# PERFECT SIMPLE IN WALLACHIA AND TRANSYLVANIA: A TYPOLOGICAL APPROACH

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**Abstract**

The focus of the article is the dialectal-typological analysis of Perfect Simple/PS (Ro. 'perfectul simplu') in Romanian dialects, i.e. Bobiceşti/Olt/Wallachia and Almaş/Arad/Transylvania. Paralleled by the main literature-based characteristics of the tense, the data do not only emphasize the surprisingly preponderant distribution of PS in Transylvania but they also reveal the key status of the Perfect Simple as part of the Romanian dialect use as well as its typologically relevant double status (Standard Romanian versus dialect use). The comparison between the 'general purpose' Latin-to-Romance PS evolution and the 'Balkansprachbund' Greek-Aorist characteristics ends with commentaries on the double perspective of Romanian: Wallachian (generally reflected in Standard Romanian) manifests Balkan-oriented phenomena and Transylvanian preserves Latin/Romance-oriented features.

**Keywords:** *dialectology, typology, dialect syntax, dialectal typology, Romanian dialects, Perfect Simple, perfectul simplu (Ro.), Balkansprachbund, Standard Average European (SAE)*

## 1. Introduction

Underestimated by linguists, research in the domain of dialect syntax has only recently[1] been reconsidered and paid due attention to. Moreover, the integration of dialect syntax analysis into a typological framework generates the emergence of significant theories, underlining the hypothesis that "non-standard dialects are bound to be a crucial corrective for typological research" (Kortmann 2004: 197). In this context, the present study initiates research (through local dialect

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[1] Studies on dialect syntax (see Anderwald 2002; Auer 2004; Bisang 2004; Kortmann 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005) proved to be of major relevance for the study of language variation in general. As dialectology itself has lately been perceived from the perspective of the first linguistic sub-discipline concerned with synchronic variation (Auer & Di Luzio (eds.) 1988: 1), it has become of essential importance to linguistics.

investigations) on different aspects associated with the use of the Perfect Simple (Ro. *perfectul simplu*) in two dialectal areas of Romania: Wallachia and Transylvania[2].

Perfect Simple (PS)[3] constitutes a unique case in the panoply of Romanian tenses and its use is a salient syntactic phenomenon in the two major Romanian dialect areas which are the focus of this study. On the basis of authentic materials representing both dialects (Bobiceşti/Olt/Wallachia and Almaş/Arad/Transylvania), different types of Perfect Simple use mentioned in literature (Beltachi 1988; Brâncuş 1957; Marin 1989; Rusu 1984), could be contrasted and debated. The main emerging Perfect Simple properties have been consequently analyzed through the norms of the Standard Romanian (StRo) verb system.

In the end, what we wish to explore in this article is the typology of Perfect Simple as part of different language families and their subordinate dialects.[4]

Considering that "all the characteristic features of the Romanian language, all that differentiates the Romanian language from Latin or the other

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[2] The dialectal areas of Wallachian and Transylvanian cover more sub-dialect areas than the areas in question. It means that by 'Wallachian' we can understand a variety of speech from the Romanian region that lies north of the Danube and south of the Carpathian Mountains, a region which, in its turn, may also be seen as a territory with subdivisions including Muntenia (Greater Wallachia), which is larger, and a smaller section called Oltenia (Lesser Wallachia). It is particularly the speech of the latter that we have in view in the present paper. Correspondingly, the 'Transylvanian' dialect can refer either to the traditional speech in one of geographical Ardeal's /Transylvania's regions: the Apuseni Mountains, Crişana, Maramureş, Banat or to Transylvania proper. They represent, in fact, as shown in Romanian historical linguistics, the South Romanian and Western Romanian speech, all other smaller variations being ignored at this stage.

[3] The choice of denomination of the tense in the paper, i.e. 'Perfect Simple', is made on semantic criteria: its current perception in Standard Romanian largely corresponds to the perfect-of-recent-past use in English (cf. Comrie 1976: 56-61) Although the Romance name is 'simple past' (Fr. *passé simple*), contrasted to 'compound past' ('Past Simple' in this paper, according to the English use), preference was given to the easier association with the language of exposition, i.e., English. Therefore the translation of the PS into English will preserve the Present Perfect form, in most cases, but Past Simple forms (for cases where the verb does not allow a Perfect Simple translation) will also be encountered.

[4] For example, the use of Perfect Simple in the Wallachian dialect (i.e., in the Romanian language) is firstly integrated into its Latin-origin language group and is consequently set in comparison with Serbian dialect examples as representatives of the Slavic group of languages.

Romance languages, can be found in all four dialects" (Puşcariu 1936: 123), we aim at integrating the results of the Present Perfect dialectal-typological analysis into more general conclusions on the double, yet contradictory characterization of Romanian as belonging to both the Romance and the Balkan group of languages.

## 2.   Preliminaries

### 2.1     Material

Questionnaires: They were designed for the informants' self-completion, in their own time. The questions appearing in the questionnaire can be generally characterised (cf. Chambers & Trudgill 1998: 21-25) as: direct, informal (90%), completive (60%). Alternatively, they formed the basis for an interview with the researcher posing the questions and completing the form with the respondents' answers.

  Interviews: There were face-to-face interviews, with the researcher completing the documentation/questionnaire. Direct affiliation with research areas or familiarity with the community (Milroy & Gordon 2002: 69) facilitated and encouraged the use of natural, uninhibited speech.

  Audio recordings: A good approach[5] was to elicit a story (Löffler 1990: 56) e.g. "The wedding day", and lead the informant into producing a free narration. The recordings (RecWal – recording from Wallachia; RecTra – recording from Transylvania) are structured into different sections (see Table 1) and are available in specific format.

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[5] The legal and ethical matter of the surreptitious recording (Milroy & Gordon 2002: 81-83) was avoided in the way psychology studies are conducted: if the case (in Wallachia, because of the higher awareness of the standard norms, 20% of recordings were performed in this way) speakers were informed after the recording, none of them opposing himself/herself to the scientific use of the recordings.

**Table 1:** Research material (linguistic investigation in Wallachia and Transylvania)

| | | Material Wallachia | | Material Transylvania | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Method 1/2** | | **Questionnaires/interviews** | | | |
| Informants/ initials | M | 3: D.G., G.M., I.M. | | 3: B.In., F.F, M.P. | |
| | F | 7: B.F, B.M., D.A., D.E., D.Ef., D.F., G.F. | | 7: B.C., B.Is., D.F., D.M., F.A, M.A, O.M | |
| Average age | | 79 (1) | | 76 (2) | |
| **Method 3** | | **Recordings** | | | |
| Duration | | 45:23' | | 52:25' | |
| Informants/ initials | M | 5: C.C., *C.I., I.F, **I.N., I.M. | | 3: B.I., **B.O., **I.O., | |
| | F | 5: B.M.;C.A., **I.I., D.E., R.E. | | 5: O.M., D.M., B.C., B.Is., F.F. | |
| Topics/ type of speech situation | | 1. *Viata lui Piala* 'Piala's life' (RecWal_00:00-06:35) | monologue | 1. *Nunta atunci* 'My wedding day' (RecTr_00:00-18:32) | dialogue |
| | | 2. *Masa dupa munca* 'Lunch after work' (RecWal_06:35-19:20) | free conversation | 2. *Nunta Catitei* 'Catita's wedding' (RecTr_18:32-26:01) | dialogue |
| | | 3. *Vizita* 'The visit' (RecWal_19:20-20:38) | dialogue | 3. *Familia Bocu* 'Bocu Family' (RecTr_26:01-35:05) | free conversation |
| | | 4. *Trecutul* 'The past' (RecWal_20:39-32:23) | monologue | 4. *Razboiul* 'The war' (RecTr_35:05-43:10) | monologue |
| | | 5. *Ziua lui nea Misu* 'Uncle Mishu's day' (RecWal_32:23-45:23) | dialogue | 5. *Sotul* 'My husband' (RecTr_43:10-52:25) | monologue |
| Average age | | 65 (3) | | 77 (4) | |
| Location of investigation | | Interwier's home (90 %) Interviee's home (10 %) | | Interwier's home (20 %) Interviee's home (80 %) | |

\*     Informants act as accomplices

\*\*    Informants (under 50 years of age – the minimum limit of age considered as relevant for the present investigation) are only passive participants in recordings i.e. theirs speech is not considered when examples are analysed.

## 2.2    Perfect Simple in Wallachia and Transylvania

Most Romanian dialectology studies are quite exhaustive, theoretically covering all Romanian dialects, carefully presenting their main (lexical) features and their area of spread e.g. *Tratat de dialectologie românească*, (Rusu 1984). Thus, the syntactic behaviour of Perfect Simple in the two dialect areas can be primarily described as:

| WalD | TrD |
|---|---|
| ▪ **action in recent past, not remoter/older than the time limit of 'today'**. | ▪ **action in the past, ranging from remote past (e.g. years ago) to action performed 'today'.** |
| (cf. Caragiu-Marioteanu et al. 1977; Georgescu 1957; Moise 1977; Pana-Boroianu 1982; Rusu 1984; Vulpe 1977) | (cf. Grecu 1980; Moise 1977; Neagoe 1985; Sandru 1935; Weigand 1896) |
| (1) *Nu ştiu ce **scrisără** iei, că iei au luat copie nu ştiu de unde**.*** | (2) *Ş-atunşea **ţâpai** bâta jos şi **sudii** de Dumnezeu.* |
| (RecWal_19:53) | (RecTra_51:34) |
| 'I don't know what they have written, cause they took a copy I don't know from where.' | 'Then I've thrown the stick on the ground and I've sworn on God.' |

**Table 2:**    Perfect Simple basic characteristics in Wallachia (WalD) and Transylvania (TrD)

However, the field work (August-September 2005) revealed that: (a) uses in both dialects mutually interfere, even if at various degrees, i.e., in Wallachia there is less use of the 'emotional'[6] PS than it is made in Transylvania of the action-'today' i.e. hodiernal PS; (b) in both dialects there is much confusion caused by the preference for Past Simple in Standard Romanian, again at various levels: in Wallachia speakers find it more difficult to use Past Simple, i.e.,

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[6] An 'emotional' Perfect Simple refers to past actions as part of an 'emotional' narration i.e. the speaker feels involved in the story he/she tells. In literature, the value is sometimes referred to in terms of the anterior conveying the sense of past or perfective but including a special flavour of relevance or proximity to the present or current situation (Bybee & Dahl 1989: 86).

*perfectul compus* (see also Note 3) instead of naturally using Present Perfect, i.e., *perfectul simplu* (one can notice a process of divergence, i.e., clear separation between the two tenses), whereas Transylvanians alternate/balance (even without making a clear distinction) the two tenses in functional competition more easily.

      It may be interesting to mention some examples which show the multifaceted even contrastive behaviour of Perfect Simple in the two dialects. For instance, examples (3) and (4) prove that PS is indeed intensively and unrestrictively used with the hodiernal value in the southern part of the country (Wallachia):

(3)     *În ciorba asta* **pusăi** *ciolane d'ălea mari, şi* **luai** *oasele*
                  put-PS:1SG               take-PS:1SG
                *după ea şi*   **nu**     *mai*    **avu** *zamă şi*  **fiars-ără** *dăcât*
                *alea.*         NEG              have-PS:3SG   boil-PS:3PL

                                                     (RecWal_08:14)
                'In this soup I put those kinds of big bones, and I took the bones out and there wasn't any soup really left and it's been only those that boiled.'

The 60-year-old female informant is obviously not able to use another tense when describing an action performed exactly that day. In other words, the range of 1st person singular PS forms, i.e. *pusăi* 'I've put', *luai* 'I've taken', is naturally and unhesitantly completed by other forms in the tense paradigm: 3rd person singular *nu avu* '(it) didn't have' or the 3rd person plural *fiarsără* '(those) have boiled'. Example (4) can bring further support to the theory claiming the close interdependence between the occurrence/meaning of adverbial *astăzi* 'today' and PS use:

(4)     *Cre' că* **fură-**         *n cimitir*  *şapte-opt inşi care*
                be-PS:3SG
                **făc-ură**           *ASTĂZI pomană.*
                make:PS:3PL
                                                   (RecWal_09: 19)
                'I think there were seven-eight people in the cemetery that gave/made alimony [for dead people's souls] TODAY.'

On the other hand, the Transylvanians make natural use of forms of 'emotional' PS which would be unacceptable in Wallachia. For instance, female informants

answered the question "How was your wedding day?" using PS every time the verb refers to an action affectionately relived through oral narration.

(5)  *Io nu-s gi-aişea. Io mi-s gintr-altu sat, gin Cromna. Şî*
  ***vin-iră***     *după mine atunşea să ne cununăm dară, la nuntă.*
  come-PS:3PL

                                                           (RecTra_03:02)
  'I'm not from here. I'm from another village, from Cromna. And they
  came after me then, to get us married, at the wedding.'

The male informant answering the question "How was in the army?" has a similar 'emotional' reaction when recollecting things in his past:

(6)  *Pă când*    ***fu-ră***     *gata cazematele, am stat aproape un an*
              be-PS:3PL

  *aclo, ş-atunşea*   ***să-***      ***ncepu***       *războiu.*
              RFL:3PL       begin-PS:3SG

                                                           (RecTra_35:56)
  'By the time the military camps were ready, I stayed almost a year
  there, then the war began.'

Even if particular examples emphasize specific uses in both regions, a different conclusion can be drawn from a small statistical analysis of data referring, in the first place, to the use of Perfect Simple in Wallachia and Transylvania and, secondly, to Perfect Simple in contrast to other past tenses.

It is quite surprising to remark from Table 3 above that the general picture of PS frequency of use contradicts the representativeness theory: Transylvanians unquestionably use Perfect Simple more often (25.8%) than Wallachians (23.4 %) in various speech situations.

**Table 3:** Use of past tenses in Wallachia and Transylvania (recording data)

| Tense | Ro. | Wallachia | | Transylvania | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | N | % of total past tenses | N | % of total past tenses |
| Past Perfect | *mai mult ca perfectul* | 3 | 0.9 | 5 | 0.9 |
| Past Continuous | *imperfectul* | 79 | 24 | 184 | 36.5 |
| Past Simple | *perfectul compus* | 169 | 51.2 | 184 | 36.5 |

| Tense | Ro. | Wallachia | | Transylvania | |
|-------|-----|-----------|---|--------------|---|
| | | N | % of total past tenses | N | % of total past tenses |
| **Perfect Simple** | *perfectul simplu* | **77** | **23.4** | **130** | **25.8** |
| Total past tenses | | 328 | | 503 | |

## 3.        Perfect Simple in typological context

The importance of the above findings can be best emphasized through their integration into a typological framework:

> Dialect data, besides serving as a rich additional data source and making a significant contribution to areal typology, are bound to help establish more fine-grained typological parameters and formulate generalizations and hierarchies which are at the same time more fine-grained and more robust. (Kortmann 2004: 1)
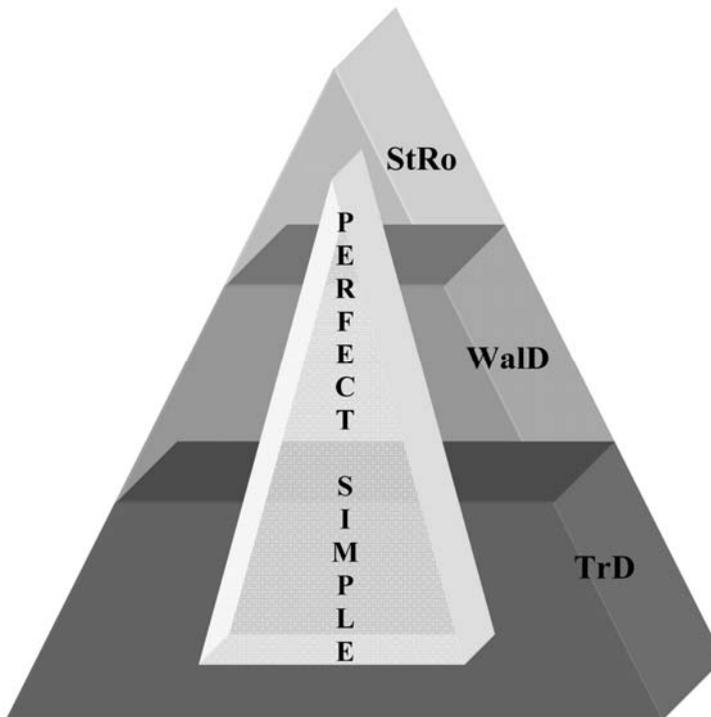


**Figure 1**: Perfect Simple use in Romanian

It is therefore assumed that an "integrated approach" (Croft 1995) can be an endless resource for uninvestigated theories, which are, surprisingly, far more relevant to the study of a certain language than the analyses based on the standard variety itself.

In Romanian, Perfect Simple should be considered as a key-tense, because of its special integration both into the Standard Romanian verb system and, most importantly, into the dialectal usage. It is one of the few dialect tenses which, although belonging to the standard grammar, is in fact restricted to dialect use (Wallachian). In other words, such use is not representative for all Romanian speakers.

## 3.1     From Latin to Romance: 'general purpose' Perfect

The Latin Perfect (i.e. the FECI paradigm) covered the functions of both Perfect and Preterit. The two parameters enter different time reference strings, which means that the Perfective/Preterit/Aorist can be opposed to the Imperfective/Perfect/Anterior series, where 'Anterior' means: a past action with current relevance (Bybee 1994: 61).

The Latin Perfect developed into a 'general purpose' perfective past (cf. Squartini & Bertinetto 2000: 404). Two of its most common values were: narrative tense (past tense adverbials) and completed events (up to the moment of speaking). The paradigm HABEO FACTUM (*habere* 'to have' was quickly grammaticalised) emergence in Vulgar Latin (Post-Classical period) presumably as a compensatory solution for the fact that the existent Preterit did not cover the recent action domain very well. In some Romance languages (in the Iberian area and South Italian vernaculars) the auxiliary descends from the Latin *tenere* instead of *habere /esse*, while in Galician and Portuguese it replaced the form with *haver*. Some scholars sustain that PS continued the colloquial use of original Latin constructions, whereas others think it originated in the educated environments through Greek influence. In spite of various theories it is quite indubitable that the HABEO FACTUM paradigm, having a constant aspectual value of present connotation, became the antecedent of 'present perfect' (i.e. Ro. *perfectul compus*) in Romance.

The historical evolution of the analytic preterit in Romance is sometimes approached under the theory of "aoristic drift", also called "aoristicization" (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000): "a single continuum, in which the various languages are disposed scalarly, from a minimum to a maximum in terms of proximity to the purely Aoristic value: from Spanish, Catalan (most perfectal) to Standard Italian, Standard French, Romanian and, finally to French and Italian dialects (purely aoristic present anteriors)".

**Figure 2:**      Aoristic drift of the Romance 'compound past' (Squartini & Bertinetto 2000: 422)

| Spanish | Occitan Catalan | Standard Italian | Standard Romanian | Various Northern Italian & French vernaculars |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------|

<more perfectal> -------------------------------------------------------------<purely Aorist>

Harris' four-stage system (1982) gives details about the development of the 'compound past'/'present perfect'[7] (i.e. meaning in English: Past Simple) in Romance. In this way, considering the stage IV in Table 4, we can notice that the PS use nowadays in some Romance languages (among which Romanian) entitles us to consider that the evolution of Perfect Simple completes a circle. Perfect Simple appeared from a simple verb form, the Latin 'present perfective', which, like Past Simple nowadays, had a double function ('perfect preterit' and 'simple past') [translation] (Engel 1997: 97).

**Table 4:** Stages of development of 'present perfect' in Romance (cf. Harris 1982)

| stage | 'compound past'/ 'present perfect' | Aorist | language |
|-------|------------------------------------|--------|----------|
| **STAGE I** | 'restricted to present states resulting from past actions, and is not used to describe past actions themselves, however recent' | 'retains all functions it had in Vulgar Latin' i.e. both 'present perfect' and 'preterit' | some Southern Italian vernaculars |
| **STAGE II** | appears 'only in highly specific circumstances' i.e. 'aspectually marked as durative or repetitive' | 'retains most of the functions it had in Vulgar Latin' (including recent events and events occurring at a time still in progress) | Galician, Portuguese, varieties of American Spanish |

[7] The Aorist is intended as the Greek Aorist and corresponds, formally and semantically to a Perfect Simple/PS (present paper) meaning (e.g., imi *zise*, 'he's just said'). The 'present perfect' function is intended as a classical Preterite and corresponds, formally to a 'compound past' and semantically to Past Simple/ps (present paper) (e.g., mi-*a zis* ieri, 'he said yesterday').

| stage | 'compound past'/ 'present perfect' | Aorist | language |
|---|---|---|---|
| **STAGE III** | 'the archetypal present perfect value of past simple with present reference' | 'restricted to preterit functions' | Castilian Spanish; varieties of langue d'oil and langue d'oc |
| **STAGE IV** | 'preterital/aoristic functions' | 'restricted to formal registers' | Standard French, Northern Italian, Standard **Romanian,** Romansh, Ladin, Friulian, Sardinian |

In other words, Perfect Simple stems from a 'general purpose' Perfect, whose values were annihilated in time, and it is now in the position of covering the same functional domain ('general purpose') of the Latin Perfect.

## 3.2    *Balkansprachbund* **and the Greek Aorist**

In addition to the genetic inheritance, the linguistic contact with other peoples' languages (e.g. Slavs, Greeks) along history eventually influenced Romanian: mostly at the lexical level (up to 20% of the Romanian vocabulary is of non-Latin origin) and, occasionally, at the level of its morphosyntax as well. It is exactly from this non-Latin influence-along-history domain that the adepts of the *Balkansprachbund*[8] theory extracted arguments for their typological characterizations: (1) a common case system of Balkan languages (Nominative/Accusative, Dative/Genitive and Vocative); (2) postponed article; (3) direct and indirect objects doubled by a clitic (weak) pronoun; (4) future tense formation (analytically with the help of the verb *a voi* 'to want'; (5) avoidance of Infinitive; (6) bare subjunctive constructions.

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[8] The earliest scholar to notice the similarities between Balkan languages belonging to different families was the Slovenian scholar Jernej Kopitar in 1829 but only in the 1920s and 1930s the theory was developed, with important contributions Gustav Weigand (Weigand 1925) and Kristian Sandfeld-Jensen (*Linguistique balkanique*, 1930) (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkan_sprachbund).

The interest in the theory grew (Table 5) as some similarities with the neighbouring languages in the Balkan region were remarked. "Slavic features" refer to the influences affecting the Romanian language at the level of particular dialects: northern varieties (Moldova and Maramureş) – strong Ukrainian, Russian and Polish influences, western varieties of Crişana and Banat have Serbo-Croatian influence, and southern varieties of Wallachia and Dobrudja have Bulgarian influences (Petrucci 1999: 6).

It is actually normal to imagine that the Romanian-Balkan culture contact led to correspondent changes in the Romanian language because "it sometimes happens that languages are in such intimate contact that a wide range of similarities arise between them" (Comrie 1981: 197).

**Table 5:**        Literature on *Balkansprachbund*

| Author/study | Research focus |
|---|---|
| Mihăilă (1960)<br>Rosetti (1967)<br>DuNay (1977)<br>Pătruț (1986) | Study on South Slavic loan words<br>The historic analysis of Proto-Slavic and South Slavic loanwords |
| Petrovici (1957, 1958)<br>Popovici (1960)<br>Rosetti (1964)<br>Shevelov (1965) | Slavic structural features in Romanian |
| Sandfeld (1930)<br>Schaller (1975)<br>Banfi (1985) | *Balkansprachbund* features |

On the other hand, the term 'Balkan' (see also Graur 1958) should be carefully defined, maybe as a geographical delimitation rather than as a linguistic one. It should be also more often emphasized that *Sprachbund* ('linguistic union') denominates languages in areal contact (well-defined geographically intact grouping of languages) that are not the result of common genetic origin (Comrie 1981: 198). Otherwise, confusion may arise: non-linguists can be led to believe that Romanian has more to do with a Slavic language typology than with a Latin/Romance one. Such confusion must be avoided, especially as, up to this moment, typological investigations on Romanian have taken the standard language into account, which resembles, more or less, the language used in the southern part of the country (areal influences should not be ignored). Secondly, the features identified as *Balkansprachbund* are sporadic and represent language characteristics (or: exception-to-the-rule features) which cannot count as definitory for the categorization of a language.

> Still, of the varieties of Romanian other than Istro-Romanian, Daco-Romanian is the least like the core Balkan language – and the most like other Romance languages – while Aromanian and Megleno-Romanian are far more Balkan in their character, at least insofar as the perfect and the preterit tenses are concerned. Affinities that Daco-Romanian may show with Balkan languages in this regard have not been such as to give all parts of its perfect and preterit system an overall Balkan character. (Joseph 1999)

Actually, most 'Balkan'-related linguistic studies mainly identified phonological and morphological features attributable to early Slavic language contact, which are present in all or most of the Romanian dialects: Romanian, Aromanian, Megleno-Romanian, and Istro-Romanian (Petrucci 1999). In what concerns the syntactic elements presumably shared by Romanian and the other Balkan languages (Bulgarian, Albanian, Serbian and Greek), arguments are divided between the Slavic and the Latin origins.

There are also studies (e.g. Joseph 1999) which approach more complex matters, such as the use of (past) tenses in Romanian, from the Romance-*Balkansprachbund* perspective. In these studies, for instance, the StRo PS is analyzed as Aoristic, because it seems to fall into the influence  of the Greek 'Aorist'. The ancient Greek Aorist was rendered through a form of past tense whereas the Modern Greek Aorist (Thumb 1912 (reprinted 1964): 22) is associated with a form of Perfect Simple (gr. *égraspa* 'I've written/I wrote'). The same tendency of development towards a synthetic past tense form has developed in the Aromanian variety. Sandfeld (1930: 105) demonstrates that, in this way, Aromanian shows a more Balkan-oriented, and less Romance-oriented, character. In addition, the southern Aromanian speakers prefer to use the Perfect Simple instead of Past Simple: "it is especially true in the case of the Perfect Simple with the meaning of *perfectum presens*" [translation] (cf. Mallison 1987: 314). This functional transformation can dramatically change the balance of Bybee's time reference strings (1994: 61): Perfective/Preterit is counterbalanced by the Aorist/Perfect/Anterior series.

## 4.        Dialectal-typological analysis of the Perfect Simple

## 4.1        Preservation of the Latin features in the Transylvanian dialect

In Standard Romanian, the tense system of the Indicative Mood seems to be a reflection of the Latin system (cf. Salvi 2004). For example, the formation of the

Past Perfect has preserved, in Romanian, a closer form to Latin than the other Romance languages (except Portuguese).

However, the picture of the Romanian verb cannot be complete if we do not analyze its dialectal forms. In consequence, Table 6 will make a summary of the most remarkable realizations of the Indicative tenses in the Transylvanian dialect, considered as the most prolific variety in the syntactic field (form and use) of the verb:

**Table 6:**          Tense variants (Indicative) in Transylvania

| Tense (Indicative) | Example | Dialect syntactic construction | Standard Romanian form | Dialect function | Standard Romanian function |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *mai mult ca pefect* 'Past Perfect' | ***erau strânşi*** '(they) had gathered' | BE (PC) + Past Participle | *se strânseseră* | past action that is completed before another past | ✓ |
| *imperfect* 'Past Continuous' | ***n-o fost putând***, '(he)was not able ' | BE (PS) + Gerund | *nu putea* | action or state in the past which is perceived as progressive | ✓ |
| | ***era zicând*** '(he) was saying' | BE (PC) + Gerund | *zicea* | | |
| *perfect compus* 'Past Simple' | ***sunt venită*** '(I )came' | BE (Pres.) + Past Participle | *am venit* | past action considered completed at the moment of speaking. | ✓ |
| | ***a fost moartă*** '(he) died' | BE (PS) + Past Participle | *a murit* | | |
| *perfect simplu* 'Perfect Simple' | ***vini*** '(he) has come' | --- | *veni* | past accomplished action | past and recent actions in written narrative discourse |

As it can be noticed, all four past tenses have particular ways of usage in Transylvania, which can be differentiated, additionally, in further subcategories: (i) Past Perfect, Past Continuous and Past Simple are expressed through particular verb structures capable of rendering the meaning/functional role of the StRo tense but, in this way, the functionality indicated by the StRo norms is preserved; (ii) Perfect Simple, on the other hand, does deviate from the standard form but not very much (expect small morphophonemic alternations); its StRo specific use is correlated more with a past accomplished action than with a recently completed action, both values restricted to the written narrative discourse.

The preservation of so many Latin features in the Transylvanian dialect has been explained through the fact that the Transylvanian dialect seems to be a very conservative linguistic variety of Romanian, because of the various geographical and historical factors[9] facilitating the better preservation of the Latin structures than in other parts of the country. There are also theories[10] claiming that the formation of the Romanian people can distinguish between two core areas: Transylvania and southern Romania.

> ...si nous considérons la carte de l´ancienne Dacie trajane [...] nous voyons que la région où les établissements romains étaient plus denses, et par conséquent la romanisation plus intense, coincident avec la région où les mots d´origine latin se sont le mieux conservés. (Pușcariu 1930: 45)

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[9] Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, considered as the ancient capital of Transylvania, became, on Roman time, the capital of the province, Apulum the military centre. Other cities, among them the municipalities Napoca und Potaissa were founded as economic and administrative centres. After the withdrawal of the Romans, the province was the target of various barbarian attacks. That is why a part of the population took refuge in the Apuseni Mountains, preserving in this way, their culture and language. After the 3rd century, a gap exists in the documented history of Transylvania, spanning several centuries. However, it appears proven that part of the "vulgar-Latin" speaking population and mostly Christianized Dacian-Roman population continued to flourish in smaller remote communities. (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Dacia).

[10] This theory has been accepted also by several other European scholars. Gamillscheg (1940) believed that two areas in Romania might be considered core areas/*Kerngebiet* of a Romance population: (a) a small strip of territory along the lower Danube, and (b) the region of the *Muntii Apuseni* in western Transylvania. The consideration which led to the hypothesis of the *Muntii Apuseni* as a Kerngebiet started from linguistic arguments (e.g. *sklab*) (source: http://www.hungarian-history.hu/lib/dunay/dunay08.htm)

It is more than obvious that all the alternative constructions (except Past Continuous to some extent) in this region are closer to constructions in other Romance languages than the StRo equivalent:

| (7) | TrD. | **sunt** | **veni-t-a** |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | be:1SG | come-PART:SG.F |
|  | It. | **sono** | **venu-t-a** |
|  |  | be:1SG | come-PART:SG.F |
|  | Fr. | **suis** | **venu-e** |
|  |  | be:1SG | come-PART:SG.F |
|  | En. | '(they) gathered' |  |

Perfect Simple use respects the general Romance tendency, namely, in Transylvania it is used with the same meaning as that of the Latin Perfect (see Example (7)): past accomplished action. The numerous examples from linguistic investigation in Almaş, set in contrast with similar Romance PS examples, confirm this theory:

(8)    TrD    *Toate*    ***fu-ră***    *acle.*    *Câte le-am avut, toate*
                              be-PS:3PL

***încăp-ură*** *acle.*
fit-PS:3PL

(RecTra_08:43)

'All was there. All that I had fit in there.'

It.    ***Fini- vi***    *i manciari ùora ùora.*
       finish-PS:1SG

(Sicilian dialect)

'I have finished eating an hour ago.'

Even if most examples in Transylvania reflect perfectives with emotional narrative value, the fact that the verb refers to a definite past accomplished action is undeniable (70% of cases). Moreover, we can still invoke the focalized-action theory, inherited from Latin, in order to explain such peculiar (to StRo) use.

In all PS examples, either from recordings or from questionnaires, the common point is that informants use such a tense in order to emphasize the importance of the event, placing it in the foreground (no matter if emotionally involved or not) of their story. One of the most relevant arguments in favour of this theory is the recurrent use of the PS in a temporal subordinate clause, for the sake of emphasis, made by a 92-year old informant:

(9) *Când **să-***      ***ndăli***    *războiu' erau ungurii. Şi unguru' când*
         RFL:3SG      begin-PS.3

     ***să-***                 ***ndăli*** *războiu,*     ***căpătai***     *ordin verde ca să*
     RFL:3SG           begin-PS.3         get-PS:1SG

     *mă duc,. la ăsta, să nu mă duc până tai ovăzu'.*

<div align="right">(RecTra_38.21)</div>

'When the war began, there were the Hungarians. And the Hungarian, when the war began, I got an order, well, not to go till I harvest the rye.'

In fact, the informant always uses Perfect Simple when speaking about a past action in a sentence beginning with *când* 'when'. Actually, the occurrence is even more surprising considering that the action is perfective, the PS use not being justified, neither its equivalence with the Past Simple use. As in Latin, there is a strong correlation between the foreground and its events (perfective) and the background with its discursive features (imperfectives) (Vetters & Mulder 2000: 23).

       When generally evaluating the PS use strategy in Transylvania, we can notice that the narrative use is extensively used but, at the same time, the hodiernal function is spreading. If the older generation makes the distinction between PS for non-hodiernal activities and Past Simple for action-'today' cases, the younger generation has extended the PS use into the latter domain as well. Interestingly, Schwenter (1994) shows that the Alicante Spanish tends to respect the hodiernal versus prehodiernal distinction: hodiernal adverbials (*esta tarde* 'tonight', *hoy* 'today'*, hace una hora* 'an hour ago') trigger the use of Past Simple. Nevertheless, the evolution is contrary to the one noticed in Transylvania: the older generation uses more PS in hodiernal contexts than the younger generation. Madrid speakers, surprisingly, extend the Past Simple use to short-distance prehodiernal narratives (yesterday), whereas PS is used for remote situations.

## 4.2      The Wallachian dialect and its connection to Standard Romanian

The dialect of Wallachia distinguishes between distant and closer past: perfective is used to denote closeness, whereas in standard language "it conveys an ironic connotation or is an imitation of dialect syntax" (Haase 1995: 141).

       If we turn to the standard use of Perfect Simple, we can remark, as previously indicated in Figure 1, that it represents the general use in Romanian (all its varieties included) only at a small rate. That is why we will try to approach those linguistic aspects which may connect the use of Perfect Simple in Romanian with the *Balkansprachbund* theory.

Sandfeld (1930) cites the example (a) *nu s mârti sor mea* 'my sister has not got married' which he contrasts afterwards with the Daco-Romanian (b) *nu s-a măritat sora mea* 'my sister didn't get married'. In any case, Sandfeld's theory has a weakness: in Daco-Romanian such uses as in (a) can be actually encountered, even if the standard variant does not consider them as valid or active in official speech. Wallachians use such sentences very frequently. This means that the Perfect Simple with recent action value may resemble the Greek PS and enter the Balkan feature class.

**Figure 3:** Typology of Romanian PS
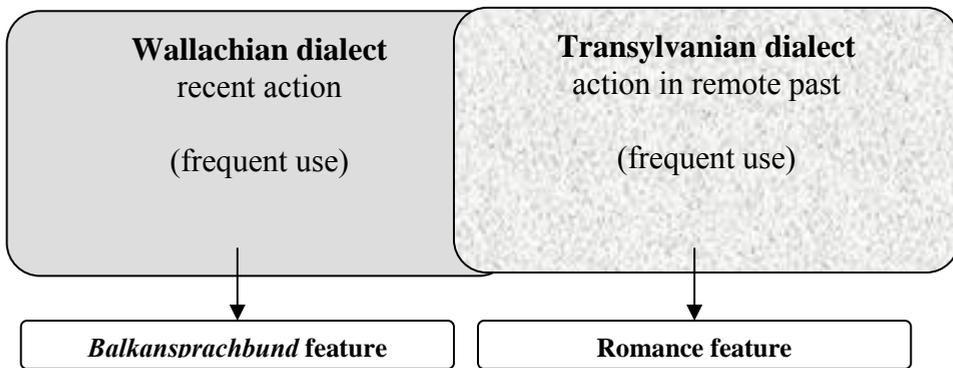


Definitely, PS use in Wallachia, through the sensitivity to proximity to the speech time, is unusual not only for the whole Romance verb system but it should be seen as "strikingly different from that of Standard Romanian" (Manoliu-Manea 1989: 108-109). It is also reported not only to submit to the hodiernal requirement, but also to be used only with non-durative situations, or *limitées*. Accepting its peculiarity, we will, however, refute the separation between the Wallachian use and the Standard Romanian use. It is definitely certain that its Wallachian (Standard Romanian included) manifestation suffers the consequences of an interference with the Greek Aorist or the Serbian influence (Lindstedt 1985).

## 4.3    A double perspective

The double argumentation initiated in Figure 3 can be further developed, because there are other aspects which can be described from the same double perspective. If we look closer into the Perfect-Aorist contrast from a typological perspective, we can notice some inadvertencies at the diachronical level, at least.

In Greek, the Aorist used to express simply a past action (narrative value) whereas the Perfect expresses a present state resulting from a past action. The Perfect has evolved towards the Aorist, without equaling its value (Chantraine 1927: 164). In Byzantine time, the Perfect did not distinguish itself from Aorist any more. In Modern Greek it was replaced by a periphrastic form (Chantraine 1927: 255). Or, it is exactly the same tendency that has been remarked in Romance languages. On the other hand, considering the evolution of Aorist in time, Greek and Romanian belong to the same typological group: ANT: AOR: IMPF area (south) (Thieroff 2000: 280-281).

The double perspective analysis can be extended in the case of Transylvania PS use: as already mentioned, the speakers tend to switch between Perfect Simple and Past Simple, which can be interpreted in two ways: (1) the tendency corresponds to a Romance feature either through the functional competition or its disappearance reflects the emergence of 'general purpose' Aorist; (2) a Balkan influence reflected in the use of the hodiernal PS (mediated by the contact with the Wallachian dialect or imposed by the Standard Romanian norms).

If we develop the topic, insisting on the former perspective above, i.e. Romance features, the co-occurrence of the two competing past tenses (Past Simple and Perfect Simple) in the speech of Transylvanian speakers nowadays can be explained through the fact that the competition between the tenses can be signalled in all Romance languages. The Romanian 'have' periphrastic tense is similar to the French *passé composé* which, in its turn, has replaced the simple Preterit (*passé simple*) from 'normal spoken French' (Harris 1987: 221). Even if in colloquial speech the tense has disappeared, in Standard French the tense is actively used in newspapers (cf. Squartini & Bertinetto 2000: 417) with a contrastive function, and in literary texts, with a propulsive value i.e. foregrounding the action. On the contrary, Standard Romanian has restricted the use of Perfect Simple to the literary register: Savic (1990) even remarks the poor occurrence of the tense in literary translations of books, the tense paradigm being restricted to the 3rd person singular. In this way, Romanian seems to be at the bottom of the Romance scale measuring the tolerance of the standard variety to the PS use (Standard Italian uses both Perfect Simple and Past Simple, Portuguese uses only Perfect Simple) because, in modern Romanian, an analytic *habeo factum* replaces the Latin Perfect. The same phenomenon can be observed in Castilian Spanish (Green 1987: 257) and in northern Italian dialects (Vincent 1987: 279).

> Daco-Romanian seems more like a prototypical member of the Romance language group than a member of the Balkan *Sprachbund*, in that it is taking part in the widespread Romance drift concerning the value of various tense formation. (Joseph 1999)

The first direction of argumentation (1) may also consider the existence of the following functions for the Latin Perfect (*praesens*): narrative past (together with *praeteritum infectum* and *praeteritum perfectum*), conversational narrative (the meaning is anchored in the deictic context of *hodie* 'today) and reflecting the narrator's voice and (Mellet 2000: 98-106). All the variety of functions covered by the Perfect in Latin once can be identifiable at the level of the Transylvanian dialect.

However, if we look deeper into the analysis, we can notice that the second perspective (2) can be, in its turn, counterbalanced by the fact that the hodiernal values are extensively and increasingly used by other Romance varieties: in Spanish, recent past adverbials trigger the use of Past Simple in normal contexts but PS when additional connotations (surprise) are involved:

> (10)  *Hoy*   ***me***        ***he***         ***desperta-do*** *a las cuatro.*
>           RFL:1SG      have-1SG        wake-PART
>
> 'Today I woke up at four'.
>
> *¡ Oh, no! Ya*   ***se***         ***despert-ò***.
>                RFL:1SG      wake-PS:3SG
>
> 'Oh, no! She has already woken up!'

Similarly, in Catalan there is a synthetic Aorist (*cantà* 'he sang') used in spontaneous spoken speech in central Valencian (Thieroff 2000: 279). In American Spanish the Simple Preterit is used "in cases where a purist insists on the present perfect" (presence relevance) (Kany 1951: 161).

> (11)  *¿Ché*   ***pas-ó?***
>                 happen-PS:3SG
>
> 'What happened?'

In addition, some linguists favour theories assuming that in languages with the distinction IMPF:AOR two kinds of developments are noticeable: (a) the development of the Perfect into an Aorist (French) and (b) the development of the Perfect into a Preterit (most Slavic languages and, possibly Romanian) (Haase 1995). In this case, the argument would not be founded if we consider the equivalence between Aorist and Perfect and we cannot accept the Slavic influence as a reasonable explanation for the use in Romanian.

Furthermore, Haspelmath's (2005) presentation of 'have' perfects in Europe (Map 68.1, p. 272) suggests four tense manifestation categories.

Romanian would not fall into any of them but it can be better contrasted with the fourth category, namely the area where a 'have' Perfect has developed into a past or a perfective (e.g. the French area), because Romanian presents, in its Standard form, the opposite phenomenon. On the other hand, Map 165 'Perfective/Imperfective Aspect' (p. 274), shows the integration of Romanian into a more general area of development: Portuguese, Greek, Basque, Spanish, Russian, Bulgarian and a variety of African languages.

       Nevertheless, the most difficult issue is the integration of the Romanian (standard and dialectal) use of Perfect Simple into a European system. The area comprising the Romance, Germanic and Balto-Slavic languages, the Balkan languages and more marginally the westernmost Finno-Ugrian (i.e. core languages) is called Standard Average European (SAE) (cf. Haspelmath 2001: 1492). In this area, the existence of 'have' perfect is noted in all Romance and Germanic languages plus some of the Balkan languages (Albanian, Macedonian and Modern Greek) and also in Czech (cf. Haspelmath 2001: 1495). If we were to refer to the integration of the Romanian Perfect into a EUROTYP category, it would be rather easy to do that on formal criteria, like the ones indicated above: the existence of an analytical Past and of a synthetic Perfect resembles the verb systems of many European languages. From the semantic point of view, the problem is more complicated: (i) Standard Romanian enters a South European category (i.e., clear distinction Aorist: Perfect), (ii) the Wallachian dialect is quite peculiar but its features are similar to some Spanish dialects, whereas (iii) the Transylvanian use equals the values encountered in many French dialects.

       Taking into consideration the oscillation of arguments referring to the use of Perfect Simple in modern Romanian we can try to make an inventory of the typological features set by the Givonian pragmatic system (Givon 1984: 278), for the three varieties investigated here:

**Table 7:**       Integration of Romanian Perfect Simple features into tense-aspect-modality/TAM system (cf. Givon 1984)

|  | perfectivity and accomplishment | current relevance | anteriority | counter-sequentiality |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **StRo** | + | + | + + | - |
| **WalD** | + + | + + + | + | - |
| **TrD** | + + + | + + | + + + | + |

As indicated above, the Romanian verb system can be characterized differently if we look at more varieties of the language: perfectivity and current relevance are, however, the features which appear most often mentioned in typological presentations. Interestingly, in this way we can notice that Perfect Simple in

Transylvania resembles the old Latin use (Preterit) whereas the Wallachian variety subscribes to a Greek-Aorist tendency.

## 5.      Conclusions

The bottom line to the debate questioning the placement of Prefect Simple use in Romanian either into the Romance category or into the *Balkansprachbund* category can be drawn: we can accept that PS in Romanian enters the Balkan (Greek-like system) category as long as we give the Wallachian dialect the availability of a standard use. Anyway, although the dialect in the south of the country is the basis of Standard Romanian, it is not the representative variety of the everyday speech of the common Romanian. As a result, we must actually not ignore the other tense values, e.g., Transylvanian use, which can shed a better light on the typology of the verb system in the Romanian language. It has thus been proved that the typological characterization of a language can be thoroughly made by considering the multiple dialect manifestations of various syntactic structures rather than by restricting the analysis to the standard norm.

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