

“UNEQUALLY COORDINATED” ADVERBIAL OF TIME: A CASE OF LINGUISTIC DESCRIPTION AMBIGUITY

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Summary: *This article gives a critical view over various grammatical interpretations focusing on how to reach the most adequate linguistic description for the “unequally coordinated” syntactic units. The update of the language theory we provide the paper with aims at getting closer to the principles of non-contradiction, exhaustivity and simplicity (Hjelmslev 1943: 13).*

Keywords: *ambiguity, syntactic coordination, anacoluthon, substitution, syntactic function.*

§1. Argument.

Our paper tackles a theoretical aspect pertaining to the Romanian grammatical description, regarding language phenomena that have always existed in the Romanian language, but have been ambiguously and insufficiently described in linguistic theory. The starting point of the discussion around the theoretical issue in question consists of contexts found in the morning radio program *Morning Zu*, which we note below:

- 1) Îmi face bine să-l aud *dimineața* și *când lucrez de-acasă*. (It does me good to hear him *in the morning* and *when I work from home*.)
- 2) Rîdem, glumim, da-ntrebi omu’ și-*n pauză*, și *de cite ori îl prinzi?* (Joking aside, are you going to ask the man about it *during the break*, and *every single time you meet him?*)
- 3) Cu norocu’ stă bine: are *de când joacă și de-o viață*. (Luck is on his side, it has been *since he started playing* and *since he was born*.)
- 4) A mai încercat el ceva *atunci* și *când s-a-ntors*. (He tried something again *then* and *when he came back*.)
- 5) Mă duc *mîine* și *cînd mi-o mai zice*. (I’ll go *tomorrow* and *whenever he tells me again*.)
- 6) S-au văzut *după o săptămînă* și *cînd i-a mai chemat*. (They saw each other *a week later* and *when he called them again*.)
- 7) Se plînge că nu petrec mai mult timp în doi *seara* și *cînd vine weekend-ul*. (She complains that they don’t spend more time together *in the evening* and *when the weekend comes*.)

8) S-a convins că a mințit-o *atunci* și *când a mai avut ocazia*. (She became convinced that he had lied to her *then* and *whenever he had had the chance*.)

9) Nu-și aducea bine aminte dacă plătise *înainte* sau *după ce-au mâncat*. (He couldn't quite remember whether he had paid *before* or *after they had eaten*.)

10) Vine-*ntr-o săptămână* sau *când termină sesiunea*. (He will come *in a week's time* or *when the session ends*.)

11) S-ar fi înscris la facultate *în aceeași zi* sau *când ar fi vrut*. (He would have enrolled in college *on the same day* or *whenever he wanted*.)

12) Curge apa aia *de-o săptămână* sau *de când au plecat ei*, nu mai știu. (That water has been running *for a week* or *since they left*, I don't know anymore.)

As it can be noted, in contexts such as the ones above, the phenomenon of coordination between the adverbial of time and the adverbial clause of time appears repeatedly. The relation of coordination – copulative (examples 1-8), disjunctive (examples 9-12) or of any other type – is described in grammars as a relation that is established between equally important units (either main or secondary) and which belong to the same syntactic level (sentence level, respectively complex/compound sentence level), according to the principle of syntactic hierarchy. Linguistic theory, however, seems to be contradicted by utterances such as those indicated above, where the coordination relationship is established between the part of the sentence and the sentence with equivalent function. This situation calls for the updating of linguistic theory according to the state of language phenomena.

§2. The problematic aspects of older linguistic description.

Updating specialized information requires a re-evaluation of the interpretations proposed until nowadays in relation to this type of structures. Therefore, we find that the divergent opinions expressed in grammars (e.g. Avram, 1957; Beldescu, 1958; Guțu-Romalo, 1973; Consatntinescu-Dobridoe, 1995) concern two debatable aspects: on the one hand, the nature of the relationship between the unequal units that share the same function (here, the adverbial of time – part of sentence, and the adverbial clause of time – sentence); on the other hand, the function of the unit representing the higher hierarchical level.

Regarding the syntactic relation that characterizes these structures, we firstly identify the older idea, proposed both by older grammars and by some recent ones, that the coordination relation is established not only between units belonging to the same hierarchical level, but also “between two elements that play the role of parts of a sentence that are related to the same extent to one and the same word”, noting that “one of the two elements is a part of a sentence [...] the other constitutes a separate sentence”. This means that “the coordination relation between these two elements is established within the syntactic framework of the compound sentence, but, by the nature of the link between them, this particular type of coordination is closer to the coordination that exists within the sentence” (Avram, 1957: 152).

The proposed interpretation, meritorious for signalling a special type of connection between syntactic units, also presents disadvantages that we note below:

1) The inconsistency represented by recognising the impossibility of coordinating a subordinate with its regent, along with accepting the coordination of a part of a sentence with a sentence, which is also impossible from the perspective of the universal norms of linguistic interpretation – because the parts of a sentence do not exist independently, on their own, but are necessarily dependent on sentences. However, the

coordination between sentences is by excellence aimed at the communication within the predicates:

- Îmi face bine *să-l aud dimineața și să vorbesc* cu el. (It does me good *to hear* him in the morning and *to talk* to him.)
- *Îmi face bine *să-l aud dimineața și când lucrez* de-acasă. (It does me good *to hear* him *in the morning* and when I *work* from home.)

2) The contradiction of accepting that the relation of coordination between a part of a sentence and a sentence represents a case of coordination in the compound sentence, along with the acceptance of the principle of the ranking of syntactic units, according to which the compound/complex sentence is made up of syntactic units that are immediately inferior to it, without it being equal to them.

3) The rest of the analysis, favoured by the appreciation that the relationship between the two units (part of sentence – sentence) is one of subordination – because the presence of the coordinating conjunction cannot be ignored.

Another direction of interpretation (Merlan, 2001: 77-80) proposes two types of analysis for the structures discussed here: the coordinating conjunction marks the coordination a) between sentences; b) between a part of a sentence and a sentence – a situation where the related units form a *complex syntactic group*.

More to the point, coordination within the compound sentence, between sentences, is illustrated with contexts in which the part of sentence enters into an interdependence relation at the level of the sentence [*Merg eu 1/ și 2/ cine mai vrea 3/ (I am going 1/ and 2/ whoever else wants to 3/)*]. Noting that the second sentence is characterized by an ellipsis of the predicating verb, it is considered that the word order has a decisive role in identifying the number of sentences, therefore of predicates, analogous to statements (01), (02):

- (01) *Merg eu și Maria* vs. (02) *Eu și Maria mergem* [(01) *I'm going and Maria is going too* vs. (02) *Maria and I are going*].

Placing the predicate before the subject (not evident in the translation above as English does not allow a similar change in word order) results in the copulative coordination of two main sentences: (01) *Merg eu și Maria = Merg eu și merge Maria* [(01) *I'm going and also Maria = I'm going and Maria is going*]. The content of the copulative relation expresses the idea of *reiterating* the action, through different actors. Placing the subject before the predicate allows the possibility of identifying the existence of a single sentence with a compound subject, the elements of which are copulatively coordinated:

- (02) *Eu și Maria mergem (Maria and I are going)*.

In this case, the relational content emphasizes the idea of *association* of the actors in the performance of the verbal action.

On the other hand, the idea of coordination between a part of a sentence and a dependent or interdependent sentence is illustrated by statements like:

- (03) *Cumpăr fructi și ce-oi mai găsi.* (*I am buying fruit and whatever else I may find*.)

The idea of identifying the *complex syntactic group* represented by the sequence *fructi și ce-oi mai găsi* (*fruit and whatever else I may find*) is motivated by the unique accusative valence of the transitive verb.

The nuanced discussion regarding the two types of situations comprises aspects that require additional clarification: contexts of type (01), with two main elements that show a copulative coordination, are often interpreted – including in the discussed work – as representing a case of agreement by attraction. Also, the idea of reiteration would be validated by the frequency of its use in contexts of this type (with agreement by attraction). However, this hypothesis would be a hard one to accept:

A fost odată un moș și-o babă ≡ * *A fost odată un moș și a fost și-o babă.* (*There once was an old man and an old woman.* ≡ * *There once was an old man and there also was an old woman.*) [+ Reiteration]

Merg eu, Irina și Ioana ≡ * *Merg eu, merge Irina și merge Ioana.* (*I am going, also Irina and Ioana* ≡ * *I am going, Irina is going and Ioana is going.*) [+ Reiteration]

Even if the hypothesis of the origin of structures with a compound subject made of initial structures with the repetition of the predicate verb is not excluded, we believe that especially within a synchronic perspective on the language study, it is more convenient to consider the coordinated terms of the compound sentence part as representing a single syntactic unit.

For contexts of type (03), with the identification of a complex syntactic group (part of sentence – sentence, coordinated), the motivation of the distinct interpretation by a unique valence (of accusative) of the regent verb is valid, *mutatis mutandis*, also in contexts of the type *Merg eu și cine mai vrea* (*I will go and whoever else wants to*), considered, however, coordination within the compound sentence.

Other works (Trandafir, 1982; Dimitriu, 1982, 2002; Zugun, 1992; Nagy, 2002), belonging to the newer classical grammar, propose to improve the deficiencies of the type indicated above, according to the requirements (Hjelmslev, 1971) of non-contradiction, exhaustivity and simplicity of any adequate linguistic description. This is how the idea of a new syntactic relationship appears, different from both coordination and subordination, called a *mixed syntactic relationship* (Dimitriu, 1982). Formally characterized by a sequence of junctives: coordinator and subordinator in the compound/complex sentence, the mixed relationship is theorized to be the result of the generalized anacoluthon, consisting in the elimination of a part of the communication, considered “extra”. This unexpressed part of communication can be a predicate-verb or a noun-subject part of a coordinated compound subject. In any of these situations, it is observed that:

- the sentence introduced by the junctive is afunctional;
- the coordinating conjunction is suspended;
- the omitted part of communication (or the predicate-verb or a subject-noun part of a compound subject) is non-existent in the sense of generalized non-expression.

In our opinion, the two types of structure require separate comments.

Therefore, for the structural type having an unexpressed predicate-verb, we find debatable, on the one hand, the characterization of the second sentence as afunctional (while the first is called regent), and of the elided part of communication as non-existent

(because non-expression cannot be equivalent to non-existence). In our opinion, a distinction must be made between the functional behaviour of anacolutha considered in the etymological sense (Gr. anacoluthon = “lacking sequence”: *Eu, când am plecat, mi s-a făcut rău* (*When I left, I started to feel bad!*) and those where the discontinuity occurs in the direction opposite to the etymological meaning [“lacking beginning”: *Îmi face bine să-l aud dimineața și (să-l aud) când lucrez de-acasă* – *It does me good to hear him in the morning and (to hear him) when I work from home.*]. If in the case of the first type of anacoluthon (“lacking sequence”), the word left suspended is afunctional (due to the suspension of the relationship with the context), in the case of the second type of anacoluthon (“lacking beginning”), with the elimination of the prime term of the relation, a reorganization of the remaining surface structure occurs, so that the remaining sequence functionally substitutes the eliminated term in the new structure (see, for example, the predicative expression in a case other than the nominative, where the omission of the semantically irrelevant term from the perspective of the speaker is accompanied by a restoration of the semantic and functional continuity of the utterance: *Cerul este de aramă* < *Cerul este cer de aramă*. (*The sky is of brass* < *The sky is a sky of brass*).

For the structural type consisting of the omission of the subject-name from an unexpressed compound subject, also motivated by anacolutha (*Eu și care mai vrea vom merge la cules mere* < *Eu și fata/ băiatul care mai vrea vom merge la cules mere* – *I and whoever else wants to will go apple picking* < *I and the girl / boy who wants to will go apple picking*), our comments concern both the motivation and the interpretation of the statements in the reference. We note, therefore, that, in contrast to the older grammar, which describes two types of realization of the function of subject – in the sentence and in the compound/complex sentence – the newer grammar admits only one type of realization of this function: either in the sentence, or in the compound/complex sentence. The difference in perspective is given by taking into account the semantic and grammatical differences between the two types of syntactic functions: on the one hand, the only approximate semantic correspondence between the subject-part of the sentence and the subject clause; on the other hand, the different syntactic relationships (inhesion, subordination) that generate the functions in question and force the recognition of their different importance (subject-part of sentence = main + regent vs. subject clause = secondary + subordinate).

Acquiring this point of view leads to the observation that the thesis of the afunctionality of the subordinate clause in the structure containing a mixed relationship is an insufficient interpretation: the subject-name [*eu* (*I*)] in the main sentence disagrees with the plural form of the predicate-verb [*vom merge* (*will go*)]². Consequently, this raises questions about the acceptability of the hypothesis that the form of the mixed relationship in utterances of this type has resulted from anacolutha. The assessment can be extended to all structural levels at which the mixed relationship is identifiable. Admitting, therefore, that the sequence of connectors of different ranks, as a generalized deviation from the norm, is also present in the sentence [*Eu și cu tine mergem* (*You and I are going*)] (Nagy, 2002: 147-149), at this level, the impossibility of motivating the deviation from the norm through anacoluthon is imposed. Regarding the level of the complex/compound sentence, the

¹ The Romanian sentence renders a clear case of syntactic discontinuity (*Nominativus pendens* being followed by the dative case), literally: “*I, when left, to me started to feel bad.”

² Obvious in the Romanian *vom merge*, but not in the English translation *will go*, due to the homonymy between verbal forms that characterizes the English language.

same motivation of the relational form makes the validation of the existence of the mixed relationship questionable: if the coordinating conjunction in the initial structure acts as a relational marker at the level of the sentence, copulatively linking the terms of the compound subject, this means that by eliminating the second term of the initial compound subject, the coordinating conjunction remains suspended in the sentence, not in the complex/compound sentence. Thus, explaining the new structure through anacoluthon-like transformations applies only to the phenomenon of suspending the coordinating conjunction in the sentence. Therefore, the only type of junctive in the complex/compound sentence being the subordinating one, identifying the mixed relationship in the absence of the rapport form is no longer possible.

Regarding only this type of structures discussed in connection to the mixed relationship, another paper (Zugun, 1992: 109-111) proposes a different functional interpretation. The analyzed contexts are of the type: *El și cine a stat alături au plecat* (*He and who stood at his side left*), where the disagreement between the subject-name [*el (he)*] and the predicate-verb [*au plecat (left-plural)*] is seen as an argument for the idea of insufficient realization of the syntactic function of subject both at the level of the sentence and at the level of the complex/compound sentence. A sufficient realization of this function in the given context is possible only at the sentence-complex/compound sentence level. The observation has the value of a principle with applicability to all syntactic functions. Consequently, the paper proposes redefining the notions of *syntactic unit* and *syntactic function* in the sense of identifying *fundamental syntactic functions*, embodied in complex syntactic units, and *secondary syntactic functions*, which find their expression in units integrated into the complex ones. This means that in the example *El și cine a stat alături au plecat* (*He and who stood at his side left*) a complex subject must be identified: *el și cine a stat alături* (*He and who stood at his side*).

The solution described above is, from our point of view, virtually operative, provided that this concept of sufficient/insufficient realization of the syntactic function is outlined by referring to certain indices according to which the difference can be made. The paper proposes, for the discussed linguistic contexts, an index of a formal nature: agreement. Thus, in the context *El și cine a stat alături au plecat* (*He and who stood at his side left*), the lack of agreement between the predicate-verb [*au plecat (left – plural)*] and the subject-pronoun [*el (he)*] certifies the idea of insufficient realization of the subject function in the sentence and, implicitly, the recognition of the compound subject at the sentence-complex/compound sentence level. However, the same paper confusingly and ambiguously supports the idea of insufficient realization of the syntactic function of the subject in the sentence with an example where the reference to the formal index, i.e. agreement, is inoperative:

Dacă lui Mircea Ivănescu nu-i plac festivitățile și nici să vorbească despre propria lui operă, e bine, totuși, că televiziunea i-a făcut o vizită acasă. (If Mircea Ivănescu doesn't like festivities nor talking about his own work, it's good, however, that television paid him a visit at home.)

The plural form of the predicate-verb in this context is imposed not by the compound subject *festivitățile și nici să vorbească despre propria lui operă*, but only by the subject-noun *festivitățile*. The subject clause *nici să vorbească despre propria lui operă* supposes an elided verbal regent: *nu-i place (he does not like)*. The reference to agreement as a formal index is also inoperative and in contexts in which, in most cases, other functions than the subject function are shown at the sentence-complex/compound sentence level:

Văd florile și ce mai este pe masă, Îmi face bine să-l aud dimineața și când lucrez de-acasă, A vorbit nu doar despre subiectul dat, ci și despre ceea ce voia să afle. (I see the flowers and what else is on the table, It does me good to hear him in the morning and when I work from home, He talked not only about the given topic, but also about what he wanted to know.)

Beside this shortcoming, the lack of precision of the concept of sufficient/insufficient realization of syntactic functions allows several types of interpretation of this term. Thus, in a context like *Se știe că va ploua.* (It is known that it will rain.), the realization of the subject function at the level of the complex sentence, through the subject clause, could be considered semantically and formally insufficient from the point of view of subject-subject clause correspondence.

An unclear situation, from this point of view, would also present itself in the realization of the same function in a case like *Cine se scoală de dimineață departe ajunge.* (literally: Who wakes up early reaches far.³). The peculiarity of this context is that each sentence (the subject clause and its regent) contains its own subject.

In conclusion, we appreciate the proposal to redefine notions such as *syntactic units* and *syntactic functions* as burdensome and marked by a rather pronounced ambiguity: the reevaluation of the syntactic system almost in its entirety (syntactic units, syntactic functions) with the aim of conveniently solving the syntactic analysis of structures like *El și cine a stat alături au plecat* raises more problems than the issues it succeeds in solving acceptably.

§3. Our opinion. Considering the inherent contradictions and inadequacies of the methods of analysis proposed up to the current stage of research, for the structural type with the non-expression of the subject-noun part of an unexpressed compound subject, our opinion capitalizes on the idea of *motivating* the exception from the norm of the linguistic form in question together with the *observation the symmetry* of the production of this deviation from the norm at different levels (sentence, complex/compound sentence). We thus advance the idea that this type of utterances resulted from *word order transformations*, a phenomenon occurring both at the level of the sentence and at the level of the complex/compound sentence, as we show below:

*Eu merg cu Sofia/cu tine la universitate. > Eu cu Sofia/ cu tine merg/ mergem la universitate.
> Eu și cu Sofia/cu tine mergem la universitate.*

*Eu merg cu cine/cu care mai vrea la universitate. > Eu cu cine/cu care mai vrea merg/ mergem
la universitate. > Eu și (cu) cine/cu care mai vrea mergem la universitate.⁴*

The *word order transformations* that we proposed above, occurring in utterances representing the same type of structure, we believe are produced based on the speaker's mostly *semantic* approach to language. In other words, a sentence/complex/compound sentence can be analyzed as a *syntactic unit*, dividable into sub-units of the type *subject – predicate +/- determinants*, but also as a *semantic unit*, dividable into sub-units of the type *agent – process – patient/instrument*, etc. The two structural levels (syntactic and semantic) are not

³ The equivalent of the English proverb *The early bird catches the worm.*

⁴ As English is much less flexible than Romanian regarding the possibility to change the word order in sentences, here the English translation does not illustrate the language phenomena analyzed in the present paper.

autonomous, but are found in certain relationships. Thus, usually the *agent* in the deep structure becomes the *subject* in the surface structure [*Sofia recită poezia*. (*Sofia is reciting the poem.*)]. From this perspective, we believe that the word order transformations of the structures under discussion should also be noted: in the *depth structure*, the speaker semantically perceives the associative as a secondary agent of the verbal action; in the *surface structure*, the semantic proximity between the associative circumstantial and the subject translates into the possibility of placing the first in the vicinity of the second, possibly through a different functional realization of the associative, as a copulatively coordinated term of a compound subject.

Furthermore, as a result of strengthening the perception of the two terms as agents of the action, the operation of introducing a specialized copulative coordinating junctive [*și (and)*] between the two syntactic units/between the two terms of the compound subject takes place, and the consequence of this phenomenon is the restriction of these structures' possibilities of interpretation to a single one, namely, the identification of a compound subject whose terms are differentiated according to the criterion of importance: the focus of the main actor is achieved by selecting the nominative form of the name/main syntactic unit, and the expression of the secondary actor, through the secondary, accusative, form of the name/secondary syntactic unit.

As the associative meaning of the second term of the compound subject is preserved and manifested as an accusative form, respectively as a subject clause, we believe that it is useful to distinguish between several types of compound subjects, depending on whether the terms are of *equal importance* – a situation that leads to the identification of a coordinated compound subject, or of *unequal importance* – which makes it possible to identify a mixed compound subject in the sentence/complex/compound sentence.

Therefore, the concept of a mixed compound subject in a sentence/complex/compound sentence represents, in our opinion, a deviation from the norm, justified by word order transformations of the deep structure into the surface structure. The two types of junctives (coordinator, subordinator) within the mixed compound subject mark the mixed relationship, and the subject under discussion entirely establishes the inherence report with the predicate-verb.

In conclusion, our opinion regarding the mixed relationship is that two types of structures can be included in this type of linguistic organization:

- the first structural type, with unexpressed predicate-verb, is identifiable at the level of the complex/compound sentence and is justifiable through *transformations of the type of anacolutha*, with the observation that the subordinate clause *does not become afunctional*;
- the second structural type, motivated by *word order transformations*, is identifiable both at the level of the sentence and of the complex/compound sentence, within the *mixed compound subject*. This type of subject establishes the relation of inherence with the predicate-verb.

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