

Babeş-Bolyai University
Cluj-Napoca
Faculty of Letters
Doctoral School of Linguistic and Literary Studies

**Determination. A Grammatical Reconsideration of
the Article in Romanian**

PhD Thesis
Summary

PhD Supervisor:
Emeritus Prof. Dr. Gavrilă NEAMŢ

PhD Student:
Lavinia DĂLĂLĂU (married NASTA)

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Keywords

determination, syntactic relationship, subordination, grammatical category, determiner, quantifier, possessor, modifier, complement, pragmatic operation, definite article, indefinite article / indefinite adjective, zero article, part of speech, morpheme of the grammatical category of determination, definite determiner, indefinite determiner, non-determiner, the category of case, synthetic analogical case morpheme, analytical analogical case morpheme, etymological case inflection, analogical case inflection, synthetic inflection, analytical inflection, mixed inflection, noun, pronoun, numeral, nouns in the Ac₁ of temporal iteration, postadverbial nouns.

Summary

The PhD Thesis entitled *Determination. A Grammatical Reconsideration of the Article in Romanian* is conceived as a monographic approach to several grammatical interpretations of the article. By the end, the thesis demonstrates that the definite article is a flective of case in all of its occurrences: in the noun and the pronoun, in the numeral, in units of the type *iarna* (in winter), *marțea* (on Tuesdays), *dimineața* (in the morning), considered in most of the Romanian grammars to be adverbs of time, and in the so-called prepositions/prepositional phrases with the genitive.

In terms of its general theoretical outlook, the thesis is situated on mixed grammar positions, in the sense that it analyses interpretations belonging to different theoretical directions (traditional, structuralist, transformational-generative, integralist).

As regards the particular direction of research on the linguistic aspects analysed here, the thesis is tributary, in principle, to the conception of neotraditional grammar, with some structuralist elements, systematically exposed in a series of studies, articles and books, as well as in the syntax courses delivered at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca by Emeritus Professor Dr. G. G. Neamțu.

As for its structure, the thesis consists of two parts organized in four, respectively, six chapters, conclusions and a critical apparatus.

The close link between determination and the article requires that research be conducted on opinions with respect to the former concept. For this reason, Part I of the thesis highlights the fact that, being approached from different points of view (syntactic, morphological,

functional-syntactic, semantic and pragmatic), determination is a highly debated concept that entails, depending on the interpretation, different meanings, features and definitions.

Chapter I, *Determination – a syntactic relationship*, finds that, as concerns the syntactic aspect, the enhancement of syntactic relations, such as determination, has not led to the clarification and ordering of the system of relations, but to confusion and questionable interpretations: different names from one author to another or even in the work of the same author; the creation of relationships where there is no dependency (e.g. the appositive relationship, the relationship of incidence), the separation of subtypes from a well-knit relationship (e.g. the explanatory rapport “se rupe”, “it breaks itself”, from case subordination), syntactic relationships with a provisional designation (I. Iordan and V. Robu).

As the number of syntactic relationships varies between 2 and 8, the option has been, by logical deduction, for the dichotomy of syntactic relationships (coordination and subordination). It should be noted that there are differences between the notions proposed for the description of the relationship between Tr and Ts (subordination, determination, dependence, governance, domination). Because the names mentioned above are not synonyms, but indicate distinct characteristics, the thesis advocates using the term “subordination” to refer to the relationship between a Ts and a Tr, while determination is considered to be one of the features of the relationship of subordination (a semantic-pragmatic feature).

Considering that within the general system of determination, a morphological/categorial determination is specialized, namely the grammatical category of determination, Chapter II is dedicated exclusively to this problem.

The linguists who support the existence of the grammatical category of determination are divided into two camps: those who argue that determination is a grammatical category specific to the noun and those who extend the existence of this category to other lexical-grammatical classes, for instance, to the verb.

The first obstacle of the fourth grammatical category consists in the name itself. While some grammarians have buttressed the term of determination with different qualifiers (“abstract determination”, “categorial determination”, “morphological determination”, “categorial-morphological determination”), others, considering that the notion of determination is too “general”, have proposed new concepts (“nomination”, “individualization”), with the mention that these too are problematic.

Another controversial issue which concerns the category of determination is the number of members in the paradigm: this number varies from one to eight, depending on the author or even in different works of the same author.

In Chapter III, *Determination/Determiner – a syntactic function* indicates how the novel perspective on determination/determiners brought by GBLR complicates the syntactic description of the nominal group. Thus, the attempt to achieve an equipollent description of the secondary parts of sentence (the attribute and the complement), by using the same classification criterion, i.e. the semantic criterion, has led not only to the destruction of the homogeneity of the classical typology (the attribute and its subtypes), but also to the augmentation of the differences of the classification criteria within the same syntactic function.

An examination of the arguments that provoked a reclassification of the syntactic functions in the nominal group has found them to be ineffective. Because of its subjective nature, the predominance of the semantic criterion increased the impossibility of clear, precise and consistent classifications, causing confusions in syntactic analysis.

Detailed research on the arguments that resulted in the elimination of the attribute from among the syntactic functions and the establishment of others, including the determiner, has led to two conclusions: on the one hand, the syntactic functions that really need an organization/reclassification, on the basis of a well-defined criterion, are complements and circumstantials, the number of which increases or diminishes depending on the author; on the other hand, the attribute, on the basis of the formal criterion (categorical-relational), has a clear subclassification, with no overlaps or confusions, that may represent a model for the typology of the complement.

The new syntactic functions in the NG (determiner, quantifier, modifier, possessor, complement), created on the basis of an insufficiently justified criterion, the semantic one, are characterized by several problematic elements: the assignment of a syntactic function according to the presence or absence of other syntactic functions; discrepancies between the semantic role and the syntactic role of the word; the eclipsing of the semantic criterion (so much relied on in determining function) by word order (taxis); although scholars endorse the existence of a single classification criterion, the description of syntactic functions in the NG reveals non-homogeneous criteria (e.g. see the case of the complement); multiple analytical solutions (e.g. *a sa* in the structure of *a sa tristete*, “his/her sadness”); overlaps of functions, that is, functions within functions; homonymies which create confusion (e.g. the possessor in the NG vs the possessor in the VG, the complement in the NG vs the complement in the VG); investing certain morphemes (the morphemes of determination) with a syntactic function.

In Chapter IV, *Determination – a semantic function or a pragmatic operation?*, it is noted that, from a semantic point of view, determination exceeds the morphosyntactic level of the language, for which reason the elements invested with this semantic function are a prolific class

from a grammatical point of view, a nonhomogeneous class, which brings together flectives, lexical-grammatical classes and locutions. However, the semantic perspective on determination does not do justice to the complexity of the concept discussed, which is why determination is given an integralist description. Defined as a complex pragmatic process, through which a linguistic sign is removed from the language system and integrated into the actuality of speech, involving at least four types of operations (those indicated by E. Coşeriu: actualization, discrimination, delineation and identification), manifested within a certain frame, determination benefits from a complete definition that rounds off its meanings. This leads to the conclusion that it is not the concept itself (“determination”) that must be placed at different levels, but the tools of determination are those that are part of the separate compartments of language: phonological flectives/alternations belong to the morphological level, words/phrases/clauses/sentences belong to the syntactic level (the syntax of the clause and the syntax of the sentence), and the frames exceed the linguistic levels.

In Part II, the first chapter, *The article – Diachronic motivation and evolution until the present-day stage of the language*, outlines a brief overview of elements pertaining to the diachrony of the article (the period when it appeared, origin, cause of occurrence, evolution), presents the atypical nature of the Romanian article compared to the other Romance languages (the enclisis of the article) and mentions the main morphosyntactic values of the definite article and of the indefinite article “un” (“a/an”) in Romanian grammars (the eighteenth – twenty-first centuries). Following the presentation of the grammatical interpretations of the article in a diachronic scheme, the conclusion that is reached is that these multiple acceptations were due to the inclusion in the same class of elements that are different from all points of view (form, content, behaviour, grammar, position). In this chapter, it is also pointed out that the diversity of grammatical acceptations of the article is not a peculiarity of the Romanian language, such a variety of opinions being found in most languages that have the article.

At a synchronic level, three interpretations of the article prevail in the Romanian grammars: the classical interpretation (the article = part of speech), the structuralist interpretation (the article = a morpheme of the category of determination), the functional-syntactic interpretation (the article = a morpheme with the syntactic function of a determiner). Each interpretation is developed in separate chapters according to the following structure: first, there is a presentation of the interpretation, as it is developed in the literature, then the problematic aspects are addressed.

The second chapter, *The classical interpretation of the article*, analyses the most common morphosyntactic acceptations of the article, namely that of part of speech. By reference to

renowned linguists (Valeria Guțu Romalo, Iorgu Iordan, Alexandru Niculescu, Paula Diaconescu, Ion Z. Coja, G. G. Neamțu, etc.), several arguments in favour of the morphematic interpretation of the article (the definite article proper) are investigated, i.e. arguments concerning the exclusion of the article from the parts of speech. Mention should be made of the following arguments: the low number of items, occurrence in limited contexts, the lack of lexical information, the abstract content (exclusively grammatical), the lack of the possibility to form compound words and phrases, the union with the noun or with other lexical-grammatical classes, the proximity, in terms of its features, to the category of grammatical affixes.

The third chapter, *The structuralist interpretation of the article*, brings into question the grammatical category created specifically for including the article-morpheme: determination. Seen as a paradigm with three members, the definite determiner, the indefinite determiner and the zero (or non-determined) determiner, the fourth category of the noun turns out to be a problematic category. Of the three members mentioned above, the indefinite article “un” (“a/an”) represents a part of speech proper (= indefinite adjective), not a morpheme, the zero article is a void construct, without expression and content, which cannot be part of a grammatical category, and the definite article, remaining the only member, cannot form a paradigm by itself. It is thus evident that determination encounters problems from several points of view: the way in which the name is given (the mere transfer from the level of parts of speech to the morphematic level); the means of expression (the category is not represented by a unitary system of marks, the elements of the system of determination differing by shape, position and content); and the content (the role of the grammatical category of determination is not that which is assumed in the definition, because the article cannot individualize by itself).

The fourth chapter, *The functional-syntactic interpretation of the article*, approaches the latest views on the article, from the GBLR. According to *Gramatica de bază a limbii române* (The Fundamental Grammar of the Romanian Language), the article represents a morpheme invested with the syntactic function of a determiner. In the thesis, this interpretation is viewed with suspicion due to several controversial aspects: the violation of the principles formulated (by the very treatise that endorses the interpretation) with regard to syntax and the syntactic function; the heterogeneous treatment of morphemes, in the sense that some have a syntactic function, while others do not (or even of morphemes in the same paradigm); the distinctive status of the definite article in relation to the other determiners (from a phonetic, graphic, morphological, semantic, syntactic point of view); the neglect of the individuality of the Romanian language among other languages as regards the (definite) article.

In view of the controversial nature of the three interpretations of the article (classical, structuralist and functional-syntactic), in the fifth chapter, entitled *The neotraditional interpretation: the article – an analogical case morpheme*, the discussion focuses on determining the fundamental value of the article. In this chapter, the argument returns to the opinions of grammarians from before H. Tiktin, respectively to the interpretations of those who discerned the morphematic status of the (definite) article, placing it in the service of the case. In this section of the thesis, it is argued that the (definite) article is invested with core values (morphosyntactic values) and secondary values (morpholexical values, pragmatic /semantic-pragmatic values and stylistic values), the latter surpassing the grammatical level of the language. Morphosyntactic and morpholexical values are discussed at a grammatical level, pragmatic values are discussed at a pragmatic level, and stylistic values are discussed at a stylistic level. In other words, these values of the article designate the implications of the article at different levels of the language: grammatical, pragmatic and stylistic.

In morphosyntactic terms, the simplification of case inflection, the unification of the paradigm of desinences with that of the article (paradigms which have become impossible to separate, forming a single affixal group), the consolidation of the desinential inflection of the noun through the enclitic article, these are all arguments that plead for the integration of the (definite) article in case inflection.

The morpholexical values (of substantival converter and disambiguated gender indicator) do not detract from the article's fundamental quality of a case flective, but represent additional roles.

At the pragmatic level, the article is not devoid of significance, its role, in the operation of determination, being that of actualizing the name, of rendering concrete the semanteme to which it attaches. Unlike other morphematic actualizers, the article has a specific feature due to etymology, namely that of announcing a subordinate, which may be expressed or left unexpressed, but understood from the context (in a Coşerian sense, from the circumstances of speech).

Stylistically, the article takes part in various expressive values existing in a latent state in the lexical-semantic content of the name.

In the subchapter *Consequences of interpreting the article as a case flective*, in the fifth chapter, it is noted that, although the etymology of the term article (Lat. "articulus" = "joint, bond") might seem favourable to interpretation as a case indicator, the notion of "article" has depreciated on a linguistic level due to polysemy, which is why the thesis proposes the concept of analogical case morpheme (synthetic or analytical).

Being different from case desinences, which are exclusively enclitical and form the etymological case inflection, the analogical case morpheme forms the analogical case inflection. Nouns with analogical case inflection will always be followed by a determinative or identificatory attribute, which may be expressed or unexpressed.

As concerns the evolution of case inflection, the Romanian language is unique among the Romance languages that have evolved towards analytism. At the moment, we cannot know exactly what typological model (analytical/mixed or synthetic) will become generalized in the future in the Romanian language, especially since researchers emphasize that the flectional treatment of some nouns (xenisms, technical terms, compound terms by abbreviation, structures obtained through conversion, proper names) reveals two contradictory directions (analytism and syntetism). As for case inflection, the conclusion would be that, in Romanian, we cannot speak of a single type of inflection, but of types and subtypes.

In the last chapter, the sixth, from the second part of the thesis, entitled *The article in controversial structures*, the analysis focuses on the article/the formant homonymous with article from the composition of some problematic constructions. The category of controversial structures includes proper nouns, nouns in the vocative, some pronouns, some numerals, some “adverbs of time”, which turned out to be nouns in the Ac₁ of temporal iteration, “prepositions/prepositional phrases with the genitive”, which turned out to be either nouns, or postadverbial nouns. After analysing the constructions listed above, the conclusion is that the definite article/the formant homonymous with article from the aforementioned structures has the same status as in the case of nouns, that is, it is an analogical case morpheme.

In the section dedicated to conclusions, the personal contribution of the thesis is presented, with emphasis on two ideas: on the one hand, determination is a complex pragmatic process (not a grammatical category, syntactic relationship, syntactic function, or semantic function), which involves the very mechanism of language functioning, and, on the other hand, the (definite) article, by specializing for expressing the case, becomes a synthetic or analytical analogical case morpheme.