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**FLOATING PREDICATE – WHY AN EXCLUSIVELY ACADEMIC
APPROACH?**

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Abstract

After 1990, the study of the Romanian language in middle school and high school has suffered many changes; the principle underlying the school curricula and textbooks was to step away from the theorising academicism and turn to the functional practice of the language. Although the teaching/learning of Romanian was meant to respond to a growing number of requirements of real life by improving verbal communication of pupils and students, the reality of recent years, reflected both in the results of academic exams at national level and in the oral and written expression of pupils and students, indicates a clear failure which can be explained, in our view, by the faulty theoretical and practical approach of the Romanian language in school textbooks and auxiliaries.

Another drawback is that school textbooks and curricula avoid a number of grammatical problems, some of them considered to be too difficult (e.g. floating predicate), and this often creates confusion, most questions remain unanswered in school textbooks and teaching auxiliaries and, consequently, only a certain type of texts/exercises/tests are approached in school textbooks and teaching auxiliaries. We consider this approach to be wrong because logical arguments can be understood by students at this age.

These are the main reasons why I have decided to address the floating predicate issue in this paper which includes, on the one hand, the theoretical framework, and on the other hand the manner in which this issue, often so easily and wrongly labelled as ‘adverbials of place’, could be theorised and reinstated.

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Keywords: Floating predicate, predicative complement, school grammar, adverbials of place, direct object.



1. Introduction

Floating predicate is a reality of the Romanian language, which has been imposed on grammar and grammar practice as a necessity. This is why, after the first observations made by H. Tiktin in his work *Gramatica română. Etimologieşisintaxă (Romanian Grammar. Etymology and Syntax)* (Tiktin, 1945, p. 197) published in 1945, continued by Nicolae Drăganu in 1945 in his work *Elemente de sintaxă a limbii române (Syntax Elements of the Romanian language)* (Drăganu, 1945, pp. 83-84), anticipated in 1957 by Paula Diaconescu (1957, pp. 105-120), Maria Rădulescu (Rădulescu, 1957, pp. 121-129) (who distinguishes it as an autonomous syntactic function!), Matilda Caragiu (1957, pp.61-89), Flora Şuteu (1957, pp.15-22), Mioara Avram (1961, pp. 14-18) and Dragomirescu (1962, pp. 99-122), in 1958 by Silvia Niţă (1958, pp.93-98), and in 1964 by Ştefan Hăzy (1964, pp. 233-238), *Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar)* published in 1963 (1963, pp. 207-208) recognises floating predicate as a distinct syntactic function.

In the first stage mentioned above, before the official recognition of the identity given by *Gramatica Academiei (The Academy's Grammar)* published in 1963, the authors' opinions did not lead to the immediate individualisation of floating predicate as a new syntactic position, their views were different both in terms of the terminology designating it and its status of (non)autonomous syntactic function, double/mono-subordinate, or a plurality of functions.

The opinions of experts in the field are different even in contemporary literature. Viorel Hodiş (2006, p. 20) and Dumitru Irimia (2008, pp. 550-555) support the grammatical theory of double subordination, while Sorin Stati (1972, pp. 130-133), Gh. Bulgăr and Gh. Constantinescu-Dobridor (2002, p. 259), Corneliu Dimitriu (2002, pp. 1488-1489) and Mihaela Secieru (2001, p. 105) consider floating predicate to be a plurality of syntactic functions whose inventory differs and does not reveal the floating predicate's means of subordination to the regent term.

In *Gramatica limbii române (GALR)*, (Guţu Romalo, 2005, pp. 290-311), the floating predicate is presented as a non-matrix predicative syntactic position resulting from syntactic reorganisation (reorganised syntactic position), which is subject to double subordination: it refers both to a nominal element and to a predicative verb; however, the GALR theory leaves a series of structures with floating predicate open to question because they do not fall within the given explanations. Moreover, there are similarities between the position referred to as matrix - i.e. object complement, and organised structures - i.e. floating predicate, and such similarities often do not support and do not justify the differences between an object complement and a floating predicate.

GBLR 2010 adopts the name of floating predicate, a position which is often optional, resulting from the reorganisation of two clauses, that has different effects, and believes that it appears in ternary constructions, referring simultaneously to a verb or an interjection predicate and to a nominal component (GBLR, 2010, p. 512). The ambiguities related to floating predicate noticed in GALR can also be found in GBLR.

In 1973, Valeria Guţu Romalo (1973, p. 147) demonstrates that the floating predicate is a former predicative complement and describes it as a surface structure, thus launching the ternary relations hypothesis. Similar studies, but with numerous innovative elements (although not necessarily

indisputable!), are those of Gabriela PanăDindelegan (1974, pp. 133-139) and Carolina Popușoi (2002, p. 127), where the floating predicate is also presented from a generative-transformational perspective.

In his work *Complementulcalității (Quality Complement)* (Diaconescu, 1960, pp. 14-18) published in 1960, Ion Diaconescu demonstrates that the floating predicate is subordinated to the predicative verb, therefore it is a mono-subordinate syntactic function.

Drașoveanu (1997), Neamțu (1986a) and Gruiță (1976) support the idea of mono-subordination of the floating predicate, but the starting point and their arguments are different from those presented by the aforementioned author. These authors argue that the floating predicate is mono-subordinated to a noun, in the presence of a predicative verb, and this mono-subordination is achieved by adjectival agreement, second case inflexion, junction and adhesion.

As regards the name, the floating predicate appears in literature under the following names: adverbial of manner, adverbial predicative complement, adverbial of state, predicate adverbial, indirect predicate, adjective adverbial, completive adjective, predicate adjective, transformed adjective, object predicative adjunct, derived verbal adjunct, floating predicate.

2. Problem Statement

The different theories and arguments, the numerous non-unified opinions in the specialised literature have turned floating predicate into a topic discussed only at the university level. In middle school grammar, the floating predicate is not approached separately, and in the school grammar analysis practice it is most often considered to be an adverbial of manner, thus denying grammatical elements that are noticeable and, in our view, easily understandable even by middle school students who are already familiar with the concept of predicative complement, which is a key concept in understanding floating predicate which, in turn, is a *former predicative complement*.

3. Research Questions

- a. Floating predicate – mono-subordinate syntactic function?
- b. Adjective floating predicate = or \neq adverbial of manner?
- c. *Noun floating predicate* = or \neq direct object?
- d. *Noun floating predicate* = or \neq adverbial of manner?

4. Purpose of the Study

On the one hand we want to stress in this paper the controversial nature of the floating predicate in the Romanian language, which was illustrated since its very beginning and remained unclarified to this day, if we were to refer to both the specialist authors and the new grammars that still deny the mono-subordinate nature of this secondary part of sentence. On the other hand, and this is the main purpose of this paper, we want to show that not addressing these secondary syntactic functions in school text books was unjustified, even though the opinions of specialist authors did not coincide.

5. Research Methods

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

6. Findings

6.1. Floating predicate – mono-subordinate syntactic function

The relational description history of the floating predicate has revealed the heterogeneity of the authors' opinions on this syntactic function in Romanian grammar.

Having analysed the theories of the abovementioned authors, weighing and comparing their arguments, seeing to what extent they cover the realities of the grammatical analysis practice, we conclude that the research direction suggested by the neo-traditional grammar is best suited to be used in order for the floating predicate to no longer be a topic discussed only at the university level.

Draşoveanu (1967), Neamţu (1986a) and Gruiţă (1976) are the three linguists whose research is better both in terms of terminology and in terms of phenomenalisation of the floating predicate syntactic function.

Therefore, in the view of the neo-traditional grammar (to which we adhere), at essence level, *the floating predicate is an individuality (...) which remains the same even when the essence is phenomenaled by involving verbal predicates* (Draşoveanu, 1967, p. 241).

The theory of *statement* and the theory of *relationship* underlie the individualisation of the floating predicate syntactic function as a mono-subordinate syntactic function.

We will make a brief presentation of these theories for coherence purposes.

The central issue of syntax is both the *statement* – as a syntagmatic structure analysable in component parts, and especially the establishment of *minimum functional units* which are components of the statement and between which relationships are established. *Relationships* are underlying elements of any communication; achieving a communication necessarily requires the existence of relationships (GuţuRomalo,1973, p. 35). These relationships give the statement *a communicative value*. If these relationships do not refer to the organisation or structure of the statement, they are *external* to the statement.

In addition to *external relationships*, there are internal, intrinsic relationships between the components of a statement. These relationships characterise only statements made up of two or more words within which components are linked to each other (GuţuRomalo, 1973, pp. 35-36).

A syntactic relationship is the syntagmatic relationship involving two or more minimal component units of a statement's structure (Iordan, Robu, 1978, pp. 546-547). A syntactic relationship is the internal relationship whose role is to structure the statement and make it an organised whole, since it is an information carrier.

The statement structure unit is provided by incorporating the lexical level of the language system in the syntactic level through syntactic relationships. The transition of a word from *lexical unit* to *syntactic unit* is achieved through *syntagm*, which is the *minimal and maximal unit of the syntactic level*.

Within and due to a relationship, lexemes receive new qualities and the status of *terms* of the syntagm (Draşoveanu 1997: 25-26). A lexeme becomes *term* only at syntactic level as a result of a relationship, since a *relationship* is the one that creates terms and not vice versa; a relationship is the creator of the terms of a syntagm understood as binary structure (Draşoveanu, 1997, pp. 25-26). A relationship is the one emanating the content of the terms, which is extrinsic to lexemes, and it also serves as organiser of the terms of a relationship. The common feature of the definitions of coordination and subordination is that they all take into account, one way or the other, the terms of a relationship (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 40). “Syntactic relationships give the statement the nature of an organised whole: they place the components of the statement in different ways to each other” (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 45).

In the work *Tezeşiantitezeînsintaxalimbiromâne (Theses and Antitheses in the Romanian Language Syntax)*, D. D. Draşoveanu offers a view, which we consider fair and full, on the concept under discussion – *syntagm*. “A syntagm is binary only, because of the linearity (one-dimension) of the speech chain, a one-dimension which compels - as shown by Saussure - consecution in the arrangement of consecutive elements and thereby binarity” (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 39). The author believes that syntagms are phenomenised as such - syntagms - or in clauses and sentences. Therefore, a *syntagm* - a group consisting of two terms and the relationship between them - is the *relational unit* of the syntax, the only unit, both *minimal and maximal*. Everything that is beyond and above the word is a syntagm (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 36).

Consequently, given that a syntactic function has only one relatee, Draşoveanu (1997) states that the floating predicate is a mono-subordinate syntactic function whose regent term is a noun, and the predicative verb is just a conditioning factor and not at all a regent term in that relationship. The presence of the predicative verb is mandatory and the floating predicate is subordinated to the regent noun by adjectival agreement (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 271), second case inflexion (Draşoveanu, 1997, p. 273), junction and adhesion.

In terms of terminology, Draşoveanu (1997) uses the names of *floating predicate* and *floating predicate adjunct*, while Neamţu (1986a) suggests another name, i.e. *verbal adjunct* (Neamţu, 1986a, p. 92), for he believes that the term “predicate” is inappropriate as it suggests the idea of predication (Neamţu, 1986a, p. 92), which is erroneous. In the work *Predicatulînlimbaromână. O reconsiderare a predicatului nominal (Predicate in the Romanian Language. A Reconsideration of the Predicative Complement)* (Neamţu, 1986b), the author theorises the primary structures and the derived structures; the primary structures refer to predicative complement (primary verbal adjunct), and the derived structures refer to floating predicate (derived primary adjunct).

We believe that it is extremely important how G. G. Neamţu has been demonstrating since 1982 that there is no second case inflexion in structures like *Îmizice Ion., Îmispune Ion. (They call me Ion.)*: $N_1(\text{Ion})$ is in the unachieved and impossible to achieve position of a Dative in the Romanian language (Neamţu, 1982, pp.55-59).

Moreover, in his work *Teoriaşipracticăanalizeigramaticale. Distincţiîşi ... distincţiî (Theory and Practice of Grammatical Analysis. Distinctions and... Distinctions)*, Neamţu (1997) shows how distinctions/confusions are reflected in practice between adjective floating predicate and adverbial of manner (Neamţu, 1999, p. 380), noun floating predicate and direct object or adverbial of manner (Neamţu

1999: 384), and the gerund – non-manner adverbial function/ manner adverbial function (Neamțu, 1999, p. 388); he also offers solutions both in terms of avoiding such errors and in terms of explaining the solutions correctly.

To get to the question asked in the title of this paper and especially to a possible answer to this question, we will refer briefly to the frequent confusions and the erroneous solutions that school practice provides in the absence of an adequate theoretical and practical framework for this topic and because of the preconceived idea that this topic is beyond the comprehension of middle school and high school students.

a) Adjective floating predicate= or ≠ adverbial of manner?

School practice shows that such a solution would be contested even by students who understood the mechanism of predicative complement. Therefore, in cases like:

Elevaestefericită. (The girl student ishappy.)

Elevulestefericit. (The boy student is happy.)

Elevesuntfericite. (The girl students are happy.)

Eleviisuntfericiți. (The boy students are happy.)

the agreement in gender, number and case between the subject N₁(*eleva, elevul, elevii, elevele - the girl student, the boy student, the boy students, the girl students*) and the predicative complement N₂ (*fericită, fericit, fericite, fericiți - happy*), consisting of an adjective, is obvious, logical and easily understandable as follows:

Eleva	-----	fericită
(genfeminin, număr singular, caz N)		(genfeminin, număr singular, caz N),
The girl student	-----	happy
(feminine gender, singular number, N case)		(feminine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevul	-----	fericit
(genmasculin, număr singular, caz N)		(genmasculin, număr singular, caz N),
The boy student	-----	happy
(masculine gender, singular number, N case)		(masculine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevele	-----	fericite
(genfeminin, număr plural, caz N)		(genfeminin, număr plural, caz N),
The girl students	-----	happy
(feminine gender, plural number, N case)		(feminine gender, plural number, N case),
Elevii	-----	fericiți
(gen masculin, număr plural, caz N)		(gen masculin, număr plural, caz N),
The boy students	-----	happy
(masculine gender, plural number, N case)		(masculine gender, plural number, N case),

and the status of predicative complement is due to the auxiliary verb in the sentence; we believe that the agreement in gender, number and case between the subject N₁ (*eleva, elevul, elevii, elevele - the girl student, the boy student, the boy students, the girl students*) and the floating predicate N₂ (*fericită, fericit, fericite, fericiți - happy*), consisting of an adjective, is just as obvious, logical and easily understandable in an example where the auxiliary verb is replaced by a predicative verb which expresses an action that is simultaneous with the one of the floating predicate, but which is not a regent term for the floating predicate, the reference of the adjective floating predicate to a name being undeniable:

Elevase plimbăfericită. (The girl student walkslooking happy.)

Elevulse plimbăfericit. (The boy student walkslooking happy.)

Elevele se plimbăfericite.(The girl studentswalklooking happy.)

Elevii se plimbăfericiți.(The boy studentswalklooking happy.)

Elevele	-----	fericită
(genfeminin, număr singular, caz N)		(genfeminin, număr singular, caz N),
The girl student	-----	happy
(feminine gender, singular number, N case)		(feminine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevul	-----	fericit
(genmasculin, număr singular, caz N)		(genmasculin, număr singular, caz N),
The boy student	-----	happy
(masculine gender, singular number, N case)		(masculine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevele	-----	fericite
(genfeminin, număr plural, caz N)		(genfeminin, număr plural, caz N),
The girl students	-----	happy
(feminine gender, plural number, N case)		(feminine gender, plural number, N case),
Elevii	-----	fericiți
(gen masculin, număr plural, caz N)		(gen masculin, număr plural, caz N),
The boy students	-----	happy
(masculine gender, plural number, N case)		(masculine gender, plural number, N case),

Grammatically, it is obvious that these words *fericit/fericită/fericiți/fericite* (happy) are adjectives, as shown in the examples above; in all cases, they are subordinated by agreement to the noun in the nominative case which is the subject. The demonstration above is intended to prevent misinterpretation of these adjectives as adverbials of manner, an interpretation which is mainly due to the use of the question *cum?* (*how?*) and its association with the adverbial of manner function; this question points out the erroneous connection of the false adverb to the predicative verb, which is erroneously considered to be regent.

Therefore, in this case the words *fericit/fericită/fericiți/fericite* (happy) cannot be interpreted as adverbials of manner since it is obvious that the predicative verb is only a conditioning factor for the existence and creation of the floating predicate which is in no way subordinated to the predicative verb, hence the exclusion of double subordination.

As mentioned, the confusion with the adverbial of manner is generally due to the question *cum?* (*how?*). The use of this question is unjustified because the floating predicate is not subordinated to the verb, it does not express *the manner* of the verb.

Moreover, the extension of the structure to the basic statement:

Elevele se plimbăși estefericită.

(The girl student walkslooking happy and is happy.)

Elevul se plimbăși estefericit.

(The boy studentwalkslooking happy and is happy.)

Elevele se plimbăși suntfericite.

(The girl studentswalklooking happy and are happy.)

Elevii se plimbăși suntfericiți.

(The boy studentswalklooking happy and are happy.)

could be successfully used both as an element that explains the natural agreement between the adjective and the name, and as an element to verify the existence of the adjective floating predicate.

b) Noun floating predicate = or ≠ direct object?

Noun floating predicate = or ≠ adverbial of manner?

In both cases, the previous experience based on which the noun floating predicate can be explained is the predicative complement consisting of noun. Of the phenomenalizations of the floating predicate, we consider the non-prepositional one to be appropriate for middle school. A comparative analysis between the predicative complement and the floating predicate demonstrates the analogy with the adjectival constructions described in point a) above.

Eleveaeste poetă. / Eleva a fostnumită poeta clasei.

(The girl student is a poet. / The girl student is called the class poet.)

Elevul este poet. / Elevula fostnumitpoetulclasei.

(The boy student is a poet. / The boy student is called the class poet.)

Elevele sunt poete. / Elevele au fost numite poetele clasei.

(The girl studentsare poets. / The girl students are called the class poets.)

Elevii sunt poeți. / Elevii au fost numite poetele clasei.

(The boy studentsare poets. / The boy students are called the class poets.)

In these cases, however, the **nominative case** of the subject and of the floating predicate is an inflexion, not an agreement (Neamțu 1999: 385), and the noun floating predicate is subordinated by inflexion.

Eleva	-----	poetă
(substantiv, gen feminin, număr singular, caz N)		(substantiv, gen feminin, număr singular, caz N),
The girl student	-----	poet
(noun, feminine gender, singular number, N case)		(noun, feminine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevul	-----	poet
(substantiv, gen masculin, număr singular, caz N)		(substantiv, gen masculin, număr sg.,caz N),
The boy student	-----	poet
(noun, masculine gender, singular number, N case)		(noun, masculine gender, singular number, N case),
Elevele	-----	poete
(substantiv, genfeminin, număr plural, caz N)		(substantiv, genfeminin, număr plural, caz N),
The girl students	-----	poets
(noun, feminine gender, plural number, N case)		(noun, feminine gender, plural number, N case),
Elevii	-----	poeți
(substantiv, gen masculin, număr plural, caz N)		(substantiv, gen masculin, număr pl., caz N).
The girl students	-----	poets
(noun, masculine gender, plural number, N case)		(noun, masculine gender, plural number, N case),

Given that there is no adverbial of manner in N, that the direct object function requires a transitive verb as regent, that the predicative complement function is excluded like any other possibilities, *we are left with... the floating predicate* (Neamțu, 1999, p. 387); the trap of the *ce?* (what?) and *cum?* (how?) questions can be easily avoided by following the logic that argues the noun floating predicate.

The same analogy may be used to argue the case of the adjective floating predicate (Neamțu, 1999, p. 385) when the floating predicate is a noun in the *accusative case* and it is subordinated to a noun direct object, in the presence of a transitive verb. In the examples below:

Pe elev îl consider un copil cuminte. (I consider the boy student a good child.)

Pe elev	-----	un copil
(substantiv, gen masculin, număr singular, caz Ac)		(substantiv, gen masc., număr sg., caz Ac),
the boy student	-----	a child
(noun, masculine gender, singular number, Ac case)		(noun, masculine gender, singular number, Ac case),

Pe elevă o consider un copil cuminte. (I consider the girl student a good child.)

Peelev ——— un copil

(substantiv, gen masculin, număr singular, caz Ac) (substantiv, gen masc., numărsg., caz Ac),

the girl student

a child

(noun, feminine gender, singular number, Ac case) (noun, feminine gender, singular number, Ac case),

Pe eleve le consider niște copii cuminți. (I consider the girl students good children.)

Pe eleve ——— niște copii (substantiv, gen feminin, număr plural, cazAc) (substantiv, gen feminin, număr plural, caz Ac),

the girl students ——— **children** (noun, feminine gender, plural number, Ac case) (noun, feminine gender, plural number, Ac case),

Pe elevi îi consider niște copii cuminți. (I consider the boy students good children.)

Pe elevi ——— niște copii (substantiv, gen masculin, număr plural, cazAc) (substantiv, gen masculin, număr pl., cazAc),

The boy students ——— **children** (noun, masculine gender, plural number, Ac case) (noun, masculine gender, plural number, Ac case),

the words un elev/o elevă/niștelevi (a boy student/a girl student/students) are in the accusative case, as they obviously refer to the direct object peelev/peelevă/peelevi/peeleve (the boy student/the girl student/the boy students/the girl students); we are in the presence of a case variation imposed by the case variation of the regent term.

As regards the noun floating predicate, we believe that the conclusion according to which the noun floating predicate (without preposition) is in the nominative case if it refers to the subject and in the accusative case if it refers to the direct object (Neamțu, 1999, p. 385) is adequate and sufficient for the comprehension of middle school and high school students.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, on the one hand we wanted to stress in this paper the controversial nature of the floating predicate in the Romanian language, which was illustrated since its very beginning and remained unclarified to this day, if we were to refer to both the specialist authors and the new grammars that still deny the mono-subordinate nature of this secondary part of sentence. On the other hand, and this was the main purpose of this paper, we wanted to show that not addressing these secondary syntactic functions in school textbooks was unjustified, even though the opinions of specialist authors did not coincide.

The floating predicate is a grammatical reality that cannot be ignored, the more so as it can be explained by analogy with another part of sentence included in the school curriculum and the school exam curriculum: predicative complement.

We believe that school grammar has remained too far behind compared to the development of the Romanian grammar in recent years; many topics (the floating predicate is just one example) are *taboo*, the only argument being that they would be beyond students' comprehension; we strongly disagree with this argument and we have countered it with the logical approach described above with regard to noun floating predicate and adjective floating predicate.

Our opinion is that introducing a new topic such as floating predicate in the school curriculum would be an important step in bridging the gap, the distance that is too great between the grammar studied in school and the one studied at the university.

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