

THE COMPARATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES

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În prezenta lucrare sunt analizate din punctul de vedere al metodei comparative de predare a limbilor străine, diferite fenomene lingvistice ca: polisemia, omonimia, antonimia, redundanța, transpoziția formelor gramaticale și categoriale ale verbelor în limbile engleză și română. Sunt folosite exemple și din alte limbi înrudite. Categoriile gramaticale, lexical-gramaticale și lexicale sunt în permanentă evoluție. Cercetările la nivelurile gnostic și cel ontic contribuie la înregistrarea și analiza proceselor latente din limbă. Se observă o tendință de simplificare a unor forme categoriale și gramaticale în limbile engleză și română. Categorisirea unor forme gramaticale din cadrul categoriilor de mod, anterioritate și aspect necesită a fi revăzute, pentru a se evita anumite dificultăți în procesul de predare/învățare.

In the comparative process of teaching/learning grammatical categories we should give the metalanguage used by linguists in the confronted languages. This would make it easier for students and teachers to better understand the material on the subject given by different schools and scholars. One of the main stumbling blocks in grammatical categorization is the lack of a firmly established relationship between the actual phenomena and their names. It is a question of discovering whether there is any real difference in the various approaches and theories, or whether it is purely a metalinguistic difference. Often the researcher fails to keep clearly apart the object of analysis and the terminology. We find different terms, compare them and often find a discrepancy not only in the units used to denote particular categories, but also in the naming or description of the most general concepts themselves. In the comparative process of teaching/learning grammatical categories we should give the terms used by linguists to make it easier for students and teachers to better understand the material on the subject. We compare terms and often find a discrepancy in the units used to denote particular categories and also in the naming or description of the concepts. The terms *continuous, durative, progressive, imperfective, imperfect, dynamic, extended aspect*, etc. are regarded as synonyms. A clear distinction should be made between grammatical and categorial forms as distinct form categories. Analyzing terms we must clarify whether they denote the same object, or they are used to indicate that a grammatical form may express several categorial forms. The terms are reprehensible when they to denote grammatical meanings, such as the notional category of *perfective, indefinite, generic, general*, etc. aspect. At first sight there is no harm in replacing the term *continuous/non continuous aspect* in English by *perfective vs. imperfective*. But *perfective* is not so easy to distinguish from the lexeme *perfect*. The term *perfective* is used to indicate a categorial form of aspect, while *perfect* is retained to denote the categorial form of anteriority, and then the system is less convincing than the opposition of *continuous/non-continuous*. If we take the opposition of *perfect aspect vs. progressive aspect* then as soon as we come to examples like *He had been reading his book for two hours before I came back*, we should explain that we cannot have two aspectual categorial forms expressed simultaneously by the same form - *had been reading* - to express a finished and an unfinished action simultaneously! Perfect here expresses grammatical anteriority supported and intensified by the lexical anteriority marker *before*. Anteriority is the main meaning of all the perfect forms. A finished action can be expressed both by perfect and non-perfect forms: *I have written a letter and I wrote a letter to him*. In both actions are finished. Perfect forms in the oblique mood forms do not always express anteriority: *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)*. Here we have an action in the past not connected with the present moment. The past perfect form in the indicative mood is polysemantic: it expresses an anterior action to a moment or action on the axis of time, or an anterior action in the future from a moment in the past in clauses of time and condition. The traditional system of 6 categorial forms in English is: indicative, imperative, conditional, subjunctive I, subjunctive II and suppositional to compare with an identical number of moods in Romanian: indicativul, imperativul, condiționalul, optativul, conjunctivul, prezumptivul. A closer inspection of the mood systems displays considerable discrepancies. In Romanian condiționalul and optativul are expressed by

homonymous forms and are given as one categorial unit: condițional-optativul. Their meanings can be expressed in Romanian by several grammatical forms, which are polyfunctional and formally belong to different moods.

Teaching grammatical categories in English and Romanian on the emic and etic levels, we have to take into consideration that morphological oppositions are part of universal or conceptual categories. Thus, the category of anteriority is expressed in English and Romanian by contextual, lexical and grammatical means. The grammatical means dominate in both languages, while in Russian, the lexical element is prevail. Grammatical and categorial forms can be polysemantic, synonymous, homonymous and antonymous [6,85-91]. Thus, conjunctivul can be used to express lexical and grammatical supposition, necessity, order, command, insistence: *He might have been there. - El ar fi putut să fie acolo. I insist (order) that he should be present. - Eu insist (ordon) ca el să fie prezent.* Condiționalul and optativul in Romanian are expressed 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* (imperfectul 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 (veneam) să te ajut ieri* (conjunctivul in the secondary clause). In the given example "had had time" expresses a simple past action not anterior to another actio and it is homonymous to "had had time" used to expresses anteriority to real and unreal actions in the future and past [6, p.92-100]. Past conditional (perfect form) in English 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. 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.* There are different interpretations to mood or modality, often attention is paid either to the form or to content without taking into consideration the phenomena of polysemy, homonymy, synonymy; grammatical, lexical-grammatical, lexical means of expressing the corresponding categorial forms of mood. More complicated systems usually include grammatical, lexical and lexical-grammatical modality. Thus, Barbara Strang's 16 mood system includes: the moods of determination (will), resolution (shall), permissive (may), concessive (might), potential (can), compulsive (must), conditional (would), determinative-conditional (could), etc. the non-finite forms of the verb: the infinitive, the participle, the gerund are declared as moods in some manuals. More "compact" systems of two or three categorial forms (indicative, imperative, subjunctive) usually combine under one term several categorial and grammatical meanings. The term *subjunctive* in some grammar books embrace the forms of subjunctive I (*Long live the queen!*), subjunctive II (*If I were you; If I had had time yesterday I would have come*), suppositional (*I insist that he should be present at the conference*), which express completely different categorial meanings. In the most Romanian grammar books we find a system of five categorial forms of mood: indicative, potential or prezumtiv, imperative, conjunctive, condițional-optative. In some manuals the infinitive, the gerunziul, the participle and supinul are added. Difficulties appear when we analyze the forms of potential, conjunctive and condițional-optative. Here grammatical polysemy grows into homonymy. The forms of present potential (*voi fi cântând, să fi cântând, ar fi cântând, aș fi cântând etc.* used in colloquial style.) can express aspectual modal meanings of subjunctive II, conditional, indicative, etc.: 1) *Se spune, că el ar fi având multe lucruri interesante; Dacă el ar fi având această carte, l-aș ruga să mi-o împrumute.* The forms of *prezumtivul* or *potențialul prezent* in Romanian have much in common with those available in the indicative mood in the earlier Romanian and identical with the continuous aspectual forms used in English, Spanish, Portuguese and Italian, Let's give some examples from the History of Moldovan Grammar, by prof. V.Marin (Chisinau, 1970), quoting sources of XVII-XIX centuries [5] and proving the fact that we deal with various categorial forms of mood in the continuous aspect. For example: ***Era ca oile rătăcindu. Au fost avându prieteșug mare cu Pătru Vodă*** [5, p.36,123]. ***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] The durative action here produces a stronger metasemiotic effect on the reader or listener than the imperfect forms. In the Romance languages aspectual meanings are most often expressed lexically and by the perfective and imperfective opposition. Various durative constructions in Romanian, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese are subservient to the lexical and lexical-grammatical aspectual means and are used in emotional speech for expressivity and emphasis in actions developing in time, intensified by the interaction with lexical and suprasyntactic prosodic

means. Thus, in the Spanish expressive discourse the continuous forms are often preferred: *Estoy hablando* (I am talking). *Estoy mirando* (I am looking at) estas revistas. *Juan está comiendo* (Juan is eating). *María está escribiendo una carta* (Mary is writing a letter). *Los pasajeros estarán llegando* (are arriving) a su destino. *Ayer estuve repasando* (I was revising) la gramática. *Hemos estado nadando* (We have been swimming for three hours; *Înotăm de 3 ore*) tres horas. *Mañana estará trabajando* (I will be working) todo el día en la biblioteca [2, p.222-224]. Italian examples: *Marcovaldo stava portando a spasso la famiglia* (At that time Marcovaldo was getting out for a walk with his family). *Pietro sta leggendo un libro* (Peter is reading a book) [4, p.167]. The continuous forms are usually accompanied by lexical durative intensifiers like “*todo el día the whole day through*” interacting with the lexical continuous meanings of the verbs. In Romanian these examples are expressed by imperfect, constructions with gerunziu or contextual and lexical durative means. The Portuguese construction *estar+gerundio* also expresses a continuous action: *Eu estou estudando na Universidade*. (I am studying at the University); *Ele estava lendo quando ela me chamou*. (He was reading when she called me); *Amanha estaremos preparando toda a documentação*. (Tomorrow we shall be preparing the documentation) [3, p.324]. In Spanish, Italian and Portuguese there are other constructions with *gerundio* expressing aspectual duration. Lexical and grammatical duration in French and German is expressed by imperfect forms, constructions with present participle, gérondif and lexical means: *He represented for her the reality of things. His conscious was echoing Fleur’s comment on Anna Bergfeld’s letter. Sa conscience répétait l’écho des commentaires de Fleur à la lettre de Annie Bergfeld. Conștiința îi repeta ecoul comentariilor lui Fleur la scrisoarea Anei Bergfeld* [6, p.134]. The French *imparfait* is rendered regularly into English by continuous forms and by past indefinite with lexical duration, though the former are more expressive than the latter. In German, the absence of the continuous forms is compensated by Imperfect and constructions with Partizip Präsens, which normally express a durative aspectual meaning. *Er kam lachend die Treppe herunter. He came laughing down the staircase. El venea râzând înjos pe scară. Er erreichte schwimmend das andere Ufer. He reached the other bank swimming. A ajuns inotând la celălalt mal* [8, p.76].

The category of aspect in English is considered to be a purely grammatical one, the marked member of the opposition being expressed by continuous forms. A closer inspection shows, that the grammatical marked form, in many cases, is intensified by lexical aspectual means, or only the lexical means are used. Here are some examples where both lexical and grammatical aspectual means are used for expressivity or intensification of aspectual meaning. *You are seeing this place for the last time. I am hearing it better now*. The same event can be described by using either continuous or non-continuous forms. It much depends on the speaker’s intention, whether he wants to describe the action in development, extended or just to express an action as very short or habitual, without paying attention to the aspectual marked categorial meaning. The verbs possessing a durative lexical meaning can express continuous aspect both lexically and lexico-grammatically, the latter being intensified aspectually: *He looked out of the window. A man stood at the door / I looked out of the window. A man was standing at the door* are confronted with imperfect forms both in Russian and Romanian: *Он сидел за столом; El ședea la masă; Человек стоял у двери; Un bărbat stătea la ușă (Am văzut un bărbat stând la ușă)*. In the case of *He sat at the table* and *A man stood at the door* the lexical aspectual meaning of “*sat*” and “*stood*” is durative, and it is intensified by superimposing a grammatical aspectual continuous meaning on the lexical one in *was sitting* and *was standing*. The Romanian and Russian equivalents belong to the imperfective aspect and express unfinished and extended actions. The grammatical duration here is supplemented by the lexical one. Even terminative or point-action verbs can be used in the continuous form if the action is repeated or the speaker wants to show the action in development, or to stress the fact that the action lasted during a certain period of time. For example: *The boy jumped over the fence / The boy was jumping round the tree*. In Romanian we have the same situation: *Băiatul a sărit peste gard / Băiatul sărea în jurul copacului*. There are various points of view that the category of aspect in English is formed by means of the opposition of perfect and continuous forms, which is similar to the perfective and imperfective aspect in the Slavic languages. In this case the sentence *I had been working at my article for three hours before he came back* would express both forms: perfect and continuous (had been working). According to the rules of categorization a grammatical form of the verb can not express both forms of the same categorial opposition simultaneously. This confusion may be connected with the fact that the term “perfect” or “perfective” is practically ambivalent and may be used to express either a finished action or anteriority. For example: *I wrote a*

letter yesterday and *I had written a letter yesterday by five o'clock*. In both sentences the actions are perfect(ive) in the sense that they are finished, but *had written* expresses a different perfect meaning, that of anteriority. There are points of view that putandi and sentiendi verbs should not be used in the continuous aspect. A closer inspection of this phenomenon shows that practically all the verbs in English, including the putandi and sentiendi ones can be used in the continuous aspect. Verbs like “believe, see”, etc. express aspect lexically and they are rarely used in the grammatical continuous form, when there is a necessity to intensify the aspectual meaning, to make it more emphatic, more expressive: *But I am seeing you, you are there behind the tree! Am I really hearing what you are saying? He was seeing them robbed. He was seeing them famish hour by hour. He was seeing them die. I am seeing a brown colour. You are seeing this place for the last time. I am hearing it better now. Am I really hearing a voice at last!* The same could be said about the habitual and repeated actions, usually accompanied by words possessing a certain durative lexical and aspectual meaning: *always, often, constantly, permanently, occasionally, seldom, usually, etc.* It has been observed that the English regularly use the grammatical continuous aspect in their speech, to make it more expressive: *He is always coming in time. He is always coming late!* The choice of the continuous aspect depends only on the action being viewed as a process. This is the universal grammatical meaning of the continuous aspect and this is the only criterion that matters when this or that aspectual form is being chosen. In case of emphasis, when there is a necessity to increase the categorial aspectual meaning English people can ignore the rule: It is important to mention that there is a process of metasemiotic transposition of continuous (durative, imperfect) aspect forms. The emphatic use of *seeing* and *always* in the examples above is accompanied by emphatic prosodic means: wide range, high fall, slow tempo, etc. in order to intensify the stylistic connotation.

The translation of the English continuous passive forms into Romanian and Russian. The English passive continuous forms are regularly translated by means of verbs with the particle “se” and flexion “-ся” in Russian to express durative meanings instead of reflexivity. They are used grammatically to express the meaning of a durative action in the passive voice: *The house is being built now, The house was being built when we arrived there, The house will be built this time next year.* – *Casa se construiește acum (Casa este construită acum). Casa se construia (era construită) când am sosit acolo. Casa se va construi (va fi construită) pe timpul acesta anul viitor.* – *Дом строится сейчас. Дом строился, когда мы приезжали туда. Дом будет строиться в это время в следующем году.* The reflexive particle and flexion here get completely homonymous meanings of passive voice durative actions. [6, p.110-122]

Analyzing all the verbal categories we have observed a phenomenon of transition from grammatical to lexical-grammatical and lexical means of expressing this or that categorial meaning. A good example could serve the category of taxis (anteriority), which undergoes a process of lexicalization in many languages [6, p.103-109]. The category of gender in English and the category of anteriority (taxis) in Russian can serve as an example of a complete transition. Anteriority in English, Romanian and other European languages are in the process of a similar transition [6, p.145-161]. 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. 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.* In both languages future anteriority is expressed here both grammatically (rarely in Romanian) and lexically. The usual tendency in languages is to simplify redundant forms. 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.* 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 transposition: *Cum am ajuns acasă, îți telefonez!* In the American spoken English there is a tendency of rapprochement of present perfect 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 attested in the confronted languages. There is a tendency of regulation and simplification of categorial and redundant grammatical forms. Grammatical anteriority can be regarded as a pedantry, for in situations of ordinary everyday speech it is very easy to do without it, and express the same categorial meaning lexically or contextually.

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