A COMPARATIVE VIEW – THEORY OF STATEMENT IN TWO ROMANCE LANGUAGES: ROMANIAN AND FRENCH

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper is intended as an overview of the Theory of Statement in two Romance languages: Romanian and French. In this paper we will refer to the evolution of the Theory of Statement. In this respect, we will present the views of renowned authors and analyse the defining features of statement in the Romanian and French, in order to shape an overall picture of the topic approached herein. We consider it important that, in the current linguistics, the basic unit subject to analysis is the statement, because this is an illustration of how modernisation of traditional grammar is achieved by borrowing technical terms that are designed to complement the shortcomings of previous terminology. Statement will be analysed both as a communicative unit and as a syntactic unit, concluding that statement may be accepted as syntactic unit in the communicative plane, although, since it is neither defined nor delimited in the relational plane, it cannot be considered a relational unit. As a syntactic unit, statement implies division, it has the status of an analysable whole, and we can talk about the internal organisation of a statement if it is created by articulating at least two components.

KEYWORDS: Statement, theory, communicative unit, syntactic unit, relational unity, Romanian Grammar, French Grammar.

INTRODUCTION

The interest that I have been having for a few years in studying statement in Romanian and other Romance languages has materialised in a bachelor’s thesis and a master’s dissertation, papers in which I tried to give a documented and substantiated version of the following questions: Is statement in Romance languages only a communicative unit or also a syntactic unit?, and As communicative and/or syntactic unit, is this a relational unity? In this paper, I want to deal primarily with these questions targeting only two of the Romance languages: Romanian and French.

RELATED WORK

In Romanian, the meaning given to the term syntax and the research object of this discipline has varied throughout the history of grammar. In Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar) of 1966, based on the idea that “morphology serves syntax, namely that syntax uses the changes in the form of the words to combine them, to express the
relationships between the words of a clause”[1], syntax is defined as “the part of grammar that includes rules on combining words into clauses and sentences” [2]. Traditional grammar accepts the following syntactic units: part of a sentence, combination of words (phrase, syntagm), clause and sentence. Of these, the clause is considered the fundamental unit. Therefore, in this sense, the basic unit of syntax is the clause, which is considered the smallest unit of syntax that stand alone and whose essence is predication, and the sentence is the syntactic unit superior to the clause, made up of multiple clauses.

Another example is offered by Iorgu Iordan in his book Limba română contemporană (Contemporary Romanian Language), where syntax is defined as “the set of rules regarding the combination of words into clauses” [3].

In her book Gramatica pentru toți (Grammar for All), Mioara Avram defines syntax as “the part of the grammatical structure (and of grammar as the study thereof) which includes rules on combination of words into a clause and of clauses into sentences”[4]. The result of this combination of words is communication and the study of syntax reflects the mechanism in which the language functions, the way in which an unlimited number of clauses and sentences is created with a limited number of words.

In the same book, the chapter Unitățile sintaxei (Units of Syntax) makes only one reference to the concept of statement: “The definition of syntax mentions two of its units – hierarchically differentiated – through which communication is achieved or, to be more precise, which can constitute standalone communications, expressing logical judgments or emotional or volitional ideas: the clause, as a lower unit, and the sentence, as a higher unit (resulting from a combination of at least two clauses). Sometimes the term statement is used as a superordinate and indistinct term for (independent) clause and sentence.”[5] The conclusion is the same, namely that the clause is the fundamental unit of syntax, the smallest unit that can stand alone, which can constitute by itself a communication, and the sentence is the syntactic unit superior to the clause from the viewpoint of organisation, the sentence being more complex than the clause due to the fact that it is a combination of two or more clauses. Phrases and parts of a sentence are classified as inferior to the clause, since they lack predication. They cannot stand alone and cannot constitute communication units unless they are included in a clause/sentence.

In his book Probleme de sintaxă a limbii române actuale (Syntax Issues of the Current Romanian Language) [6], Ion Diaconescu defines syntax as the part of grammar that deals with the study of syntactic units - part of a sentence, phrase, clause, sentence - viewed from two perspectives: relational and functional. The relational perspective highlights expression elements, and the functional perspective highlights content elements. The study of relations will reveal the typology of syntactic units, the rules and means of construction, whereas the study of functions will help determine and define units of content. In other works, the syntax area was extended, including in its object also the study of meanings implied by morphological changes, the emphasis on the values of grammatical
categories that result from their participation in certain types of constructions, combinations of words. An example can be found in Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar)[7] where syntax includes, along with clause syntax and sentence syntax, a chapter called “Syntax of Parts of Speech”, which discusses the value and the use of forms of number, case, person, etc.

However, all these variations do not exceed certain limits. At the heart of syntactic research remains the organisation of communication and certain combinations of words. Any type of syntax[8] - traditional or classical, analytical or structuralist, synthetic or generative-transformational - “deals with the organisation of communication units, combinations of words, regardless of the conception of language and the research methods used by specialists”[9].

In current linguistics, the basic unit subject to analysis is the statement. This represents an illustration of how the modernisation of traditional grammar is achieved by borrowing technical terms that are designed to complement the previous terminological shortcomings. Given that, analytically, the starting point of syntactic research is the text of various sizes, the text which is a unique linguistic communication, it can be concluded that the main objective of syntactic research is to discover the possible ways in which statements are organised in a language, and to describe the structure of such statements. The branch of grammar called syntax deals with statement [10]. Syntactic analysis successively divides the statement into simpler parts until it reaches the smallest syntactic units which are words. The original whole is the statement, the minimal fragment is the word, and the analysis examines the relations between the parts that form a whole [11]. The statement covers the two communication units mentioned above – clause and sentence – but it does not entirely identify itself with any of them. A statement may be a clause or a sentence, but there are statements whose structure consists of one word, and all fall into the category of maximal language units. Therefore, the central issue of syntax is the statement - not the statement as communication unit, but the statement as syntagmatic structure analysable in components, and the determination of minimal functional units which are parts of the statement [12].

Romanian syntax has been interpreted by many theorists and in previous editions of the Romanian Grammar in terms of two units: clause and sentence; the statement was not considered to be the fundamental unit of syntax.

In his book Predicatul în limba română. O reconsiderare a predicatului nominal (Predicate in Romanian. A Reconsideration of the Nominal Predicate), G.G. Neamțu presents four factors that justify the lack of a proper definition for the concept of clause that includes all sequences characterised by predication: “a) placement of the clause/sentence alternatively at the level of speech (parole) and at the level of language (langue); b) reference/non-reference to a mandatory sentence pattern - verbal (bi-member); c) one predicate/multiple predicates in a sentence; d) acceptance/non acceptance in Romanian of the compound
predicate category (trebuie să meargă - must go, poate să citească - can read, etc.), depending on which the number of clauses varies in a given situation”[13].

The conclusions of the first factor’s analysis reveal the clause as a subtype of statement, and the statement as the main factor. “If the clause is a unit of speech, then it claims a certain communicative autonomy, limitation by pauses and a certain intonation contour. But these traits coincide in principle with those of the statement, thus the clause becomes a subtype of statement. Conversely, if the clause is located at the level of language, of system, the communicative autonomy issue no longer arises. In this respect, D. D. Draşoveanu believes that the clause does not constitute a unit at the level of language, that it is merely one of the customisations of the “interlexematic binary relationship”, the one in which the means of achieving the relationship between relationship partners is the “verbal agreement morpheme”, the desinence of number and person of the predicate verb” [14].

A definition of the statement, and a clear distinction between the statement and the clause is found in Iorgu Iordan and Vladimir Robu’s book Limba română contemporană (Contemporary Romanian Language): “A statement is a syntagmatic structure established as a standalone communication unit, marked as such in terms of content and form, in the segmental and suprasegmental side”. It is considered that, within these limits, the term statement covers the communication units accepted by traditional syntax, namely the clause and sentence; and the clause as component of a sentence is not a statement, but merely a component of a statement [15]. The statement is or can be a sentence, regardless of the number of clauses that make up the sentence and regardless of the relational organisation of the sentence. Every sentence is a statement understood as a concluded communicative act, but not every statement is a sentence. Mono-member non-analysable clauses (noun clauses: Sunday!; adverbial clauses: Yes!, No!; interjectional clauses: Alas!), often called non canonical, also fall into the category of statements.

In her book Sintaxa limbii române. Probleme şi interpretări (Romanian Syntax. Problems and Interpretations), Valeria Guţu Romalo formulates a definition of the statement which refers to oral communication, considered to be the main and primary form of linguistic activity, while written communication is treated as a secondary phenomenon. Thus, “statement is a sound sequence (sound flow), limited by pauses and characterised by intonation contour, and which bears certain semantic information; therefore, it represents a communication” [16].

I pointed out that statement was a sound sequence limited by pauses. An explanation is needed with regard to the pauses mentioned above. Pauses are of two types: pause on the left side of a statement – this is the initial or absolute pause which, in the absence of a higher linguistic context, is marked by the initial capital letter component of the statement; pause on the right side of a statement – marked by a main punctuation mark. The intonation contour and the pauses that delimit it give the statement autonomy, but this autonomy of content is not mandatory. There are situations where information cannot be
understood without a previous context. The presence of components such as the pronouns he, this, that or the adverbs there, then, here make the understanding of a statement depend on the context in which it appears. In most cases, a prior statement containing the information needed to understand the new statement. A statement like: Then he resumed his explanation. Becomes clearer in the context: The teacher explained the lesson, but the students did not understand. Then he resumed his explanation [17].

The new edition of Gramatica Academiei (Academy Grammar) abandons the distinction between clause syntax and sentence syntax and recognises the statement as a central concept, as indicated by the title of the second volume: The Statement. The structure of the statement is interpreted in close connection with another key concept, i.e. syntactic function. This gives a new interpretation to the Romanian syntax. Given that the specific feature of the syntactic level is based on the requirements of the communication process, the statement becomes the fundamental unit, whereas the clause becomes minimal unit. Dumitru Irimia considers that: “Due to a syntactic structure - morphological structure consubstantiality relation, the statement updates the semantics of lexical terms – basis in the linguistic communication process. The relation between the semantics of the statement and the expression generates the central function of the linguistic knowledge and communication act: predication” [18]. The author regards statement - the result of enunciation - as a finite structure, relatively autonomous, whose syntactic identity is defined by a triple unit that is based on the cohesion and coherence. Thus there is a unit of meaning - its semantic components lie in simultaneity in the linguistic knowledge and communication; a structural unit - the terms of which it consists develop different syntactic relationships among them - it is ensured by the incorporation of the language system’s lexical level into the syntactic level through syntactic relations; and a prosodic unit - it is delimited by pauses and has only one intonation [19].

In Gramatica limbii române (Romanian Grammar) of 2005, the statement is presented and defined as a communicative unit and as a syntactic unit. The first approach is based on the idea that statement is a linguistic unit involved in the communication process - along with the syntactic group which is part of that statement and the word which can be part of its statement, and in some cases even statement – that this is the basic unit of communication and that it is represented by a sound sequence associated with a significance. Referentiality is what characterises and conditions statement as communicative unit and involves a process of clarification, restriction of meanings that constitute the semantic content of language units. As a linguistic reality, statement is characterised by the association of the sound sequence represented by the information making up the subject of the communication act to a certain intonation contour. Statement does not belong to the linguistic system, it is a particular embodiment of the communication of information. As far as the statement form is concerned, it depends on the conveyed information and on the communication situation. The making of any statement involves selecting means adequate to the referential topic of communication and to the situational context [20].
The second approach - statement as syntactic unit - emphasises the dependency of statement on the possibilities offered by the linguistic system of a language, on language units in terms of the means of achievement. Thus, any statement is represented by language units used separately or associated in combinations that vary in terms of scope and organisation complexity [21].

According to the linguistic embodiment criterion, statements are grouped in unstructured statements – represented by sound sequences that identify with the lexical unit and which are thus non-analysable and normally communicate information on the speaker’s reaction to the extralinguistic fact –, and in syntactically structured statements - which vary in scope and are prototypically organised around a personal verbal form which, through specific grammatical information, referentially anchors the linguistic structure which represents the statement and determines the overall configuration of the communication [22].

“The statement, as communication unit, is dependent on the reference whose expression it represents and on the combinatorial linguistic possibilities offered by the system, any statement being the result of updated combinatorial virtualities of the given language’s system”[23].

It is believed that the communicative plane interferes with the syntactic one in the organisation of every statement, and that syntactic relationships are those that have a defining role in the grammatical ordering of the analysable statement’s components. In Gramatica de bază a limbii române (Basic Romanian Grammar) of 2010, the statement theory is presented in two chapters entitled: “Types of Statement” and “Informational Structure of Statement”. The statement is defined as “a verbal communication unit which, prototypically, is grammatically structured around a predicate of enunciation. The sequence of words that make up the statement refers to a real or possible state of affairs (it has referentiality), is autonomous and performs an act of language (it has a pragmatic tone). The statement is characterised by a specific intonation contour (depending on its types). There are also unstructured statements, consisting of elements equivalent to a predicate of enunciation (Fire!, Oh!, Yes! etc.)” [24].

The statement is classified into two typologies: syntactic typology and syntactic-pragmatic typology. The category of syntactic statements includes simple statements - structured statement and unstructured statement - and complex statements - those made through coordination, subordination and those containing clauses with non-finite verb [25].

Depending on the pragmatic purpose of communication, statements are organised into a few main patterns - assertive, interrogative, imperative and exclamatory [26].

The chapter “Informational Structure of Statement” of Gramatica de bază a limbii române (Basic Romanian Grammar) (2010) assumes that the information contained in a statement
is organised from several standpoints, depending on what is new or already known, on what is considered more important or less important, on what contradicts certain expectations of the interlocutor. These hierarchies of content are reflected in the syntactic and prosodic structure of the statement by syntactic reorganisation, word order, the presence of specific markers, intonation (phrastic character). Theories consider a statement’s theme – the already given element, which is the starting point of a statement – and rhemé – the new information, the thematisation (topicalisation) of a statement – placing a non-characteristic component at the beginning of a statement, the rhematisation of a sequence in a statement, the focus – element emphasised by contrast and by relating to the receiver’s expectations, the focalisation – highlighting rhematic information and placing it in the focus position – and the focalisers – those who emphasise a rhematic constituent and have semantic-pragmatic values [27].

In conclusion, based on the aforementioned definition of statement, definition according to which “the statement is a sound sequence (a sound flow), limited by pauses and characterised by intonation contour, and which bears certain semantic information; therefore, it represents a communication”.[28], we can say that any statement is characterised by three defining characteristics, i.e.: communicative autonomy, structural integrity and unique intonation contour.

The first parameter taken into consideration is communicative autonomy which means that the statement is or can be, from the communicative viewpoint, independent, complete, finished, i.e. it can be understood without further additions [29]. As already mentioned and exemplified in this paper, the autonomy we refer to is not absolute, it is often limited due to components that cannot be unambiguously decoded, components that are normally classified as categorematic words – pronouns, pro-adverbs, pro-adjectives [30].

The second parameter, the structural integrity of a statement, refers to the completeness of a statement. From this perspective, we distinguish two types of structural integrity: absolute or explicit structural integrity - all components are physically present in the statement – and relative or implicit structural integrity - some components which are necessary parts in the structure of the statement are not expressed, but can be recovered [31].

The third parameter is the intonation contour. A statement has only one intonation contour, which is broadly consistent with the communicative purpose of the statement. There are three types of intonation contour: declarative intonation contour, interrogative intonation contour and exclamatory intonation contour. Accidentally, a statement can have two intonation contours, the second one being the result of the suppression of an information word, suppression which causes an indirect interrogative clause with declarative intonation to become a direct interrogative clause, as shown in the following example [32]:

You are upset with me, but why are you upset with my brother?

You are upset with me, but (I do not understand) why you are upset with my brother.
We have shown that the statement can be accepted as syntactic unit in the communicative plane but, since it is neither defined nor delimited in the relational plane, it cannot be considered a relational unit [33]. As a syntactic unit, the statement involves the possibility of being divided, it is an analysable whole, and we can talk of internal organisation of a statement if that statement is created by articulating at least two components [34].

As shown in the previous section, in French grammar, the statement is an object of a discourse, seen as a materialisation of any type of human communication [35]. Thus, since language is first and foremost a communication tool, language is the one that offers users the elements needed to convey information, thoughts, ideas, and feelings to each other. Any communication can be put in words in the course of human speech. The oral or written result of the use of language is called discourse.

In addition to communication, a sentence is nothing more than an abstract form. It does not become a discourse unless it is the result of an act of individual communication in a particular situation. At this stage, it can be considered that a sentence is interconnected with the users of the communication act. One and the same sentence can generate an infinite number of statements depending on the identity of interlocutors and the specific conditions under which the act of communication occurs [36].

Only the statement establishes the relationship of the sentence with the world. The sentence and the clause indicate possibility, but only the statement indicates a current reality. Only the statement belongs to discourse and has a truth value. The sentence J’ai mal à la tête is not true or false until it is actually pronounced by an interlocutor [37].

Discourse appears as a series of sound or graphic signs in which, according to certain criteria of form and meaning, multiple constitutive elements or constituents can be distinguished. In order to be understood when speaking or writing in a language, we need to formulate the communication that we want to convey using constitutive elements of that language, according to the rules of operation and combination of such elements.

The statement will determine the conditions for the integration of the sentence in the discourse. In order to be integrated in a text, the sentence not only needs to comply with grammar, but it also needs to adapt to the functional structure of the context to which it belongs.

Therefore, the grammatical or semantic acceptability conditions must be completed with the cohesion conditions, since they determine the integration of a well-formed sentence in a context. Due to these cohesive relations between what precedes and what follows, the statement is an integral part of a discourse/text organisation [38].

Given that in French the term sentence is more general and applies to all types of statements, to both simple and complex statements, we will focus on statement from the
clause and sentence perspective.

A clause is a minimum statement, and its structure is defined by the relationships between words. A clause with subject, predicate and possibly its modifiers can constitute a complete statement, in which case it is called independent clause and represents a sentence. A sentence or a complete statement in which each term is related to one or more terms may contain multiple clauses, which are in either coordination or subordination syntactic relationships. A complex sentence consists of a main clause and modifying subordinate clauses, which in turn can be modified by secondary subordinates [39].

In their book Gramatica limbii franceze (French Grammar), Anca Cosăceanu and Micaela Slăvescu highlight that French grammar authors distinguish the following constituents of a statement: sentence (la phrase), phrase (le groupe de mots), word (le mot) and sounds (les sons) [40].

A sentence (la phrase) expresses a complete communication. In written language, it generally ends in a full stop, and in spoken language it is characterised by a specific intonation.

A sentence usually contains more constituents with different functions. Two of these constituents are fundamental and form the core of the sentence: they are the subject and the predicate, respectively. The sentence that contains one predicate is called a simple sentence, and the one that consists of multiple clauses is called a complex sentence. Thus we distinguish the following [41]:

a. simple sentence with two terms (subject + predicate)
e.g.: Elle mange.
   Il pleut.
b. simple sentence with three terms (subject + predicate + direct object)
e.g.: Ils abandonnèrent leurs études.
c. simple sentence with three terms (subject + predicate + agent), when in passive voice
   e.g.: La maison fut entourée de soldats.
d. simple sentence with three terms (subject + predicate + predicative name)
   e.g.: Le ciel était clair.
e. simple sentence with four terms (subject + predicate + direct object + direct object attribute)
   e.g.: Mon frère trouvait l'histoire amusante.

or subject + predicate + other subordinate constituents of the subject and/or predicate, and which in turn may have other subordinates.
   e.g.: La soeur de Jojo joue de la guitare.

Subordinate constituents can have various functions [42] such as:
a. noun complement (which in Romanian is called attribute)
   e.g.: La sommeil des enfants est profound.
b. (direct or indirect) object complement of the verb forming the predicate
   e.g.: J’ai acheté des fraises.
   Elle pense à sa mère.

c. adverbial complement of the verb
   e.g.: Catherine va au théâtre.

A complex sentence may consist of either simple independent clauses - coordinate or juxtaposed, or of two or more simple sentences (clauses), or of one or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses. The functions of clauses in a complex sentence are similar to those mentioned above for simple sentences.

The form of a French sentence may vary depending on the speaker’s intention to present the message as a declaration, a question, a command or an urge, expression of a feeling, etc.
   e.g.: J’ai soif.
   Est-ce que votre fils est revenu de France?
   Donne-lui de l’eau!
   Quelle belle journée!

In Dictionnaire de linguistique (Dictionary of Linguistics) of 1973 [43], Jean Dubois makes certain terminological clarifications, insisting on the distinction between simple sentence and complex sentence, and between sentence and clause, the sentence being the one that may contain multiple clauses, and specifying that the term clause applies only to subordinates. The author notes the difficulty of defining the sentence by unit of meaning, because there are situations where the semantic content can be expressed in one sentence or two juxtaposed sentences, making it difficult to distinguish between sentence and text.

   E.g.: Pendant que je lis, maman coud // Je lis. Maman coud.

Jean Dubois also notes that in modern grammar there is no clear definition of the sentence, it is preferred to say not what a sentence actually is, but what constitutes a sentence. From this perspective, a sentence is a statement in which the constituents must assume a function and which, in speech, must be accompanied by intonation [44]. The sentence is defined by a capital letter at the beginning and by a full stop at the end, being marked by a certain intonation contour and is delimited by two clear pauses; from the semantic viewpoint, the sentence has a complete meaning [45].

Therefore, a sentence seen as a statement has one intonation contour which is broadly consistent with its communicative purpose. From the point of view of intonation contour, there are several types of sentences in French grammar: affirmative and negative declarative [46] (in which the speaker communicates a piece of information which he/she knows or believes it to be true) [47], direct and indirect interrogative (which is a sentence specific to the dialogue in which the speaker expresses his/her wish to receive either information that he/she does not possess or the confirmation of information of which he/she is not certain) [48], exclamatory (expressing the speaker’s emotions, which can be associated with a value judgment that the speaker makes with regard to what he/she says)
[49], imperative (expressing values from the logical category of injunction: order, prohibition, demand, advice, kind request etc.) [50].

As in Romanian, a sentence consists of two or more clauses which together have a complete meaning:

\[ \text{Je veux que tu travailles davantage}. \]

but, unlike Romanian where the predicate can be expressed only through a verb in a personal mood, in French the predicate can sometimes be expressed also through a verb in the infinitive or participle mood, forming infinitive or participial clauses. Thus the sentence:

\[ \text{La cérémonie terminée, / je vis les enfants / s’éparpiller en désordre.} \]

consists of three sentences, of which the first has the verb in the past participle, and the third is infinitive. This sentence may correspond to one clause in Romanian.

\[ \text{Ceremonia terminându-se, văzui copiii răspândindu-se în dezordine.} \]

(At the end of the ceremony, I saw the children spread out in disarray.)

However, there is always the possibility of translating French infinitive and participial clauses into Romanian in clauses with a verb in a personal mood, having the same syntactic function in the sentence:

\[ \text{Când s-a terminat ceremonia,/ văzui copiii / care se răspândeau în dezordine.} [51]. \]

(Once the ceremony ended,/ I saw the children/ who were spreading out in disarray).

Due to its completeness, the sentence as a statement is characterised by structural integrity. From this point of view, as in Romanian, we distinguish two types of structural integrity: absolute or explicit structural integrity - all components are physically present in the statement – and relative or implicit structural integrity - some components which are necessary parts in the structure of the statement are not expressed, but can be recovered. The description and analysis of complex sentences requires, first of all, defining it as a concept and as a linguistic embodiment; this definition cannot be limited only to the syntactic field. The semantic and pragmatic perspective which such a structure can express on logic-semantic relations is essential.

In order to define a complex sentence, it is necessary to distinguish between simple sentence and complex sentence, as well as between the sentence and clause.

In French syntax, the term clause is reserved to subordination, to name subordinate clauses, while, as already pointed out, the term sentence is more general and applies to all types of statement, to both simple and complex statements [52].

French dictionaries insist on the unit of meaning in the definition of sentence, the semantic definition thus occupying a privileged place. In Le Petit Littré, the sentence is defined as “set of words forming a complete meaning”, and in Le Petit Larousse we find the following definition: “a set of words which have a complete meaning”. In Le Petit Robert there is a pragmatic-semantic definition: “any set of linguistic elements able to represent
for an auditor the complete enunciation of an idea issued by the speaker”. A declarative-type definition is found in Lexis: “a basic unit of statement comprising a set of terms that represent the speaker’s message.”

In linguistic works, authors attach great importance also to the definition of sentence. Thus, in the Le Langage magazine of 1973, Bernard Pottier analyses various definitions of sentence in French grammar and distinguishes the following definition criteria:

- a semantic criterion: the sentence is semantically autonomous, with a complete meaning by itself. In other words, it has communicative autonomy.
- a prosodic criterion: the sentence has a melodic unit marked by two pauses. In other words, it has the intonation contour.
- a syntactic criterion: the sentence is a complex sign that combines linguistics with extralinguistics.

Antoine Culioli proposes a definition of sentence that is as complete and rigorous as it is possible, taking into account all modern linguistic perspectives: “a grammatical unit that has prosodic and graphic features, and which can be defined either by rules of good syntactic formation or by semantic rules.” [53].

Teodora Cristea raises an objection with respect to this definition, as she believes that the syntactic rules underlying a well-formed statement from the canonical point of view are not binding in particular cases of statements where, for example, the explicit predicate is missing or in the case of interjections or statements with verbs in non-personal moods, all of which being considered sentences [54].

In her book Synthèses de syntaxe française (Syntheses of French Syntax), Dorina Roman defines sentence as a complex syntactic unit superior to the clause, and which consists of two or more clauses, namely of two or more predicative verbs or verbs that may have a predicate status (infinitive or participle verbs), and whose core is a main clause [55].

A complex sentence must have a complete meaning; in this case, it is both grammatical and semantic. A grammatical sentence is not a mere combination of grammatical clauses, but the space of a flowchart, where each constituent assumes a specific function in relation to the whole. Thus, in its entirety, a complex sentence is a structural and semantic unit, in which the elements, i.e. the carriers of informational contents, are so organised that communication is logical and coherent. [56].

Hence the communicative autonomy of the sentence, which means that the sentence as a statement is or can be, from the communicative viewpoint, independent, complete, finished, i.e. it can be understood without further additions.
CONCLUSION

The statement determines the relationship of the sentence with the world and decides the conditions for the integration of the sentence in the discourse. The statement has a current reality and is characterised by communicative autonomy, structural integrity and intonation contour. The sentence and the clause indicate possibility. A sentence is nothing more than an abstract form which becomes discourse only following an act of individual communication in a particular situation. One and the same sentence can generate an infinite number of statements depending on the identity of interlocutors and the specific conditions under which the act of communication occurs.

Therefore, we believe that in French, as in Romanian, the statement can be accepted as syntactic unit only in the communicative plane. As a syntactic unit, the statement involves the possibility of being divided, it is an analysable whole. Thus, the central issue of syntax is the statement – as syntagmatic structure analysable in components – and, above all, the determination of minimal functional units which are parts of the statement and among which relationships are established, i.e. those elements that underlie any communication. These relations give statement a communicative value and, since it is neither defined nor delimited in the relational plane, it cannot be considered a relational unit.

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