Two New Post-Verbal Particles in Romanian: A Case of Contact-Induced Grammaticalization

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Abstract

The paper analyses a hitherto ignored case of contact-induced grammaticalization, which consists in the creation of new verb particles expressing the path of motion in a regional variant of Romanian, under the influence of neighbour language Hungarian. The grammaticalization of two particles out of nouns meaning ‘wheel’ and ‘thread’ challenges previous theories concerning the classes of lexical sources for grams, and raises the question of contact reinforcing latent unproductive categories.

Keywords

Romanian – Hungarian – grammaticalization – motion – particles

The present paper originates in a personal enquiry carried out in northwestern Romania, in the margin of the Trajectoire project (CNRS Lyon 2-Fédération Typologie et universaux linguistiques), which aims to reconsider Talmy’s (2000) typology of verb/satellite-framed languages by resorting to the grammaticalization theory. Within the Trajectoire project, motion sentences were elicited using short videos, as well as free descriptions of itineraries. In the latter, speakers from northwestern areas of Romania occasionally used uncommon post-verbal modifiers in order to express global paths. Since the methodological framework of the original project did not intend to elicit global paths, I constituted a parallel corpus focused on these verb-particle constructions, which is briefly presented below.

According to C. Lehmann’s seminal work (1982), grammaticalization is a core phenomenon in the “genesis of grammar” (Heine and Kuteva, 2007), a complex
evolution involving semantic, paradigmatic, morphological and phonetic changes, which turns lexical items into grammatical ones, or makes grammatical items even more grammatical. The numerous studies following Lehmann’s research identified several general cross-linguistic mechanisms and clines of grammaticalization. These patterns of grammaticalization express common mechanisms of human cognition, such as metaphorical transfer and analogy. More recent studies have taken into account particular linguistic situations giving rise to grammaticalization. Heine and Kuteva (2003) were the first to describe and formalize grammaticalization triggered by the contact of two or more languages, a phenomenon they labeled “contact-induced grammaticalization”. The present paper follows in the footsteps of Heine and Kuteva (2003, and in more detail 2005), and analyses a particular cline of grammaticalization leading from nouns to verb satellites.

I shall begin by presenting the grammaticalization of the nouns roată and ață in Romanian, their lexical sources, and their functioning as path satellites. The contact situation in the area under scrutiny will be presented next, and it shall be argued that the formation of these two modifiers is a case of contact-induced grammaticalization. In closing, I shall address the vexed question of the place of these modifiers in the Romanian linguistic system, and the deeper consequences of this change.

1 The story of roată and ață

I recorded an oral corpus between 2006–2009 in the county of Cluj (central Transylvania, i. e. northwestern Romania). I also use a corpus recorded between 1928 and 1934 all over Transylvania and non-fictional writings. These corpora will be compared to standard Romanian constructions quoted by dictionaries and grammars. The regional constructions in point are summarised in Table 1. They consist of a motion verb (or verbs metaphorically associated with motion, such as perception or posture verbs) and two verb modifiers or ‘satellites’, originating in the nouns roată (‘wheel’) and ață (‘thread’), as in:

(1) Am mers ață peste pod, nu era trafic deloc.

Have:1sg go:pp thread across bridge neg be:impf3sg traffic at.all
‘I drove dead-straight across the bridge, there was no traffic at all.’
(taxi driver, about 40 years old, Cluj, 2008)

The words roată and ață are current and common Romanian nouns. Roată (<Lat. rota) expresses any type of wheel, while ață (<Lat. acia) has the narrow
**Table 1** Verb+Satellite Constructions in Northwest Romanian Compared to Standard Romanian and Hungarian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Standard Romanian Construction</th>
<th>Hungarian Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>a merge</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>go round</td>
<td><em>a ocoli</em></td>
<td>kör-be-megy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go1</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a ocoli</em></td>
<td>circle-ILLATIVE -go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a se duce</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>go round</td>
<td><em>a ocoli</em></td>
<td>kör+(be)+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go2</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a ocoli</em></td>
<td>any motion verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a fugi</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>run around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run/jog</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a se plimba</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>walk around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a veni</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>come around</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>come</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td>smb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a se aşeza</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>sit down in circle,</td>
<td><em>a se aşeza în</em></td>
<td>körül-áll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sit down</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td>around smb/</td>
<td><em>a se aşeza în</em></td>
<td>körül-áll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a sta</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>stand/sit around</td>
<td>*a sta în jurul/</td>
<td>around-sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stand/sit</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td>smth</td>
<td>*a sta în jurul/</td>
<td>around-sit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a privi</em></td>
<td>roată</td>
<td>look around</td>
<td><em>a privi de jur</em></td>
<td>kör-be-néz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>look</td>
<td>wheel</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a privi de jur</em></td>
<td>kör-be-néz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a merge</em></td>
<td>aţă</td>
<td>go straight</td>
<td>? <em>a se îndrepta</em></td>
<td>át-megy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go1</td>
<td>thread</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a se îndrepta</em></td>
<td>to/over-go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a se duce</em></td>
<td>aţă</td>
<td>go straight</td>
<td>? <em>a se îndrepta</em></td>
<td>‘to cross’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go2</td>
<td>thread</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a se îndrepta</em></td>
<td>‘to cross’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>a fugi</em></td>
<td>aţă</td>
<td>run straight</td>
<td><em>a fugi</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>run</td>
<td>thread</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>a fugi</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other verb+satellite constructions specific to northwest Romanian

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Satellite</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Construction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>a merge</em></td>
<td>lontru</td>
<td>go to work/office</td>
<td><em>a merge la bejár</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go1</td>
<td>inside</td>
<td>serviciu</td>
<td>in-go/walk/march</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to go to work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The meaning ‘go to work’ is derived and context-constrained in Hungarian, e.g. *vonattal jár be* ‘he goes in by train > he goes to work by train’.
meaning of ‘sewing thread’, already present in Latin. In Transylvanian Romanian, they were grammaticalized to express the global shape of a path (what Zlatev, 2007 labels as ‘rich path’). This phenomenon is not attested outside the Carpathians.

1.1 Grammaticalization

The evolution of ață and roată from nouns to verb modifiers corresponds to grammaticalization parameters set by Heine and Reh (1984), Lehmann (1985) and others.

a. Semantic bleaching: a lexical item loses part or all of its lexical meaning, becoming more abstract when grammaticalized. Both roată and ață underwent semantic bleaching. Roată evolved from the concrete meaning ‘wheel’ to the more abstract meaning of a round shape, then to an abstract circular trajectory, as seen in the sentence below, where the speaker was referring to the rectangular Unirii Square in Cluj:

(2) Am mers roată toată piață
Have:1SG go:PP wheel whole square
și n-am găsit loc de parcare.
and NEG-have:1SG find:PP place of parking
‘I drove round the square and found no parking place.’
(taxi driver, about 50 years old, Cluj, 2009)
This modifier is attested in various contexts, including posture, perception and even non-spatial verbs. When combined with *roată*, they acquire a motion value, as in (4):

(3) *Odată să-nvârte roată de vo două ori.*

Suddenly REFL-turn:3SG wheel of about two time:PL

‘And suddenly, he turns around a couple of times.’

(man, 47 years old, Năsăud, 1930)

(4) *Să tăiem deluțul roată.*

m.sbjv cut:1PL hill.DIM.ART wheel

‘Let’s go round the little hill.’

(Card ALR 6229/64)

The noun *ață* underwent a similar semantic bleaching, evolving from the concrete meaning of ‘sewing thread’ to the abstract one of a straight line, as in example (1), or of a continuous straight trajectory:

(5) *Mama, disperată, s-a dus ață la buna Ioană.*

Mother:ART desperate refl-have:3SG go:PP thread to grandma Ioana

‘Desperate, my mother went straight to grandmother Ioana.’

(Valentin Uritescu, *Să ai grijă de cel bun din tine* (memoirs), Bucharest: Humanitas, 2013)

b. Decategorialization: a grammaticalized lexical item loses a part or all of its categorial features; a noun can lose the ability to inflect, or the possibility to be used in nominal positions (as subject, for instance). *Roată* and *ață* both exhibit this evolution: in their lexical use, they can be preceded by an article, they can have a nominal function (subject in (6), direct object in (7)), and they can be inflected in the plural (in (6)):

- indefinite article, subject:

(6) *Mi s-a desprins o roată de la bicicletă.*

1SG.D refl-have:3SG detach:PP a wheel of at bicycle

‘A wheel of my bicycle has gone loose.’

- plural form, definite article, direct object:

(7) *Trebuie să schimb roțile la bicicletă.*

Must:3SG m.sbjv change:1SG wheels.ART at bicycle

‘I must replace the wheels of my bicycle.’
As verb modifiers, they cannot be inflected or accompanied by an article; they become invariant items:

\[(2') \quad *Am \quad mers \quad o \quad roată \quad *Am \quad mers \quad roţi\]

\[\text{Have:1SG go:pp a wheel} \quad \text{Have:1SG go:pp wheel.PL}\]

c. Morphological boundness, or loss of syntactic freedom: an originally free lexical item becomes more and more bound to another item, ultimately becoming a dependent morpheme. This parameter is more difficult to assess, since Romanian is generally an analytical language; the structure of the language blocks this evolution to an intermediate state (the phenomenon was also highlighted by Traugott and Heine 1991). If one compares the regional structure in (8) with the corresponding standard Romanian constructions in (9a) and (9b), one can note the syntactic dependence of the noun roată on the verb:

\[(8) \quad \text{Erau ceva studenţi care alergau roată pe stadion.} \quad \text{be:impf.3pl some student.pl rel run:impf.3pl wheel on stadium} \quad \text{‘There were some students jogging around on the stadium.’} \quad \text{(man, about 70 years old, Cluj, 2008)}\]

The structure here is: \([\text{care [alergau [roată] [pe [stadion]]]}]\)

\[(9a) \quad \text{Erau ceva studenţi care alergau } \varnothing \text{ pe stadion.} \quad \text{be:impf.3pl some student.pl rel run:impf.3pl } \varnothing \text{ on stadium} \quad \text{‘There were some students jogging around on the stadium.’} \quad \text{Structure: [care [alergau [pe [stadion]]]}\]

\[(9b) \quad \text{Erau ceva studenţi care făceau tururi de pistă.} \quad \text{be:impf.3pl some student.pl rel make:impf.3pl tour.pl of track} \quad \text{‘There were some students running full tracks.’} \quad \text{Structure: [care [făceau [tururi [de pistă]]]}\]

It is impossible to measure morphological boundness through manipulations on a spoken, spontaneous corpus. In the elicited corpus, the particle seems bound to the verb, and no other lexical elements are intercalated. The only exception in my corpus was:

\[(10) \quad \text{A căutat câinele tot roată.} \quad \text{Have:3sg search:pp dog.art continuously wheel}\]
'He kept searching for his dog all around.'
(woman, 30 years, Bologna, Cluj, 2006)

It must be noted, however, that the adverb *tot* is exceptional, in that it is the only item liable to be placed between the auxiliary and the lexical verb. Standard Romanian constructions involve a single verb and a prepositional phrase (9a) or a complex direct object (9b), whereas the regional construction exhibits the noun *roată* in the position of a verb modifier, which thus becomes a part of the verb phrase. The pronunciation of the sentence points out in this direction too: the speaker used a single breath group /alergau roată/ and another group /pe stadion/, thus placing *roată* in direct dependence on the verb.

d. Phonetic erosion: this parameter is not always exhibited by grammaticalized items; it generally occurs after a long period. This is also the case of the two verb satellites discussed here. Although we lack written historical data, it can be assumed that these constructions are not very old.

1.2 **Lexical Sources**
A number of cross-linguistic studies have pointed out that there are regularities in the grammaticalization of lexical items. On the one hand, some lexical meanings are more likely to grammaticalize than others, as Traugott and Heine (1991: 8) demonstrated:

It seems unlikely that *wallpaper* would become grammaticalized. This is not to say that such a change is impossible, but rather that it is extremely unlikely. [...] Ultimately, the question is, can the form be used to serve the metalinguistic purposes of text construction in a natural and therefore easily understood way? It is hard to imagine a context in which *wallpaper* could be used to serve such a purpose.

On the other hand, a given lexical class generally produces a given grammatical item; for instance, verbs generally evolve into tense or aspect markers (Kuteva, 2001). In the same spirit, Svorou’s comprehensive research (1994) identifies four possible nominal sources for space grams: human or animal body parts, environmental landmarks, relational object parts, and abstract spatial notions.

The two verb modifiers analysed here, *roată* and *ață*, may represent a fifth lexical source for grams, which I would label ‘human artifacts’. The wheel and thread are indeed, in any human society, very old and common objects, exhibiting a specific shape, so that they fulfil all conditions to be used as
sources for grammaticalization. Moreover, these bisyllabic words are short enough to become convenient modifiers. The metaphorical transfer from the wheel to a round trajectory, and from the thread to an rectilinear path is also obvious in these cases. I am certain that further studies can attest to other instances of nouns denoting old, common human artifacts as sources of grammaticalization.\(^2\)

Although not precisely a *wallpaper* in the sense of Traugott and Heine (1991), *ață* is not a very common noun either. It belongs to a lexical class comprising such nouns as *sfoară* ‘cord’, *coardă* ‘cord’, *fir* ‘string, wire’, which gave birth to lexicalized constructions and metaphorical uses in Romanian, or were grammaticalized into complex adpositions, such as *pe firul* ‘along’. In the following section I shall argue that *ață* was preferred to its synonyms on reasons that pertain to language contact.

2 Contact

As mentioned before, the words *roată* and *ață* are only used as verb modifiers in the variants of Romanian spoken in Transylvania. My hypothesis therefore is that we are dealing here with a case of what Heine and Kuteva (2003) call ‘contact-induced grammaticalization’, that is to say grammaticalization that took place under the influence of a neighbour language. Cases of contact-induced grammaticalization in Central-European languages are described in such works as Hansen (2005) on modal systems.

The area where the grammaticalization of *roată* and *ață* is attested does indeed correspond to the contact criteria highlighted by Thomason (2001) and Giacalone-Ramat (2008). Balázs (1965), Tamás (1966), Kelemen (1971a–b), Király (1990), Gafton (2014) among others highlight the long, continuous and deep contact situation in Transylvania. The presence of Romanians and Hungarians has been attested on this territory for over 1000 years, often in mixed communities; the oldest borrowings from Hungarian date back to the fourteenth century (Tamás, 1966). Transylvania was a part of the medieval kingdom of Hungary, was an independent principality between 1526 and 1683, was integrated to the Habsburg Empire and in 1867 became again a part of Hungary,

\(^2\) I am grateful to an anonymous referee for indicating two similar nouns used as locatives in Italian, although in a different construction and with different meanings: *a ruota* ‘closely behind’, and *a filo* ‘in parallel position’. I may add German *schnurgerade* ‘straight ahead’, where *Schnur* modifies the modal adverb.
within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. Since 1918 Transylvania has been a part of Romania, with the exception of the period 1940–1944, when its Northern part was annexed by Hungary. Romanians have always been the majority population, but Hungarians were in a politically dominant situation until 1918. Hence, Hungarian was a prestige language and consequently a donor at least until the First World War. However, most linguistic contacts\(^3\) took place at a popular level, in bilingual or neighbouring rural communities (Kelemen, 1971a).

This long and intense contact situation led to lexical borrowings in both directions (Balázs, 1965), but mainly from Hungarian to Romanian. Tamás (1966) and Kelemen (1971b) estimate that about 200 lexemes in standard Romanian are of Hungarian origin, including very common words, such as *munci* ‘to work’, *gândi* ‘to think’, *chip* ‘face’, while Transylvanian Romanian records over 2600 borrowings. In addition to the lexical aspect, the contact also triggered several phonetical changes (Pătruț, 1953; Kelemen, 1971a): a distinction of vowel quantity (phonological in Hungarian, but not in standard Romanian), the palatalization or affrication of */t/ and */d/*, the introduction of the */ɲ/ sound, a shift of word stress to the first syllable in some words, the reduction of */wa/ to */ɔ:/, etc. Morphosyntactical changes owed to contact are also recorded: confusion of genders and subsequent agreement hesitations, the replacement of grams (such as *akar-* of Hungarian origin used instead of *ori-* in the formation of indefinite pronouns: *accarcine* ‘whoever’), and some calque constructions such as *a da înainte* (literally ‘to give forward’ from Hungarian *elő-ad* ‘forward-give’, meaning to deliver publically). However, phonetical and morphosyntactical features influenced by Hungarian are only present in the Transylvanian variant of Romanian (Pătruț, 1953; Kelemen, 1971b; Gafton, 2014), where also borrowed lexical items and calque constructions are more frequent.

The last column of Table 1 presents the Hungarian constructions corresponding to regional Romanian expressions like *a merge roată*, *a merge ătă*, etc. As pointed out below, Hungarian is a satellite-framed language using a motion verb (*to go*, ‘to pass’, ‘to enter’, etc.) and a verb modifier placed before or after the verb.\(^4\)

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\(^3\) In the sense given by Thomason (2001: 1): ‘language contact... does not require fluent bilingualism’. See also her concept of ‘negotiation’, which implies situations of ignorance or superficial knowledge of the other language. See also Harris and Campbell (1995: 122): ‘By contact we mean a situation in which the speakers of one language are familiar in some way with another’ (my highlight).

\(^4\) The Hungarian forms in Table 1 are in the unmarked, dictionary form, where the modifier appears as a preverb. In speech, they may appear after the verb (under negation, in exclamations, after modal verbs or under focalization, cf. Sőrés, 2014).
Given the contact situation, the structural resemblance between the Hungarian and the regional Romanian constructions, and the dispersion area of the grammaticalization of roată and ață (not attested outside Transylvania), one can posit that the Romanian evolution copies existing Hungarian grams.

This hypothesis also explains the choice of ață as a lexical source for grammaticalization. I believe that the choice of this particular lexical item was also determined by its formal resemblance with the Hungarian particle át (as in át-megy ‘to cross’). Indeed, as highlighted by Weinreich (1953) and by Heine and Kuteva (2003), in the case of contact-induced grammaticalization, formal similarity can condition the choice of the lexical source:

What leads the bilingual to establish the interlingual equivalence of the morphemes or categories is either their formal similarity or a similarity in preexisting functions.

WEINREICH 1953: 39

When associated with ‘go’ verbs the preverb át- has several meanings, including “going from one end to the other” (Fazakas, 2010: 248): átmegy/átjár ‘pass over’, átjut/átszalad ‘march/run over’, átjön/átkel ‘cross from one end to the other’, átsétál ‘walk along something completely’, átvonul ‘pass by’ etc. Along with the (probable) later grammaticalization, this explains why ață is only associated with ‘go’ verbs in the Romanian corpus, as opposed to roată, which appears with a wider range of verbs.

From a formal point of view, Hungarian uses certain preverbs (Sőrés, 2014) as verb modifiers, whereas Romanian grammaticalized existing nouns, which ended up playing a role similar to that of Hungarian preverbs. Such a grammaticalization was labeled ‘ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization’ by Heine and Kuteva, which means that the replica language (Romanian) develops a category equivalent to that in the model language (Hungarian) by using its own material, and by drawing on universal strategies of grammaticalization.

At this point, one may define the creation of the verb modifiers roată and ață as ordinary contact-induced grammaticalization; moreover, the choice of ață is motivated by a formal resemblance in the lexical material.

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5 Similarity in the semantics, functioning and role of preverbs, adverbs and other ‘particles’ or ‘prefixes’ is also pinpointed by Imbert, Grinevald and Sőrés, 2011 and Sőrés, 2014 as an argument for creating a single class of ‘satellites’ or ‘verb modifiers’, which in turn allow cross-linguistic comparisons and analyses like the present one. According to Sőrés (2014: 191), “The elements that function as verbal modifiers (...) can be nominal or adverbial elements, or preverbs. They are undefined and unspecific and form an intonational unit with the verb.”
These contact-induced grammaticalizations raise two further questions. Firstly, one must address the longstanding theoretical debate initiated by Meillet (1914) about ‘the structural-compatibility requirement’ for a grammatical borrowing to take place (Harris and Campbell, 1995). The second problem concerns the place of these two newly created verb modifiers in the wider system of Romanian.

3 Typological Compatibility

According to the typology of lexicalization patterns proposed by Talmy (1985 and 2000) and Slobin (2004 and previous works), Romanian and Hungarian belong to two different linguistic types where the expression of motion is concerned.

A motion event includes several conceptual elements: Figure (the person/object in motion), Ground (the place of motion), Path of motion, and Manner of motion (jump, roll…). According to the ‘lexicalization pattern’, or the way languages distribute these components on the lexemes, Talmy organised languages into two main categories: satellite-framed and verb-framed languages. Slobin (2004) added a third category, labelled ‘equipollently framed’, mainly including serializing languages. Since the two languages discussed here do not belong to this third type, one can adopt, for the sake of simplicity, Talmy’s bipartite typology.

Hungarian is a fairly regular satellite-framed language (Sőrés, 2006). It encodes Motion and/or Manner of motion in the main verb of the sentence, leaving the Path to be expressed by satellites (preverbs). Like all Romance languages, Romanian is verb-framed (Papahagi, 2009): it generally encodes Path in the main verb and leaves the manner of motion at the periphery of the sentence (on a second verb, on a nominal construction, or unexpressed). The comparison between standard Romanian and Hungarian constructions in Table 1 does indeed reveal these strategies. Thus, the meaning ‘to go round’ is expressed in standard Romanian by a single verb, a ocoli ‘to circle’, which encodes the path of motion. In Hungarian, this meaning is expressed by körbe-megy, where the first element is a path satellite (followed by the directional case ending), and the second one is a ‘dummy’ motion verb, as in the English go round.

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6 Besides ‘pure’ motion, Talmy (2000) includes in this conceptual domain posture (or position, e.g. to stand, to lie…), perception (to see, to hear…) and other non-spatial domains.
One can therefore say that Romanian and Hungarian are structurally incompatible, which has long been considered an obstacle to syntactic borrowing. That notwithstanding, Table 1 presents other regional Romanian constructions resembling Hungarian, but not standard Romanian ones. For instance, ‘to cut down’ is expressed in standard Romanian by the simple verb *a tăia* ‘to cut’, without further distinctions. The Hungarian construction is a complex expression, made up of a satellite and a verb: *le-vág* ‘down-cut’. It is a living and productive structure, since the preverb participates in a paradigm: for instance, one can say *ki-vág* ‘out-cut’, if the tree is uprooted rather than felled. The regional Romanian expression for this meaning was (in its wider context):

\[(11) \quad \text{Mi s-a uscat un nuc} \quad 1\text{sg.d refl-have:3sg dry:pp a nut.tree} \]
\[
\text{și a trebuit să-l tăi jos.} \quad \text{and have:3sg need:pp m.sbjv -3sg.ac cut:1sg down}\
\]

‘One of my nut trees died, and I had to cut it down.’

(man, about 40 years old, Apahida, Cluj, 2008)

In this sentence, the speaker used a space adverb as verb modifier; the adverb *jos* is the exact semantic counterpart of the Hungarian preverb *le* ‘down’.

At least apparently then, regional Romanian has replicated a category and a syntactic functioning (verbal modifier) that were not compatible with its type. The last example however tends to amend this too categorical conclusion: some space adverbs can be used in Romanian as verb modifiers, at least in the regional variant that grammaticalized *ață* and *roată* into verbal modifiers.

4 The Place of *roată* and *ață* in Romanian

The regional Romanian constructions presented in this paper exhibit a structure similar to the Hungarian one; this satellite-framed structure (verb + modifier) is at least apparently incompatible with the verb-framed type of Romanian.

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7 For a theoretical and historical overview of this debate, see the discussion in Harris and Campbell (1995: 122 ff). The most radical opinion quoted is Allen (1980: 380) concerning syntax alone: ‘We would expect syntactic influence only when the two languages had a good deal of syntactic similarity to begin with’. A more generally accepted version is formulated by Weinreich (1953: 25), following Jakobson (2002 [1938]: 241): ‘a language accepts foreign structural elements only when they correspond to its tendencies of development’.
However, the same regional variant of Romanian exhibits other similar constructions, such as *a tăia jos* ‘to cut down’, or the lexicalized constructions *a da înainte* ‘to deliver (a paper)’ or *a merge lontru* ‘go to work’. Although they use Romanian lexical material, these constructions are moulded on the Hungarian type.

It is legitimate to ask if the category of the ‘satellite’ (or modifier) was created *ex nihilo* on a Hungarian model in this regional variant, or if it corresponds to a category in standard Romanian enriched through contact-induced grammaticalization. A similar question was asked by Aikhenvald, who identified two types of linguistic changes:

System-altering changes involve the introduction of new categories – by analogy with other language(s) in the area. In contrast, system-preserving changes do not involve any new categories; they may involve adding a new term to an already existing category, or grammaticalization of a morpheme to preserve threatened functional categories.

Aikhenvald, 2003: 2

Is the grammaticalization of *ață* and *roată* to be considered, in Aikhenvald’s terms, as ‘system-altering’, or as ‘system-preserving change’? This phenomenon can be described as ‘system-preserving’ on two different grounds, although this may look surprising at a first glance.

Recent work on Romance languages (Vicario, 1995; Iacobini and Masini, 2006; Papahagi, 2009, and above all Iacobini, 2015) amends the classification of this family as completely verb-framed, putting forward that spoken variants make a wide use of verb + modifier constructions in expressing motion. According to Iacobini (2015), Italian and Romanian exhibit the most inconsistent pattern among the Romance languages, because of a stronger conservation of the Latin satellite-framed type. Both languages make a wide use of particle-verb constructions; these are morphosyntactically coherent, and consist of a verb of motion, manner of motion, putting or taking (or, seldom, a non-motion verb) and post-verbal adverbs expressing a general direction of motion: Italian *spingere via* ‘push away’, *mettere giù* ‘put down’, *fare fuori* ‘wipe out > kill’, etc.

Similarly to Italian, spoken Romanian sometimes exhibits constructions involving a motion verb and a space adverb used as modifier: *a merge înainte* ‘to go ahead’, *a cădea jos* ‘to fall down’, *a veni jos* ‘to come down’, etc. These colloquial and unproductive constructions are either lexicalized (*a merge înainte*) or pleonastic (*a cădea jos*) in the standard language. Formally, however, they exhibit the structure of typical satellite constructions, as is made visible in
the English translation. Although native speakers from other regions than Transylvania do not spontaneously use *a merge ață* or *a tâia jos*, they do employ similar constructions, such as *a cădea jos*.

One can therefore say that the new constructions attested in Transylvania resemble latent structures of the standard language. They involve forms that appear in the same position (immediately after the verb), with the same function and meaning (verb modifiers expressing the path of motion). This corresponds to another of Lehmann’s parameters of grammaticalization — the insertion into a paradigm. Given the group of space adverbs that can be used as verb modifiers, two new elements are created from nouns through grammaticalization. The new elements behave like these space adverbs, occupy the same position, assume the same function and can alternate with any of them: *a merge înainte* ‘to go forward’, *a merge jos* ‘to go down’, *a merge roată* ‘to go round’, etc.

Secondly, the grammaticalization of *roată* and *ață* can be cast against a wider diachronical background: Romanian is a verb-framed language that evolved from a satellite-framed one (Latin).8 In Late Latin, complex adpositions were used simultaneously as prepositions, as adverbs after motion verbs (Hamp, 1888), and even as ‘prefixes’ with the role of expressing the path of motion. Such a prefix is for instance *in+circum* in the construction *incircumveniendus* (Nov. vers. vulg. 111, 3, *apud* Hamp, 1888) ‘the one that will come around’. And just like modern Romanian, Latin also used *inante* ‘forward’ after a ‘go’ verb:

(12) *Vade, vade inante, dat tibi deus.*

> go:imp.2sg go:imp.2sg forward give:3sg 2sg.d god:n

‘Go, go ahead, and God will give you (what you need).’

(August. Patr. 39, 2305, *apud* Hamp)

From this point of view, the creation of two new verb satellites (*roată* and *ață*) through grammaticalization finds its place within the Romanian system; not in the ‘modern’, verb-framed system of standard Romanian, but among the conservative aspects of the language. As I have attempted to demonstrate, a category of ‘verb modifiers’ can be found in Romanian, although it is neither productive, nor systematic. The two new modifiers fit into this existing category. They are a ‘system-preserving change’: their creation was influenced by Hungarian, but also corresponds to an existent, inherited category in the language. Alone, the

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8 For a description of the transition from satellite-framed to verb-framed in the Romance languages, see Iacobini and Fagard, 2011; Iacobini, 2015.
lexical source of this grammaticalization is really new (nouns, not adverbs), and to be found nowhere else in Romanian. Finally, it must be highlighted that all Romanian adverbs used as verb modifiers are inherited forms, whereas ață and roată are indigenous creations of more recent times.

5 Conclusion

The creation, in a regional variant of Romanian, of two verb satellites through grammaticalization of nouns calls for two general conclusions. In the first place, it confirms that languages rarely exhibit a pure ‘type’ (here: satellite- vs verb-framed). Alongside a dominant type, there may coexist features of another type, as relics of a former historical stage, due to contact (e. g. English borrowing French path verbs such as enter), or as a combination of both internal and external changes, as is the case of the two Romanian verb modifiers presented above.

Secondly, the grammaticalization of nouns denoting human artifacts, a category previously not acknowledged as a lexical source for grammaticalization, reminds one that language is the most important manifestation of human creativity. As such, it is always likely to innovate outside the known mechanisms and categories.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 – person
ART – definite article (enclitic in Romanian)
AC – accusative case
D – dative case
DIM – diminutive
IMP – imperative
IMPF – imperfect
INF – infinitive
M.SBJV – subjunctive morpheme
N – nominative case
NEG – negation
PL – plural
PP – past participle
REFL – reflexive
REL – relative
SG – singular
References


