source of certain syntactic structures and phenomena found in old Romanian.

The third chapter, “Deplasarea verbului și structura nucleului propozitionă în română modernă” [Verb movement and the structure of the sentential core in modern Romanian] (pp. 37–116), is mainly theoretical. It is not only a preliminary research for the analysis of old Romanian (in the next chapter) but an insightful syntactic analysis of certain controversial issues in the syntax of modern Romanian. The goal of this chapter is to answer two questions: (i) which is the syntactic domain to which the verb moves in modern Romanian, and (ii) how the verb moves, as a head or as a phrase. Before answering these questions, the chapter opens with an introduction in which the state of research is presented: the basic assumption is the verb can move to different projections in different languages, the main dichotomy being V-to-I vs V-to-C movement.

The second section aims to answer the question on phrasal vs head movement for the Romanian verb. After reviewing the previous literature on this topic (in which verb movement is mainly conceived as head movement) and introducing the main concepts used in his own analysis, the author rewrites the grammar of verb movement in Romanian by adopting a phrasal movement analysis: the verb moves as a phrase but the moved phrase contains only the head, i.e., any other VP-material except for the head has to be evacuated from the VP prior to verb movement. His analysis also incorporates Pesetsky and Torrego’s1 case licensing theory, in which an intermediate projection, T, endowed with an EPP feature that attracts the object to its specifier (Nicolae’s parameterization), and the object shift phenomenon, which allows the free movement of the direct object in the VP domain. The phrasal movement analysis of verb movement in Romanian, different from other Romance languages, explains the oddness of the V2 grammar of old Romanian (V2 takes the form of inversion) when compared to other old Romance varieties.

The third section aims to answer the first question, and it does, in the following way: in modern Romanian, the projection targeted by verb movement is I, precisely Mood (as a general option), and C (for inverted conditionals, bare subjunctives and imperatives); while moving, the verb transit all the specifiers in the I-domain. The thorough analysis of verb movement gives the author the opportunity to offer insightful information and conclusions about other core syntactic features of Romanian: the distribution of Romanian auxiliaries, the architecture of the I domain, with a high Pers projection hosting clitics (which are, therefore, I-oriented), the high position of the Negation, which represents the boundary between the I domain and the C domain, the status of să (the subjunctive complementizer), and of a (the infinitive complementizer), the formal analysis of auxiliary and clitic inversion, etc.

Built on the theoretical framework described in the previous chapter, the fourth chapter, “O analiză diacronică și comparată a deplasării verbului în limba română” [A diachronic and comparative analysis of verb movement in Romanian] (pp. 117–225), deals with several phenomena specific to the syntax of the verb in old Romanian, phenomena indicating the level of verb movement in this stage of the language. The perspective is not only diachronic (the passage from late (Danubian) Latin to old Romanian and to modern Romanian), but also comparative, the (old) Romance (similar) data playing an important role. The main change in the passage from old Romanian to modern Romanian regards the stabilization of the level to which the verb moves: while old Romanian allows for both V-to-C and V-to-I, modern Romanian generalized the V-to-I option, while V-to-C specializes for valuing the [+ directive] feature; moreover, low verb movement, formalized by means of Long Distance Agree, is no longer available in the syntax of modern Romanian.

These changes are supported by the detailed analysis of several syntactic phenomena of old Romanian (systematically compared to modern Romanian): auxiliaries, pronominal clitics, propositional negation, the subjunctive complementizer să, object shift in old Romanian. The comparison between old Romanian and modern Romanian reveals the following results: the structure of the clause is similar in the two stages of Romanian; the auxiliary system shows differences between the two periods – while old Romanian has two types of auxiliaries, i.e. auxiliaries which

express mood and modality and periphrastic structures in which the auxiliary is inflected for mood and tense, modern Romanian only preserved the first type; the raising of the auxiliary to the C domain is not attested in old and modern Romanian; old Romanian clitics are I-oriented and they do not obey the (strict version of the) Tobler-Mussafia law; the proclisis of auxiliaries and clitics diagnoses V-to-I movement, while the enclisis diagnoses V-to-C movement; as in modern Romanian, in old Romanian the verb raises as a phrase.

A special section is devoted to the residual relaxed V2 grammar of old Romanian (similar to other old Romance languages and different from the strict V2 grammar of the Germanic languages), instantiated by the V-Aux, V-Cl, and V-Aux-Cl structures. In this discussion, a lot of space is dedicated to inversions in old Romanian, which are analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. The following result obtains from the careful analysis: in old Romanian inverted structures, the verb raises to C, precisely to Fin; this result, mainly built on the distribution of the complementizer ad in relation with proclisis and enclisis, differs from other analyses, e.g. Alboiu, Hill and Sitaridou (2014) and Hill and Alboiu (2016), but is in agreement with the analyses of similar phenomena of other old Romance languages (Ledgeway 2007 and subsequent work, Wolfe 2015). The asymmetry between the availability of inversion in main vs embedded clauses supports the residual relaxed V2 syntax analysis of the grammar of old Romanian.

Another section deals with dislocated verb forms in old Romanian, analyzed as low verb movement manipulated via Long Distance Agree. The loss of these structures in modern Romanian correlates with the loss of other phenomena which involved this type of Agree. Special attention is paid to the phenomenon dubbed by the author “the negotiation of a grammar”, i.e. the effects of foreign influences on the syntax of old Romanian, manifested, for example, as pronominal enclisis in non-specific contexts or as the cancellation of the pragmatic effects created by different word order patterns.

The last chapter, “Concluzii generale” [General conclusions] (pp. 227–232), briefly summarizes the main findings of the research for the synchronic analysis, for the diachronic one and for the grammaticalization phenomena. The conclusions are followed by a list of the corpus of old Romanian used in the book and by a large list of references.

In conclusion, the book under review is a very interesting and insightful research focused not only on word order in old Romanian but also on the syntax of both old and modern Romanian. The comparison between Latin, old Romanian and modern Romanian and between Romanian and other Romance languages is never neglected or underestimated, a fact which makes the book very interesting appealing not only for syntacticians but for Romance scholars in general. The author is not only preoccupied to answer his research questions but also presents collateral results, very interesting for the analysis of the syntax of Romanian in general, which raise new research questions, answered or kept for future research. The description and analysis of the data, including statistical results, are adequately combined with a technical syntactic analysis, which is always easy to follow thanks to very clear definitions adopted for the concepts employed.

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5 Wolfe, S., 2015, “Syntactic Microvariation in the Medieval Romance Languages and the Nature of V2 Recomnidered”, talk given at the SyntaxLab, University of Cambridge, June.
The volume that represents the focus of this brief presentation includes a large number of articles (70) and it is distinguished by its highly heterogeneous nature — the articles reunited under this volume coming from a large number of fields, such as syntax, morphology, lexicography, traductology, dialectology, semiotics, phonology, orthography, didactics —, in-depth analyses, coherent demonstrations, new and original approaches.


A most useful account is the outline of the progress made by the Cluj School of Grammar between the two world wars: Dana Covaci, Școala clujeană de gramatică la ora actuală [Current Trends in the Cluj School of Grammar], p. 184–193), as well as the presentation of the professors who ran the Romanian Language Department of the Faculty of Letters, one of the first departments established upon the birth of the University of Cluj in 1872 (Gabriel Vasiliu, Catedra de limba română de la Universitatea din Cluj și Sextil Pușcaru [The Romanian Language Department of the University of Cluj and Sextil Pușcaru], p. 613–617.


Ligia Stela Florea’s study focuses on the formal status and archaic character of the French concessive clauses, which are then classified according to various types. The study underlines the manner in which the progressive grammaticalization leads to the transformation of syntactic structures in lexical-grammatical categories or to the transformation of some evaluative-intensive marks in temporal or spatial conjunctions.

Larisa Avram makes an extremely interesting investigation into the syntax and semantics of non-canonical mirativity subjunctive constructions (MSC) in Romanian, trying to see whether they represent a distinct clause type associated to their pragmatic use or have the properties of other clauses. The conclusion reached is that MSC have the same functional structure as other root subjunctives, their core meaning of surprise-incredulity being achieved by means of intonation.

Starting from the fact that, usually, the definitions of the parts of speech are not accompanied by contextual definitions (that is, by definitions based on the distributivity of the elements of a class in an enunciation – diagnostic contexts), Ștefan Găitănaru’s study reviews the contextual definitions of the noun (Paula Diaconescu 1967 și 1970, Emil Ionescu 1992/2011), presenting a new definition. It is pointed out that contextual definitions are simple, they do not consist of groups of contexts and they differ in the case of proper nouns, as opposed to common nouns.

Adina Dragomirescu analyzes the means of expressing age in old Romanian, drawing a comparison with modern Romanian. It is pointed out that in old Romanian, age is expressed using constructions based on the verb a fi, unlike the current language use, where structures with the verb avea are preferred, inspired by the French model.

Considering that one of the topics approached by G.G. Neamțu is the predicate, some of the presented articles tackle related issues: Gabriela Violeta Adam’s study Auxiliarul predicativ – termen conditioning al predicativului suplimentar [Auxiliary Predicate – Conditioning Term for the Additional Predicative Element], p. 47–53; Sergiu Drincu’s study Coincidența „oppositorum” [Coincidence Oppositorum], p. 227–235. The study entitled Predicatul complex – dinspre inovație spre tradiție [The Complex Predicate – From Innovation towards Tradition], p. 194–203, pleads for a return to the traditional grammatical research. In this article, Daiana Cuibus approaches the specific issues of the complex predicate by presenting a series of particular aspects related to verbal phrases/constructions including a copulative operator + predicative, underlining the idea that modern works on the theory and practice of grammar can only benefit from taking into account the contributions of traditional grammar.

Since G.G. Neamțu also approached the complex issues related to the article, Valeriu Gațu Romalo proposes a study entitled Articolul – două secole de istorie [The Article – Two Centenaries of History] (p. 340–344), focused on a concise description of the article in the Romanian grammar. Although initially, the article is defined and described based on an intuitive-empirical analysis, later on, it is approached from the structuralist perspective. According to the functional perspective on language, the article plays the role of an enunciative integrator.

Considering that G.G. Neamțu also tackled the homonymy topic, Gabriela Pană Dindelgean chooses Gramatica formelor omonime „a” [The Grammar of a Homonymous Forms], p. 497–507 as
the object of her study, which describes the current grammatical regime of each of the homonymous forms "a": functional preposition; free grammatical morpheme included in the structure of the 3rd person past tense; free grammatical morpheme included in the structure of a regional 3rd person future form; analytical grammatical mark that is part of the non-finite form of infinitive; proclitic genitive (or possessive) mark; semi-independent pronoun when the noun phrase head is not expressed/lexicalized; semi-independent pronoun in partitive, quasi-fixed constructions, such as the partitive preposition de + the plural form of the semi-independent pronoun (ai/âle) + a genitive/possessive form; semi-independent demonstrative pronoun—the semantic equivalent of the semi-independent demonstrative cea; lexical and semi-lexical preposition with multiple values; interjection. Also, a comparative analysis of the old Romanian homonymous forms a is performed in order to explain the current homonymous forms.

Although not frequent, the collaborations between researchers are remarkable. In this respect, mention should be made of the joint studies of Alexandra Cornilescu and Alexandru Nicolae, Articolul hotărății referențial vs articol hotărăță expletiv. Situația numelor proprii [Referential Definite Article vs. Expletive Definite Article: On Proper Names’], p. 168–173; and Daiana Felecan, Nicolae Felecan – Cazurile gramaticale rândunăști – perspectiva G. G. Neamțu [Romanian Grammatical Cases – G.G. Neamțu’s Perspective], p. 263–273. The former study looks at the morphosyntactic similarities and differences between the referential definite article (the definite article in noun phrases headed by other types of nouns than proper nouns) and the expletive definite article characteristic of proper names. The analysis of proper names of persons reveals, in addition to a series of especially inflectional similarities between the two articles, that the syntax is different because, in the case of proper names, the article has only a morphosyntactic function, whereas, in the case of common names, it has a semantic, pragmatic and syntactic function. In Romanian, the lexical matrix of anthroponyms includes both a definiteness feature and a person feature.

An interesting case is the linguistics study applied to old Romanian Marcatorul concesiv „măcar” în diachronie (seculele al XVI-lea – al XVIII-lea) [A Diachronic Perspective on the Concessive Marker măcar in the 16th to 18th century] (p. 678–687), in which Rodica Zafițu approaches the problem of măcar, a concessive marker characterizing the Romanian language in the past centuries. This marker is compared to other descendants of the Greek form μαχαρ in several Balkan (Albanian, Bulgarian, Serbian, Croatian) and Romance languages (Spanish, standard Italian and Italian dialects). The stability and associative capacity of this term is underlined, which confirms the etymological hypothesis of a Latin makarie borrowed from Greek and occurring in the Romance languages.

There are also studies of linguistics applied to certain works or to popular lyrics: Note filologice la Istoria... lui G. Calinescu [Philological Notes on G. Câlinescu’s History...] by Liviu Petru Berea (p. 92–96); Elemente de nouate în sistemul modal-temporal propus de Institutiones linguae valachica [New Aspects Concerning the Verbal System Introduced by Institutiones Linguae Valachica] by Cristina Corneț (p. 151–167); Arsenie Boca, Cărărea Șițării. Particularității morfosintactice [Arsenie Boca. Cărarea Șițării. Morphologic and Syntactic Characteristics] by Luminuța Hoarță Cărășu (p. 358–375); Câteva observații privind paralelismul syntactic în lirica populară neterminată din Maramureș [A Few Observations Regarding the Syntactic Parallelism in the Non-Ritualistic Folk Poetry of Maramureș] by Georgeta Comnă (p. 174–183). Luminuța Hoarță Cărășu analyses the morphologic and syntactic particularities of clauses and sentences. Among the morphological particularities, mention should be made of the use of phrasal verbs, the frequency of infinitives, the use of auxiliaries and clitics in postposition, the occurrence of italized forms, whereas in point of syntactic particularities, aspects like the presence of complex predicates with three operators (copulative, aspectual and modal), the ellipsis of the predicative verb, the high frequency of subjective, causal and appositive clauses are invoked.

The study of Eugenia Bojoga, Limba română sau „moldovenescă”? O perspectivă sociolinguistică asupra controversei actuale din republica Moldova [Romanian or “Moldovan”? A Sociolinguistic Perspective on the Current Controversy in the Republic of Moldova”] (p. 107–123), focused on sociolinguistics, is impressive by its large scope of research. The study demonstrates that
the introduction of the glossonym Romanian language continues to depend to a large extent on the political factor and not on the scientific evidence provided on multiple occasions by the linguists of the Philology Institute of the Moldovan Academy of Science.

The theoretical issues involved represent the object of many articles. Thus, theoretical linguistics is the topic of the articles Linguistica cognitivă şi categorizarea lingvistică [Cognitive Linguistics and Linguistic Categorization] by Mihai Mirea Zdrenghea (p. 689–697) and Notiunea de transpoziţie în lingvistica şcolii de la Geneva: Ch. Bally şi A. Sechehaye [The Notion of Transposition in the Genevan Linguistics: Charles Bally and Albert Sechehaye] by Anamaria Curea (p. 204–214), whereas theoretical semiotics is the object of Dumitru–Cornel Vâlcu’s study Structura semioticii: Husserl, Peirce, Saussure, Coşeriu [The Structure of Semiotics: Husserl, Peirce, Saussure, Coşeriu] (p. 630–644).

Vocabulary is the focus of the studies Elemente de origine franceză în vocabularul limbii engleze [French Elements in the Vocabulary of English] by Dorin-Ioan Chira (p. 136–143); Romgleză – o temă controversată [Romgleză, a Controversial Subject] by Mihaela Mureşan (p. 458–464); Despre caracterul motivat al toponimelor [About the Motivated Nature of Toponyms] by Marius I. Oros (p. 494–496). An original aspect is debated in Ovidiu Felecan’s study Porele date de elevi/studenţi profesorilor. O perspectivă sociolingvistică [Teachers’ Nicknames Given by Pupils/Students. A Sociolinguistic Perspective] (p. 274–287), in which the nicknames given in education units are defined and classified, with focus on some of their characteristics, such as complexity, as well as their pejorative, depreciatory and mainly oral character.

Terminological issues are approached by Ionuţ-Valentin Roman in Grupă sintactică şi sintagma. Două unităţi? [The Syntactic Phrase and the Syntagm – Two Distinct Syntactic Units?] (p. 563–568) and by Mariana Istrate in Metalimbaj şi terminologie în morfosintaxa limbilor italiannă şi română [Metalanguage and Terminology in the Morphosyntax of Italian and Romanian] (p. 390–397), whereas etymology is targeted by Dumitru Laşcană’s study Rectificări şi contribuţii etimologice [Etymological Rectifications and Contributions] (p. 398–409).


The lexicographic field is represented by Ștefan Genecâru’s study Român, Moldov. Vlah și alte întâiri lexicografice [Romanian, Moldovan, Vlach and Other Lexicographic Entries], p. 324–331. Some of the studies in this volume focus on orthography and punctuation: Sanda Mășinaşu’s study Observați privind regulile de punere aplicabile construcțiilor din limba rusă realizeate cu conjoinția(k) „ca” [Remarks on the Punctuation Rules Applicable to Russian Constructions with the Conjunction [k] „ca” ] (p. 444–448); Simion Răchișan’s study Norme ortoepice – auxiliare sintactice. Apropos de subiectul relat [Orthoepic Standards – Syntactic
Auxiliaries. On Redundant Subjects], p. 558–562; Ioana Vintilă- Rădulescu’s study Punctuația în „Gramatica de bază a limbii române” (GBLR); virgula și semnele echivalente [Punctuation in „Gramatica de bază a limbii române” (GBLR); Commas And Equivalent Signs], p. 618–629. Other studies focus on didactics: Predarea limbii române în Franța. Crâmpere de istorie [Teaching Romanian Language in France. Pieces of History], p. 75–84, by Gilles Bardy; Principii de filosofie a limbajului în abordarea contrastivă a actului didactic de predare a limbilor străine. Premise teoretice [The Philosophy of Language in the Contrastive Approach of the Didactic Process of Teaching Foreign Languages], p. 465–472, by Nicoleta Neşu; Reflectii asupra conceptului de interlimbă [Reflections on the Concept of Interlanguage], p. 527–539, by Elena Platon; Principii de gramatică analogică și contrastivă [Principles of Analogical and Contrastive Grammar], p. 575–579, by Viorel Rujea; Observații asupra utilității inventarelor lexicale [Considerations on the Utility of Lexical Inventories], p. 54–61, by Antonelei Arișan.


Ileana Oancea’s study Asumarea unui destin: Teresa Ferro (1956-2007) [Assuming a Destiny: Teresa Ferro – 1956-2007] (p. 473–478), an homage dedicated to Professor Teresa Ferro, head of the Romanian Department of the University of Udine, outlines the portrait of a complex personality and underlines the necessity to maintain the academic relations between the Romanian linguists and the Western culture, to which G. G. Neamțu contributed as an associate professor at the German and French universities (p. 478).

The traductology field is represented by Alexandru Gafton’s study Discursul traducătorilor în principalele versiuni românești contemporane ale Bibliei [The Translators’ Discourse in the Main Contemporary Romanian Versions of the Bible] (p. 301–316), which compares two contemporary versions of the Bible, the 2001 and the 2013 versions, from the point of view of the ecclesiastical translator’s account/discourse in Introductions, with focus on the structure, content and individual characteristics of the respective pieces of discourse. A number of similarities, but also differences between Introductions are highlighted. The similarities include information on the biblical book and its author, manner of presenting the content, elements of theology. The differences consist mainly of different purposes, namely the translator’s discourse in the Introduction to B 2001 is mainly focused on persuasion and total adherence to the Christian values, while the translator’s discourse in the Introduction to B 2013 has an informative, scientific purpose.

The volume dedicated to professor G.G. Neamțu is an extremely interesting read, which presents numerous benefits, providing pertinent and stimulating answers to the readers, be they researchers, professors, PhD candidates or students that are interested in the current trends in linguistic research, drawing attention to the contribution of Cluj School of Linguistics. As a whole, the studies that are part of this volume, mostly written by one author, are distinguished by the diversity of the topics tackled and of the methods of analysis, by the exceptional quality of their analyses, by relevant examples (all the authors bringing into discussion a great variety of examples to support their claims), by the thorough scientific documentation and, not in the least, by their interdisciplinary character. Many of the studies are just part of a larger research work, to be materialized either in PhD theses (A. Arișan’s study) or in other studies or books (Gilles Bardy’s study, D. Lojoniţ’s study and N. Neşu’s study).

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