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DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

ADJECTIVAL STRUCTURES IN ROMANIAN NEW TESTAMENT VERSIONS

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KEY WORDS

Romanian literary language, Romanian adjectival system, historical evolution, inflection of the adjective, grammatical category of comparison/intensity, synchrony, diachrony, descriptive grammars, Romanian New Testament versions, biblical language, traductological and contrastive-typological perspective.

ABSTRACT

1. Premises and objectives

The main *objective* of this paper is to present the historical evolution of the adjectival subsystem in the written Romanian language, as it is reflected in the most representative Romanian religious texts from the time period between the 17th century and the 20th century. Therefore, we are going to focus on one language, the religious one, more specifically, the biblical one, but starting from the idea that, at least during the first centuries of written Romanian culture, this language concentrated all the features of the polished register of our language.

So, the *premise* from which we have started is that these texts provide enough situations of usual, relatively generalised behaviour for each historical stage of the language as well as special cases, typical of the division of the literary language, not yet standardised until the middle of the 19th century, into functional styles, particular levels and registers. On the other hand, in our opinion, formal and logico-semantic evolutions of the adjective occur against the background of the history of the entire Romanian language system; hence, the analysis of morphosyntactic structures encompassing the adjectives offer a general picture of the language at various stages of its development.

Finally, we have been prompted by our desire to verify the degree of maturity of the literary Romanian language *by referring to base texts* from which the successive versions of the Romanian *Bible* start, because, as in any other modern language, the Romanian biblical text is actually a translation.

This means that the detailed study of a lexico-grammatical class can verify the ability of the receiving language to adapt to the structural particularities of very ancient languages, which are highly inflected and functionally and lexico-semantically wealthy, such as "sacred languages": Hebrew-Aramaic, Old Greek, Christian Latin, Slavonic.

The second premise from which we have started is that the adjective occupies an important place in a writing with a strong dogmatic nature and a high degree of abstraction – in which value judgements, expressed through qualifying and referential adjectival determiners, through degrees of logico-subjective intensity as well as through quantifiable referents, are extremely frequent. In other words, we have considered not only the valorisation of the usual paradigms of the Romanian adjective, but also its pragmatic-stylistic possibilities to reflect appreciations of great spiritual finesse, which naturally occur

in such writings – addressed to both thinking and feeling. And, ultimately, the study of adjectives in old and modern Romanian texts, put in a contrastive relation to those in base texts, very well reflects the compensatory resources of the Romanian language, its ability to create new forms, to adopt and adapt loanwords, to use linguistic calques, to produce viable substitutions – in order to render the force and beauty of pages of high ideational and expressive complexity.

2. Working methods

In order to analyse the adjectival structures identified in texts illustrating the evolution of the written Romanian language, the literary version, all of which exhibit a functional style, namely the religious style, we have used the principles, method and working tools of the *diachronic grammar*, but, in chapter I, we have made a synchronic presentation of the Romanian adjectival system.

Therefore, in terms of the *descriptive synchronic grammar*, the first step in the infrastructure of the paper was to systematise the notions regarding adjectival formations (by which we mean: independent lexemes, adjectival phrases, adverbial substituents, numerals or pronouns with adjectival value etc.), by referring to the three descriptive grammars – GA, GALR and GBLR –, specialised treatises which clearly mark the opposition between tradition and modernity in the codification of today's Romanian language system.

Afterwards, we carried out a similar valorisation of the academic treatises on the history of the Romanian language (ILR, Vol. I-II, 1965/1969; ILR, Vol. I, 2018) and of the grammatical treatises on the Old Romanian language, written or coordinated, among others, by Ovid Densusianu, Al. Rosetti, C-tin Frâncu, Fl. Dimitrescu, I. Gheție etc., in order to highlight the evolution of the Romanian adjective in key-moments of the evolutionary process of the Romanian language: *Danubian Latin*, *Common Romanian*, *Common Daco-Romanian*, *old age* (1521-1780), *modern age*.

The diachronic picture thus obtained helped us establish the place and role of the Romanian adjective in several selected Romanian New Testament versions, which we compared in order to examine how exactly the adjectival formations are valorised in relation not only to the usage of the age, but also to the translators' inspiration or knowledge.

The perspective in the phonetic, lexical, semantic, morphological and syntactic analysis is thus descriptive and diachronic as well as *traductological* and *contrastive-typological*, as biblical texts are all the result of linguistic transfers.

Pragmatic analysis method was useful for some verses excerpted from the biblical texts, so that the interpretation of examples taken from Romanian New Testament versions was carried out not only at the level of the linguistic structure or of the historical-geographic context, but also from a *logico-thematic perspective*.

3. Working corpus

For our study, we have selected several Romanian versions (in effect, eight complete editions) of the *New Testament*, which are representative not only for the evolution of adjectival structures, but also for the various stages of development of the Romanian literary language, in general.

We have chosen the texts of the *New Testament*, mainly the *Gospels*, but, when necessary, we have also selected verses from other *New Testament* books or even from the *Old Testament*. These texts have been excerpted essentially according to the chronological criterion: *Noul Testament de la Bălgrad* (1648); *Biblia de la București* (1688)[1]; *Biblia de la Blaj* (1795); *Noul Testament de la Smirna* (the fifth edition of 1857); *Biblia de la Buzău* (1854-1858); *The Bible* translated by Dumitru Cornilescu (1924/1928); *Biblia jubiliară* revised by His Eminence Bartolomeu Anania (2001) and the *Bible* in use (the Radu Vasile; Gala Galaction edition, 1982).

Naturally, the traductological and contrastive-typological perspective, to which we resort in the context of some procedural uncertainties observed in Romanian texts, urges us to compare that particular verse with the verse in the *Greek base text* in order to justify the selection of adjectival structures. In addition, to reveal correspondences, the comparison is often made once or twice with the *Latin translation* of the exemplified verse and then with witness translations from modern languages, such as *one of the English versions* of the NT, consulted online.

4. Structure and contents of the paper

Our thesis includes *three chapters*, which aim to present one aspect in the evolution of the Romanian literary language, from the first great monument of Romanian language – BB (1688) to the beginning of our century (BA – 2001), from the perspective of only one language, the biblical one, and of a single grammatical class – the adjective and its substitutes.

The first chapter, *The adjectival system in descriptive grammars. Synchronic perspective*, carries out a comparative analysis of the lexico-grammatical class of the adjective. We have pointed out the changes in vision that occurred in the description of the Romanian adjectival system by highlighting the innovative elements in the grammars of the early 21st century (GALR, GBLR), which appropriate the principles and working tools of the logico-semantic, structural and discursive-pragmatic analysis, and by permanently referring to the GA – considered "traditional" by the current generation of grammarians –, indebted to the classic, descriptivist-normative frameworks.

The second chapter, *The diachronic perspective on the Romanian adjectival system*, is actually a study with a double diachronic character:

[1] It is a modern complete reissue of *Biblia de la București* 'The Bucharest Bible', with a linguistic introductory study of the biblical text, printed in Iași, in 2001-2002, under the supervision of the researchers V. Arvinte, I. Caproșu, Al. Gafton and L. Manea.

a) On the one hand, it regards the history of the research of language acts related to the behaviour of the Romanian adjective, reflected in older or newer, classic or modern works, which we have deemed as important for the topic in question: mainly, the academic treatises of history of the Romanian language and of grammar of the old Romanian language mentioned above;

b) On the other hand, we had synthesised the image of the evolution of the Romanian language, focusing on key-moments in the evolutionary process of the Romanian language and highlighting the most important language acts regarding the behaviour of the Romanian adjective.

This attempt at outlining the diachronic and very dynamic picture of adjectives, thus obtained, has contributed to better placing in time the phenomena encountered in the Romanian versions of New Testament texts[2], representative for the 17th century (NTB and BB), the 18th century (BBJ), the 19th (BBZ and NTS) and 20th centuries (BU, BC, BA).

Therefore, the goal of the third chapter, *Distribution of adjective structures in Romanian biblical versions*, is thus clear: to highlight the evolution of grammatical-semantic forms and values of the Romanian adjective in the successive versions of the *Bible* in Romanian.

5. General conclusions

The end of the *first chapter*, which comprises a synchronic presentation of the adjectival system in Romanian, as it is today, as a result of the accumulations of over 300 years of use in the polished written form, has revealed the following:

- Recent grammars carry out integrative analyses at morphological, syntactic, logico-semantic and pragmatic levels, so the adjective in the traditional grammar, the part of speech *expressing* features of objects, is now included in the category of flexible, open lexico-grammatical classes that *assign* properties to the nominal.
- The most relevant changes in vision can be noticed on several levels:

- the classification of adjectives: in the GA_1, there were etymological or empirical criteria (e.g. inherited/borrowed/autochthonous etc. adjectives), whereas in recent grammars hierarchies are established based on "hybrid" criteria: semantic-morphological (adjectives proper, pronominal adjectives etc.); semantic-syntactic (qualifying adjectives, categorial adjectives etc.).

- article inflection of adjectives: recent grammars avoid the terms *adjectiv articulat/nearticulat*, i.e., adjective with definite article/without article, present in the

[2] In order to explain the predilection for certain Romanian adjectival structures, we have used the Greek version of the NT as a witness and correspondences have been revealed by consulting the Latin translation of the NT, i.e., the *Vulgate*, and other witness-translations into several other modern languages – for example, the *English Standard Version* (ESV).

traditional grammar and consider that the enclitic article is attached to the adjective form, particularising the object, not the feature.

- the traditional "degrees of comparison" become, in modern grammars, "degrees of intensity"; this is justified by the logical content of comparisons (for example, the positive and the absolute superlative do not imply an explicit comparison) etc.

In the *second chapter*, intended to configure a diachronic picture of the Romanian adjective, we have highlighted the most important language acts regarding the behaviour of the adjective in Romanian, in key-moments of the evolutionary process of the Romanian language:

- In *Danubian Latin*, one can note the shift of many adjectives to the class of those with three endings (*-us*, *-a*, *-um*) and the diversification of analytical constructions rendering the comparison (adverbs *magis*, *plus*, for the comparative, *multum*, *forte* etc., for the superlative).
- In *Common Romanian*, the occurrence of adjectives with four (*amaru*, *amarə*, *amari*, *amare*), three (*nou*, *noauə*, *noi*, *noauə*) or two inflected forms (*dulce*, *dulci*) may be noted, while adjectives with one form are missing. The comparative of superiority is expressed by the adverb "mai" 'more': *ma*(*i*) *bunu*, whereas the absolute superlative was formed by means of the adverbs "multu" and "vîrtos" in Aromanian, and "foarte" 'very' in Daco-Romanian.
- During the *Common Daco-Romanian* period, innovations in the adjectival inflection occur amid regional phonetic evolutions and regard the desinential markers: final *-u* becomes silent (*bun/bunu*) and the emergence of the feminine singular ending *-á*, a desinence co-occurring with the previous one (*-ă*) (*grea/greauă*). The innovation attributed to Common Daco-Romanian resides in the manner of expressing the adjunct of the comparative with *decât* 'than', which co-occurs with *de*, which were to be used in free variation in the 16th century as well.
- In terms of the *old age* of Romanian (1521-1780), several particularities of a small number of adjectives are relevant: ***mare*** and ***(ne)tare*** are, in some texts, invariable, but, sporadically, they also appear as variable forms; adjectives ending in ***c*** and ***g*** sometimes have the feminine and neutral plural form *-e* ("*groape adânce*"), but are not as frequent as those in *-i*; the preservation of *l* in the masculine plural form of the adjective ***gol*** ("*golilor*"); the adjective ***nou*** has the feminine plural form *noao*, as the version *noi* is not yet attested etc. The absolute superlative was expressed by ungrammaticalized or partially grammaticalized lexical means, which is why degree operators frequently and autonomously occurred as adverbs proper ("prea" 'too', "foarte" 'very', "mult" 'much', "tare" 'very' etc.).

The *third chapter* focuses on the most important characteristics of the adjective class, as reflected in the analysed Romanian versions of the New Testament.

Divergences from one version to another and from one age to another have been mostly noted in the marginal points of the subsystem. Several specific aspects of the

inflection of the lexico-grammatical class of the adjective, preserved until late in the church language, have drawn our attention. For example:

- a number of adjectives that move from one inflectional class to another (adjectives such as *cenuşiu*, *vecl'u*, *târziu*, *viu*, *roşiu*, included, in earlier stages of the language, in the category of adjectives with 4 forms, were to migrate to the class of adjectives with 3 inflectional forms or even of those with 2 endings, such as the adj. *vecl'u* etc.);

- some difficulties related to desinences produced mainly by the strong utterance of some consonants (for example, the co-occurrence of desinences *-ă* and *-e* in the feminine-neutral plural form of adjectives ending in a strongly uttered consonant);

- important phonetic phenomena (e.g. the softening of *ş* in south-eastern Romanian versions, as in the case of the adj. *roşiu*);

- graphic and phonetic particularities of pronominal adjectives (*mieu*, *meale*, *aceştea* (m. pl.), *aceaia*, *acealea*, *celalalt*, *ceialalţi*, *atîţea/atâţa*, *toţ*, *nece un* etc.) and even the emergence of parallel forms (relative and interrogative adjectives, variable in terms of gender and number: *carele*, *carile*, or the category of *personal pronouns of identity*: *mineşi*, *tineşi* etc.);

- particularities of the grammatical number (plural forms not yet fixed: "săbii *lunge*"; double plural forms of some adjectives: *supţiri* and *subţii* etc.) or of the gender of adjectives in the NT (e.g. plural feminine *târzie*, as in *zilele târzie*, of the adjective *târziu*, *târzie* etc.);

- some aspects regarding the grammatical category of comparison (for example, the absolute superlative was expressed with morpheme-adverbs that were mostly placed after adjectives; there were also alternative constructions to express strong intensity, cf. the superlative genitive: *deşertăciunea deşertăciunilor* 'vanity of vanities' etc.).

The conclusions, required at the end of the research of this long line of adjectival structures excerpted from old or modern Romanian biblical texts, refer to the permanent interweaving of the Romanian literary language with the special language of the church, to the development of both functional variants. They have influenced each other, imposing forms that have acquired viability and standardised use, not without possibilities of stylistic and pragmatic nuancing, in various other registers, levels, styles.

Throughout our approach, we have examined to what extent all these discussions on the history of the Romanian adjective help us establish the place and role of this lexico-grammatical class in the Romanian New Testament texts and, conversely, to what extent the attestations in the Romanian biblical texts confirm some theories regarding the specific nature of the Romanian adjectival system or, more importantly, bring new information about the morpho-syntactic and semantic behavioural peculiarities of the adjective.

In other words, the essence of our research has been to recompose the moving, i.e., diachronic, picture of the Romanian adjectival subsystem within the general Romanian language system.

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