

**LINGUISTIC PHENOMENA OF POLYSEMY, SYNONYMY, HOMONYMY,  
REDUNDANCY AND TRANSPOSITION OF VERBAL CATEGORIAL  
AND GRAMMATICAL FORMS**

**Dumitru MELENCIUC**

*Catedra Filologie Engleză*

În articolul dat se analizează unele cazuri de fenomene lingvistice ca polisemia, omonimia, antonimia, redundanța și transpoziția formelor gramaticale și categoriale ale verbelor în limbile engleză și română. Sunt folosite exemple ocazionale și din alte limbi înrudite ca spaniola, italiana și portugheza. Se propune de a vedea, într-o anumită măsură, unele forme gramaticale în limbile engleză și română din cadrul categoriilor de mod, anterioritate și aspect.

Grammatical and categorial forms can be polysemantic, synonymous, homonymous and even antonymous. The categories of mood in modern Romanian and English could be reinterpreted, because their present classifications are somewhat confusing. In the case of Romanian *prezumtivul* we have almost a complete transposition of future continuous and future perfect (both forms are extremely rarely used to express future actions in the indicative) into a relatively new mood "*prezumtivul*". Thus for example: 1) *Vei fi din oraș!* *You should come from the city! Probably you come from the city!* 2) *Vei fi venit cu trenul.* *You must have come by train. I suppose you have come by train.* 3) *Ar fi fiind asta dorința prințesei?* *Could this be the wish (desire) of the princess?* Partially transposed are the forms of simple future, conjunctive continuous and non-continuous, conditional, optative continuous and non-continuous forms [6, p.85-91]. In case of the Romanian conjunctive the criterion in singling it out, as a separate mood, serves the verbal form with the particle "să". A multitude of contextual sub-meanings demonstrate that this grammatical form is polyfunctional and can be used in the meanings of the English indicative, subjunctive I, subjunctive II, suppositional, infinitive in both perfect and non-perfect forms. Subjunctive I (Old Subjunctive) in the first and second meanings usually corresponds to forms of *conșuntivul* in Romanian: *Long live democracy! Să traiască democrația!* *I insist that he come. Eu insist ca el să vină.* *It is necessary that he be (come) here in time. E necesar ca el să fie (vină) aici la timp.* Subjunctive I in the second meaning has a stylistic synonym – Suppositional mood: *I insist that everybody should come in time! Insist ca toți să vină la timp!* *It is necessary that he should be (come) here in time. E necesar ca el să fie (vină) aici la timp.* In both cases the use of the corresponding categorial forms is lexically conditioned by modal words accompanying the verbs. Thus, we can speak here of lexical-grammatical categorial meanings of mood. Subjunctive II has three synonymous equivalents in Romanian: *If I had had time yesterday I should have come to help you yesterday. Să fi avut (=dacă aș fi avut/dacă aveam) timp ieri aș fi venit (veneam) să te ajut ieri.* Thus, there are three forms in Romanian corresponding to the English Subjunctive II or Optative Mood: *optativul*, *conșuntivul* and *imperfectul modal*, which in this case are perfect synonyms. In the main clause the Conditional mood corresponds in the confronted language to *Conșuntivul* and *imperfectul modal* [2, p.92-100]. Here we should also mention the fact that in some grammar books the Romanian *Conșuntivul* and *Optative* are considered to form one categorial form of mood, probably because their forms coincide. In reality here we have two different homonymous categorial forms with their specific meanings.

*Conșuntivul* regularly substitutes the infinitive in the Romanian colloquial language: *They promised to take him home. Ei au promis să-l ducă acasă. He must have come in time. El trebuie să fi venit la timp. Even a child could understand, Și un copil putea să înțeleagă. To believe me capable of something like that! Să mă creadă capabil de așa ceva!* An interesting phenomenon has been observed in this case. During the last 18 years most people improved their native literary language and now we can observe the infinitive being used more often, to a certain extent, replacing *conșuntivul* not only in the literary publications, official speeches, but also in everyday activity conversations. *Conșuntivul* is used to express the future tense in colloquial speech: *What shall I do? Ce să fac? He will come in time. El are să vină la timp.* In the second example we have a future form used in colloquial speech, synonymous to "El va veni la timp", corresponding to the literary style. *Conșuntivul* is also used to express lexical and grammatical supposition, necessity, order,

command, insistence: *Might he have been here? Să fi fost el aici?; He might have been there. El ar fi putut să fi fost acolo. Have I lost it on my way home? Să-l fi pierdut în drum spre casă? I insist (order) that he should be present. Eu insist (ordon) ca el să fie prezent. It is necessary that he should be here. E necesar ca el să fie aici.* Conjunctivul can also be used to express the imperative and present indefinite indicative forms: *Leave the town immediately! Să pleci (pleacă) din oraș imediat! Don't you worry, mother! Să nu te neliniștești, mamă! Do not doubt! Să nu te îndoiești! Let's sit and talk. Să ședem și să vorbim. There is no doubt that conjunctivul should not be considered to be a grammatical form expressing one categorial mood form. It is just a grammatical form used to express quite a number of categorial forms.*

Most surprising is the fact we have mentioned above, that *condiționalul* and *optativul* can be expressed in Romanian by several synonymous grammatical forms, which are **polyfunctional** and formally belong to different moods: *If I had had time I (should) would have come to help you yesterday – Dacă aveam timp, veneam să te ajut ieri;* (imperfectui modal in both cases); *Dacă aș fi avut timp, aș fi venit să te ajut ieri;* (optative, conditional); *Să fi avut timp, aș fi venit (or veneam) să te ajut ieri* (conjunctivul in the secondary clause). **“Had had time”** here expresses an anterior unreal action in the future, past and to a present moment, and in most cases is homonymous to a similar form in the indicative mood, used to express anteriority in the past and future in the past (in clauses of time and condition) [6, p.92-100]. Past conditional (perfect form) has **several homonymous forms**: suppositional mood (in the first person), future perfect in the past indicative mood, the modals “should” and “would” plus perfect infinitive. Thus, for example: *He would have come, but he had no time; I should have read the book but I could not find it; I should have come earlier; He promised that he would have come before the beginning of the meeting.*

**The use of subjunctive II and conditional mood to express anteriority.** Analyzing the perfect forms of the oblique mood forms we find out that in some cases they do not really express an anterior action. Thus, if we take the example: *He said he would have come earlier yesterday if he had known; El a spus că ar fi venit (venea) mai devreme ieri, dacă ar fi știut (să fi știut, dacă știa).* In order to check this we transform the example into the indicative mood changing the category of affirmation/negation; *He did not come yesterday because he did not know.* Here we have an action in the past not connected with the present moment. As soon as the action is related to the present moment it acquires an anteriority meaning: *If she had worked hard at her lessons this month she would have no problems at the exam. Dacă ea ar fi lucrat (lucra, să fi lucrat) la lecții pe parcursul lunii acestea n-ar avea probleme la examen.* The perfect form in the secondary clause expresses an anterior action to the present moment and corresponds to a present perfect form in the indicative mood: *She has not worked hard at her lessons this month and now she has problems at the exams.* In case of actions corresponding to future perfect, past perfect the oblique moods forms express an anteriority meaning. The past perfect form in the indicative mood is already polysemantic as it is used to express an anterior action to another action or moment on the axis of time, and it also can express an anterior action in the future from a moment in the past in clauses of time and condition. In the oblique mood forms the past perfect form can express anteriority to moments in the past, present and future, including the future in the past. It becomes homonymous in the case when it expresses and action in the past not connected with the present moment and not anterior to any moment or action in a given context.

The forms of **prezuntiv** in Romanian represent an interesting case like that of conjunctivul. At a closer inspection we discover that by the forms of present prezuntiv Continuous forms are practically used, forms which were actively used in the indicative mood in earlier Romanian. Some examples taken from the History of Moldovan Grammar, published by prof. V. Marin (Chisinau, 1970), quoting sources of XVII-XIX centuries [5] could prove the fact that in reality we have various categorial forms of mood in the continuous aspect. Here are some examples in the indicative continuous forms: **Era ca oile rătăcindu; Au fost avându prieteșug mare cu Pătru Vodă** [5, p.36,123]; **Ștefan Vodă... Tocmai când părerea de rău îl ajunsese... erau trecând printr-o pădure mare și deasă.**; **Au fost dormind la bisearica lui svetin Benedict** [5, p.83]; **Și era mergându și apropiindu-mă către Damascu, întru ameadză...** [5, p.90]; **...martorului tău însumi era stându...**[1, p.91]. Analyzing these examples we have no hesitation in stating the fact that the constructions of the auxiliary verb **a fi + gerunziul** express the grammatical continuous aspect meaning like in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. The durative action here produces a stronger metasemiotic effect on the reader or listener than the imperfect. In Modern Romanian extended or periphrastic forms are used only in the oblique moods in colloquial speech: – *Unde-i Petru? – Va (o) fi lucrând în livadă. – Să fie el lucrând în livadă? De ar fi el*

*lucrând în livadă!* [6, p.112]. Metasemiotic transposition is found in both English and Romanian. Thus, the category of aspect can be metasemiotically used not in its usual way, but in a way that will provide additional overtones: expressive, evaluative, emotional, modal, etc. For example: "He is leaving tomorrow". "Are you coming on Sunday?" In these two forms the aspectual and tense categorial meanings are used to express a stylistic connotation, the future action being expressed purely lexically (tomorrow, on Sunday). In Romance languages aspectual meanings are most often expressed by the perfective and imperfective opposition. But for metasemiotic purposes, for categorial intensification, most often they use durative forms. The continuous forms and various constructions in Romanian, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese are subservient to the lexical and lexical-grammatical aspectual means and are usually used in emotional speech for expressivity and emphasis in an action developing in time, intensified by the interaction with lexical and prosodic means. Thus, in the **Spanish** expressive discourse the continuous forms are often preferred: *Estoy hablando*. *Juan está comiendo*. *María está escribiendo una carta*. *Los pasajeros estarán llegando a su destino*. *Ayer estuve repasando la gramática*. *Las gotas de agua estaban cayendo pausadamente*. *Hemos estado nadando tres horas*. *Mañana estaré trabajando todo el día en la biblioteca* [2]. Identical constructions exist in **Italian**: *Marcovaldo stava portando a spasso la famiglia*. *Pietro sta leggendo un libro* [4]. The continuous forms are usually accompanied by lexical supporters or intensifiers like "todo el día the whole day through, toată ziua" and interacting with the lexical durative meanings of the verbs. In Romanian these examples are usually rendered by means of imperfect, constructions with gerunziu or contextual and lexical durative means. The **Portuguese** construction **estar + gerundio** is also the equivalent of the English continuous form: *Eu estou estudando na Universidade*. *Ele estava lendo quando ela me chamou*. *Amanha estaremos preparando toda a documentacao* [3]. In Spanish, Italian and Portuguese there exist several constructions with gerundio expressing aspectual duration. Thus, the Portuguese construction **ficar + gerundio** expresses a progressive action and is translated into English by means of continuous aspect forms: *Fico olhando para o retrato*. The construction **andar a + infinitive**: *A Teresa anda falando da mudança de casa* [3]. What is important to mention is the fact that in Portugal the construction **estar + gerundio** can be substituted by the construction **estar a + infinitive** preserving the durative meaning: *O Pedro esta a ler o novo livro*. The same happens with the construction **ficar + gerundio**, where gerundio is substituted by the infinitive: *Fico a estudar 3 horas*. The construction **continuar (seguir, prosseguir) + gerundio** express a continuous action as well: *Ele continua lendo o jornal*. The construction **continuar a + infinitive** practically expresses the same type of continuous action: *Ele continua a ler o jornal*. [3] Exactly the same we have in English: *He continues reading the journal* can be easily changed into *He continues to read*. The construction with the non-continuous infinitive has a weaker aspectual grammatical meaning, the lexical durative meaning of "continue" taking over the categorial function.

The imperfect forms may be also used stylistically in case suprasyntactic metasemiotic means are used. The continuous/non-continuous binary opposition in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian (and partially in Romanian) are in a process of transposition from a pure grammatical aspectual category into a stylistic one. In English this grammatical opposition is well represented in all the functional styles of the language and is regularly used for stylistic purposes in emotionally coloured expressive and emphatic speech.

The categorial forms of present tense continuous or non-continuous aspect could also serve as an example of metasemiotic transposition. In some text books we usually find an explanation that the present tense can be used to express past and future actions. What we really have is a metasemiotic use of present tense forms to describe a past or future action, for certain emotional-expressive or evaluative purposes, to express vivacity and dynamism of an action, as if deployed in the speaker's mind or in front of his eyes. In this case the categorial forms of past and future are expressed purely lexically or contextually. Thus, for example: *Yesterday I was reading in the lounge*. *Suddenly Ann comes in, sits on the sofa and starts to cry*. *Next week I am leaving (leave) for Paris*. The verbs expressing mental perception and feeling can be metasemiotically used in the continuous aspect; the same is true in the case of the usage of progressive forms with adverbs like *always, often, seldom, generally, constantly, permanently, etc.* Another case of metasemiotic transposition can serve the use of conditional mood forms to express: additionally to its main meaning of an unreal action the fulfillment of which depends on an unreal condition, this categorial is regularly used to express an action, which is not contrary to reality and expresses politeness, interest, etc. For example: *I should eat an apple if I had any*. *Aș mânca un măr, dacă aș avea.* (unreal condition); *Look! You have apples! I should like to eat one! Privește! Aveți mere! Eu aș mânca unul!* (indirect polite request); *Could I help You? Could you help me? Aș putea să vă ajut? (polite offer of help) Ați putea să mă ajutați? (polite request).*

One more interesting phenomenon is the gradual transition of some grammatical categories into lexical-grammatical or purely lexical ones. The category of gender in English and the category of anteriority (taxis) in Russian can serve as an example of a complete transition. Taxis in English, Romanian and other European languages are in the process of a similar transition. Perfect forms in modern English and Romanian are variously interpreted, as expressing anteriority, a complete action, a result, as a tense form, time relation. But lately more and more linguists consider anteriority to be the main categorial meaning of finite and non-finite perfect forms (E. Benveniste, A. Smirnitsky, R. Allen, H. Palmer, etc.). Thus, according to Smirnitsky, "perfectivity" is the realization of a certain process before a certain moment or action in the movement of time, while the meaning of the past is merely the realization of the process before the moment of speaking [6, p.145-161]. This difference is most clearly observed when we compare the perfect future with the usual past indefinite, as in the examples: *He will have finished reading the book by 10 o'clock. El va fi terminat (va termina) de citit cartea pe la ora zece* and *He finished to read the book. El a terminat de citit cartea*. The meaning of past is clearly expressed in both cases, but in the former the past is referred to a certain moment, which is conceived with respect to future, while with past indefinite it is simply the relationship between the action and the moment of speaking. Thus, anteriority or perfectivity is the meaning of an action, which precedes another action or moment on the time axis. The category of anteriority historically appeared in the result of transposition, when it was necessary to intensify the existing lexical and contextual means by grammatical ones. Now we have a reverse process but on a different level. At the moment the means of expressing future anteriority in both languages slightly differ. English has preserved the Latin system of expressing future actions as seen from a moment in the past. In Romanian it is very rarely used. Now let's take some examples: 1. Future from the present moment: *I shall have read the text by six o'clock (by the time you come home. Eu voi fi citit textul către ora șase (până când te vei întoarce acasă)*. In both languages future anteriority is expressed here both grammatically and lexically. The usual tendency in a language is to **simplify redundant forms**. Thus, the examples, given above, are naturally simplified in both languages, and anteriority can be expressed only lexically or contextually: *I shall (will) finish reading the text by six o'clock (by the time you come home). Eu voi termina de citit textul către ora șase (până când te vei întoarce acasă)*. Present perfect is used to express future anteriority in clauses of time and condition (substituting future perfect), while perfectul compus in Romanian can be used to express future anteriority only in case of stylistic (metasemiotic) transposition. Past perfect is used in clauses of time and condition to express future anteriority from a moment in the past. In past perfect the category of taxis is not as clearly manifested as in future perfect. But here, too, although past indefinite (or simple past) and past perfect are both past tense forms, the difference between them is very clearly expressed. The past tense of the perfect form, although refers to the past, differs clearly enough from past indefinite in having a second and different meaning of past anteriority. In the American spoken English there is a tendency of rapprochement of present perfect in the second meaning and past indefinite and the former is often substituted by the latter: ***Did you ever go to Paris? Did he arrive yet? He never read this book.*** In the British Standard English present perfect continues to differ regularly from past indefinite in all the meanings. We would like to draw your attention to the fact that it is not enough to state the existence of the category of anteriority or any other categorial system in English and Romanian. Language is permanently changing and all abstract linguistic systems should be checked in practice (texts, speech), otherwise we could find ourselves "abusing grammar". Confrontation of metalinguistic systems and grammatical forms disclosed phenomena of polysemy, homonymy and synonymy. Categorial transposition (stylistic and modal, etc.) is found in both languages. There is a tendency of regulation and simplification of categorial and redundant grammatical forms. Thus, grammatical anteriority can be regarded as a pedanticism, for in situations of ordinary everyday speech it is very easy to do without it, and express the same categorial meaning lexically or contextually. There is a clear-cut tendency of transition of some grammatical categories to lexico-grammatical or lexical categorial means of expression.

#### References:

1. Великопольская Н., Родригес Данилевская Е. Испанский язык. - Москва, 1963.
2. Виноградов В.С. Курс практической грамматики испанского языка. - Москва, 1990.
3. Жебит А., Кузнецова Г. Португальский язык. - Москва: Высшая школа, 1984.
4. Карулин Ю., Черданцева Т. Курс итальянского языка. - Москва, 1981.
5. Marin V.Z. Gramatica istorică a limbii moldovenești. - Chișinău: Lumina. - 1970.
6. Melenciuc D. Comparativistics. CE USM. - Chișinău, 2003.
7. Родригес Данилевская Е., Патрушев А., Степунина И. Испанский язык. - Москва, 1988.

Prezentat la 07.04.2008