

# Notes on the Interpretation of the Prepositional Accusative in Romanian

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## 1. Significant previous results and aim of the paper

1.1 Several Romance languages, among which Spanish and Romanian, as well as languages outside the Romance domain show a Prep(ositional) Acc(usative), alongside of a non-prepositional one. While Spanish and other Romance languages (cf. Pensado (1985)) use the Dative preposition *a* 'to', descending from the Latin *ad*, to mark the Prep Acc, Romanian employs the preposition PE 'on'. As suggested by the use of a different preposition, and as confirmed by diachronic studies, the Romanian development is not related to the development of a Prep Acc in the other Romance languages (cf. Rosetti (1978), Pensado (1985), among many).

Currently the Prep Acc must be used with person-denoting proper names and personal pronouns and is optionally used with all person-denoting nouns. Since the Prep Acc is obligatory for proper names and personal pronouns, it has often been interpreted as a mark of "personal" gender and of "identification" in Romanian (cf. Gramatica Academiei, II, 1963:154). In an essential study, Niculescu (1965) argues that, since all person-denoting common nouns may be used with or without *pe* in the Acc, to explain the occurrence of *pe*, it is not sufficient to speak of a personal gender, but the value of *pe* is that of indicating "individualisation or particularisation". The preposition *pe* may appear "in front of any person-denoting common noun, if it refers to a *person known beforehand*, individualised for the speaker at the time of the communicative act."

The theory that *pe* DPs send to individualised, particularised referents, though surely on the right track, encounters difficulties when confronted to the use of *pe* with bare quantifiers like *nimeni* 'nobody', *cineva* 'somebody', *oricine* 'anybody', which cannot be said to refer at all.

A clear perspective of the textual effects that can be obtained through the difference between the prepositional and non-prepositional accusative is given in Manoliu-Manea (1993).

1.2 In the generative tradition, a crucial result is obtained by Dobrovie-Sorin (1994), who investigated the use of *pe* with indefinite DPs. The difference between *pe* DPs and non-*pe* DPs is analysed as a means of disambiguation between specific and non-specific reading of indefinite DPs, in cases like the following:

- (1) a. *Toti bărbații iubesc o femeie.* [± specific]  
All men love a woman
- b. *Toti bărbații (o) iubesc pe o femeie.* [+specific]  
All men (her)-love PE a woman

In her analysis, the *pe* DP is a term, while the prepositionless DP may also be a quantifier, as a consequence of Determiner Raising. Determiner Raising is blocked by the preposition PE; consequently the PE DP is a referential term. This is why *pe* DPs are doubled by clitics in the Left Dislocation construction, and may or must also be doubled in the clitic doubling construction to the right of the verb, as in example (1b).

b) A second correlation has been established within Case theory and says that when a post-verbal direct object is doubled by a pronominal clitic *pe* is *obligatory*. Since the pronominal clitic checks the case feature of the verb, some preposition (*pe* 'on' in Romanian) must be used to case-license the lexical DP; (Kayne's Generalisation).

The correlation between the prepositional case marker and the possible occurrence of the clitic, though attested in Romance, is not universal. Albanian offers the example of a language in

which post-verbal objects may be doubled, even though there is no prepositional marking (cf. Kalluli (1999)). Clitic doubling marks a particular discourse function in Albanian, as well as in other Balkan languages (Greek). In Romanian too, doubling and the Prep Acc are distinct phenomena: their history as well as their current distribution is different (even though there are areas where their semantic-pragmatic effect is similar).

1.3 The aim of this note is to present a unitary account of the use of *pe* 'on' in Romanian, including its use with *nominal*, but also with *pronominal* phrases.

The present proposal is a reinterpretation of the idea that the use of *pe* 'on' in Romanian is a means of expressing *semantic gender*, alongside of grammatical gender. While grammatical gender distinguishes between Masculine and Feminine forms, semantic gender distinguishes between *non-neuter gender* (personal gender) and *neuter gender* (non-personal gender). This hypothesis has a number of consequences.

a) It may conveniently explain the distribution of *pe* 'on', not only with nouns, but also with pronouns and quantifiers.

b) The distinction between semantic and grammatical gender allows one to understand why *pe* may be optional. Namely, while grammatical gender is necessarily marked on the noun's morphology (cf. Coene (1999)), and is thus an *obligatory* feature, semantic gender is an inherent descriptive feature of the noun, which is only *sometimes* marked formally by *pe*, when it is particularly significant, because the intended referent is "prominent". Hence, *pe* is optional *even* for person-denoting nouns.

c) Semantic gender is not unrelated to individualisation since only individualised referents are granted "person" status.

d) The presence of *pe* with lexical DPs places constraints on their denotations. DPs, which are salient enough for their inherent "personal" gender to be marked, always have *object-level* readings. Of the specific denotation of DPs, they select the *argumental denotations* <e> (object) and <<et>t>(generalized quantifier). Crucially, they *lack the property reading* <et>, and are simply excluded from those contexts which require property readings. Likewise, *pe* DPs lack the *kind* interpretation which is related to the property reading.

## 2. PE with pronouns ( quantifiers and determiners)

A successful account of the Prep Acc should integrate its use with the bare quantifiers (BQs), as well as definite pronouns, since in this area there are sharp contrasts: *pe* 'on' is either obligatory or impossible. In this section, we briefly survey the use of *pe* with BQ, definite determiners and pronouns, and indefinite determiners.

### 2.1. Bare quantifiers

BQs clearly express the contrast between forms which "refer to persons" and forms that refer to non-persons. *Pe* is *obligatory* with the former and impossible with the latter.

- (2)
- a. *nimeni* 'nobody' / *nimic* 'nothing'
  - b. *cineva* 'somebody' / *ceva* 'something'
  - c. *oricine* 'anyone' / *orice* 'anything'
  - c. *cine* 'who' / *ce* 'what'
  - d. *Am văzut pe cineva ieșind.*  
I saw PE someone going out

The Romanian BQ system morphologically differs from that of definite pronouns with respect to *gender*. Definite pronouns (e.g., personal pronouns, demonstratives) vary according to *grammatical* gender and number. They are fully specified for grammatical gender, disposing of distinct morphologic gender-marked forms, such as *acesta* (M, Sg), *aceasta* (F, Sg), *aceștia* (M, Pl), *acestea* (F, PL), etc. As the forms in (2) show, the BQ system is organised according to *semantic* gender, being identical to that of a language that has semantic gender like English, where pairs like *nobody/ nothing* illustrate the same contrast. In English, it is customary to first oppose the [+Neuter]

forms *it*, *nothing*, to the [-Neuter] forms, *nobody*, *he*, *she*, while further distinguishing, within [-Neuter] forms the [+Masculine] *he*, from the [+Feminine] *she*.

The relevant binary opposition, which may be adopted for semantic gender in Romanian as well, is the opposition [ $\pm$ Neuter]. [-Neuter] DPs are semantically [+Person] and require the use of *pe* in the Acc. [+Neuter] DPs are semantically [-Person] and will not require *pe* in the Acc.

In the case of BQs, which through their inherent semantics do not refer at all, the semantic gender feature characterises an *in-built restriction on their domain of quantification*. Accordingly, the “personal” [-Neuter] BQs are restricted to vary on a domain of “personal”, *object level variables*.

- (3) Nimeni n-a venit.  
There is no x such that x is a person and x came.

This discussion allows us to state a Generalization which is valid for both pronouns and lexical DPs:

- (4) *Pe* selection

The preposition *pe* is not selected in the Accusative, if the DP is specified for semantic gender as [+Neuter], that is, [-Person].

## 2.2 Demonstratives and other definite determiners

With demonstratives, what is striking is the difference between the determiner and the pronominal use. When the demonstrative is a determiner, the use of PE is determined by the semantics of the noun. Thus, PE is excluded if the noun is semantically [+Neuter] (non-person), and it is allowed otherwise. (see (5a) vs. (5c)). In contrast, PE is *required when the demonstrative is used as a pronoun*, that is, with a null *pro* head.

- (5) a. *Vrei creioanele acestea/ \*pe creioanele acestea ?*  
Want ( you) pencils-the these / PE pencils-the these  
'Do you want these pencils?'  
b. *Nu, le vreau pe acelea.*  
No, them-want (I) PE those.  
No, I want those.  
c. *Îl vezi pe omul acesta?*  
Him-see (you) PE man the-this  
'Do you see this man?'

Romanian has two other definite determiners which behave like the demonstratives, the “adjectival” article CEL and the possessive article AL. CEL DPs are exactly like demonstratives, that is, they take the Prep Acc when the DP has no lexical head. When there is a head, the semantic properties of the head determine the use of PE. Pronominal AL DPs always require PE, since they always lack lexical heads:

- (6) a. *Maria a ales cele două rochii pentru călătorie.*  
Mary has chosen CEL(F, Pl) two dresses for trip.  
'Mary has chosen the two dresses for the trip.'  
b. *Le-a ales pe cele de mătase*  
Them-has (she) chosen PE CEL(F, Pl) of silk.  
'She has chosen the silk ones.'

The contrast between the determiner and the pronominal use of the demonstratives may be shown to follow from the generalization in (4') on *pe* selection.

In the determiner use, the head noun selects *pe* function of the inherent semantic [-Neuter] gender feature. The preposition *pe* may be viewed as a functional head, carrying the feature [-Neuter]. The preposition PE activates a probe in its domain, specifically, the inherent corresponding feature in the NP. There is an *Agree* relation between them, in the sense of Chomsky (1999). Nouns

like *creion* 'pencil' are always [-Person], therefore [+Neuter], and cannot check the [-Neuter] feature of *pe*. Person-denoting nouns like *copil* 'child' appear to be problematic since they only optionally select *pe*. To formally express the optionality of *pe*, we propose that in the lexicon, person-denoting nouns are underspecified for the feature [Person], being marked [ $\alpha$ Person]. In particular situations, to be discussed below, [ $\alpha$ Person] is realized as [+Person], i.e. [-Neuter], in which case *pe* is selected. The specification [ $\alpha$ Person] on the other hand is not sufficient for checking the [+Person] feature, since [ $\alpha$ Person] does not entail [-Neuter]. We will therefore rephrase (4) as (4'):

(4') *Pe* Selection

The preposition *pe* is not selected in the Accusative if a DP is specified for semantic gender as [-Person], that is, [+Neuter] or [ $\alpha$  Person]. PE is obligatory otherwise.

Let us now consider the pronominal use of the demonstratives, where *pe* is used irrespective of the semantics of the intended noun (see (5b) or (6b)). If the demonstrative is pronominal, the nominal head is null, i.e., it is *pro*. Demonstratives are projected as specifiers (cf. Giusti (1992)) which agree in gender, number and case with their nominal heads, whether the latter is lexical or *pro*. *Pro* is merely a bundle of grammatical features and does not carry any descriptive [Person] feature. With *pro*, only the grammatical gender feature is available. The grammatical gender feature [+Masculine] or [+Feminine] of *pro* entails [-Neuter] and is thus sufficient to require *pe* in accordance with (4'). and to check the [-Neuter] feature of *pe* by Agree. Thus, the descriptive generalization in (4') guarantees that *pe* will be used when the demonstratives are used pronominally.

Evidence for this proposal comes from the existence of "neuter" demonstrative pronouns, the most familiar of which is *asta* 'this'. These neuter forms *always refer to a propositional content*, a type of denotation which is neither masculine nor feminine, but semantically [+Neuter]. Formally, these demonstratives agree with a *pro* head that stands for a clause. The clausal pronominal substitute *pro* is always semantically [+ Neuter ] (cf. also Iatridou (1997)).

What matters for us is that *pe* is impossible with these neuter forms. For instance, neuter *asta* 'this' appears without *pe* in post-verbal or in preverbal position, even in the unlikely situation that it is doubled by a clitic.

- (6) a. Eu am spus asta.  
I have said this.  
*Asta am spus: să mergem la cinema*  
This (I) have said: SA go (SUBJ) to cinema.  
'This is what I have said: we should go to the cinema.'  
*Asta am mai spus-o: Ion este de vină*  
This (I) have said-it: Ion is to blame.  
'I have said this before: Ion is to blame.'  
\**Pe asta (o) spun: să mergem la cinema.*  
PE this (I) (it-) say: SA go (SUBJ) to cinema.  
This is what I am saying: we should go to the cinema.

The marking for semantic [+ Neuter ] gender explains why *pe* is impossible in the examples above. On this point [+Neuter] *asta* behaves like the [+ Neuter ] BQs, which also exclude PE.

- (7) a.N-am spus asta/ nimic.  
not-have said this /nothing.  
\*N-am spus pe asta / pe nimic.  
not-have said PE this /nothing.

Since morphologically Romanian distinguishes only between [+Feminine] and [+Masculine] forms, each subsystem chooses one default to represent the semantically neuter use. In the case of

demonstratives, the default is the [+Feminine] form, *asta* (F, sg) 'this'. In the case of lexical adjectives, the default is the [Masculine] or the "adverbial" form. The neuter use of the demonstrative is precisely signalled by this apparent incongruity of a [+Feminine] pronoun *asta* 'this' agreeing with the [+Masculine] form of the adjective.

- (9) Trebuie sa ajungem la timp la gară. Asta este cel mai important.  
Must (we) arrive in time at station. This is the most important.  
'We must arrive at the station in time. This is the most important thing.'

The same explanation works for the standard Romanian relative *care* 'who, which'. It operates in the same way as the demonstrative pronouns. *Care* is also projected as a specifier, in DPs containing a nominal *pro* head, carrying the grammatical gender of the antecedent. It is this feature which triggers the use of PE. Notice that *care* (who, which), like the demonstrative pronouns, is "blind" to semantic gender.

- (10) ...cartea pe care ai comport-o  
...book-the PE which (you) bought-it  
...'the book which you bought'...

2.3. Personal pronouns are definite DPs which, depending on the analysis adopted, have no nominal heads and carry an inherent grammatical gender feature or have a null head *pro*, like the pronouns discussed above. As with demonstratives, the grammatical gender feature is sufficient to trigger the obligatory use of PE.

- (11) Petru l-a numit pe EL.  
Peter him-has appointed PE HIM.  
'Petru appointed HIM.'

RESULT. We conclude that with definite pronouns, including demonstratives personal pronouns, the relative *care*, the grammatical gender feature[+Masculine] or [+Feminine] is interpreted as [-Neuter], that is, as sufficient gender marking to trigger the use of *pe* in the Acc. The grammatical gender feature is either inherent in the pronoun, or acquired by agreement with a nominal *pro*. Since *pro* has only grammatical features, there can be no potential disagreement between semantic and grammatical gender, so the grammatical gender features do double duty, triggering the use of *pe*, irrespective of the descriptive gender properties of the referent.

### 3.4. Indefinite pronouns and determiners

We will lump under this term all the weak determiners, the indefinite determiner *un/o* 'a', the negative *nici un/ nici o* 'no', the indefinite *vreun-vreo* 'some', 'any', the lexical quantifiers: *multi*

'many', *puțini* 'few', cardinals which all behave in the same way. The use of *pe* depends on the properties of the head noun, *whether or not the head noun is present*. In other words the use of *pe* depends on the properties of the referent, always being semantically determined. With weak (indefinite) determiners, there is then no difference between the determiner and the pronominal use.

- (12) a. Am văzut mulți copaci înfloriți / multi elevi studioși.  
(I) have seen many trees blossoming / many pupils hardworking.  
'I have seen many blossoming trees/ hardworking pupils.'  
b. Am văzut mulți.  
(I) have seen many.  
(13) a. (I)-am văzut pe mulți elevi studioși.  
Them-(I) have seen PE many pupils hardworking  
'I have seen many hardworking pupils.'  
b. (I)- am văzut pe mulți făcând asta.  
Them -(I) have seen PE many doing this.

'I have seen many doing this.'  
 c. (I)-am văzut pe acești mulți elevi studioși  
 Them-(I) have seen PE these many pupils hardworking  
 'I have seen these many hardworking pupils.'

We suggest that the different behaviour of definites/ indefinites is the result of different strategies of concord, which are the consequence of the semantics of the weak determiners. Notice first that, in addition to the determiner use, when they license the NP themselves, most weak determiners may also have an *adjectival use* where they occur after the strong definite determiners, as in (13c). This distribution suggests that weak determiners originate in a lower position than strong determiners. We will follow Giusti (1992) and Zamparelli (1995), who argue convincingly that the DP is a layered structure. The top of the DP structure is the projection hosting the strong (=definite) determiners. The next layer is that of the weak determiners.

Weak determiners are all generated in this lower projection and they are essentially *adjectival*. The lower position of the indefinites is associated with a *predicative* (cardinal, non-presuppositional) interpretation. Their adjectival properties are clearly marked when they appear in post-determiner position, in DPs of type (13c). (See for details regarding the difference between the determiner and the adjectival use Giusti (1992)). Naturally the indefinites may optionally check a D feature by raising to the D projection.

What matters for this discussion is that weak determiners are *adjectival* and *predicative*, so that they may not only *c-select*, but also *s-select* their complement. As a result of their predicative "descriptive content", *they may pick up semantic gender*, i.e., the specification that the referent is [ $\pm$ Neuter], in the same way in which predicative adjectives may *s-select* null *pro* subjects. The semantic gender feature can be acquired "from the context", through some kind of local anaphoric relation, etc. Indefinites are thus sensitive to the difference between semantic gender and grammatical gender and will be able to license *pe*, *function of the grammatical gender feature*, just as if the lexical head noun were present.

**CONCLUSION** With pronouns and bare quantifiers, *pe* is a manifestation of (semantic) gender, systematically appearing with pronouns which end up being specified as [-Neuter], in one of the ways described above. The hypothesis that the relevant feature in understanding the distribution of *pe* is semantic gender appears to be fruitful.

### 3. PE in DPs with nominal heads. The basic generalisations.

Semantic gender is an inherent feature in DPs, but it is only optionally formally marked, when the feature "person" [-Neuter] acquires particular significance. The contribution of *pe* 'on' will come out more clearly precisely in those cases where *pe* 'on' is optional. As known, Niculescu (1965) argued at length that animacy or personhood (i.e., semantic gender) is not sufficient to bring about the use of *pe* 'on'. Instead, he proposed that the preposition *pe* appears with a person-denoting DP, only if the latter refers "to a person known beforehand and individualised for the speaker during the act of communication".

However, we believe that the idea of *semantic gender and individualisation are related*. Specifically, it appears that *semantic gender, i.e., person-status is granted only to particularised individuals*. In slightly more technical terms, this amounts to saying that *pe* is called for when a person-denoting DP is explicitly given an *object-level reading*, because the referent is known or otherwise salient. *Pe* DPs are thus semantically constrained, in that out of the range of possible DP denotations, they may have only the argumental, object-level denotations <e> ( entity, object ) and <<et>t>> (generalized quantifier), while they lack the predicative, property denotation <et>.

This characterisation of the semantic effects of PE, based on semantic gender, accounts for all its distributional properties with nominal heads and has proved to also be applicable to the use of *pe* 'on' with definite pronouns and bare quantifiers. The desirable effects of this characterisation is

that it allows us to predict when *pe* is obligatory and when it is excluded. The following empirical generalisations can be stated:

(14)

*Generalisation 1*

Pe 'on' is obligatory with those DPs which *allow only e-type readings*. Consequently, *pe* 'on' is obligatory with proper names which have only e-type denotations.

*Generalisation 2*

Pe 'on' is impossible in those contexts where a property reading or a kind reading is the only possible one. Consequently, the Prep Acc is not possible with verbs that require a property reading of their object.

While *Generalisation 1* has long been known, though not stated in these terms, *Generalisation 2* has not, as far as we know, been stated so far.

3.1. *Proper names*

In our view, the general property of *pe* DPs is that they have *e*-type (object-level) denotations, but not *<e t>* (property) denotations. The prediction is that *pe* 'on' will be obligatory with those DPs which can have only *e*-type reference. This is the case of (person-denoting) proper names. Indeed, the only category of lexical nouns with which PE is obligatory in contemporary Romanian is that of proper names.

Historically, PE arose from the need to differentiate the subject from the object in case both were animate and personal, especially when both DPs were post-verbal, as in the following XVI<sup>th</sup> century example, quoted by Rosetti (1978: 549)

- (15)    ..au adus Stanislav p(r)e Voicu român...  
          ..have brought Stanislas P(R)E Voicu Romanian-the

Evidence that proper names have only the object-level, *e*-type reading is the fact that they are excluded from contexts which require the property reading, *because* they lack the property reading. One construction where the property reading is the only possible one is the *se* (reflexive) passive. Significantly, proper names, as well as personal pronouns, which lack the property reading, are excluded from this construction, though they are allowed as subjects in *fî* 'be'-passives. Thus, the bare plural in (16), which typically has a property reading (cf. Dobrovie-Sorin&Laka (1996)), is a felicitous subject in the SE passive, while the proper name in (17) is not.

- (16)    a. *S-au adus cămăși.*  
          SE-have brought shirts.  
          b. *Au fost aduse cămăși.*  
          Have been brought shirts  
          'Shirts have been brought.'  
          (17) a. *\*S-a adus Ion la judecată*  
          SE-has brought Ion to trial.  
          b. *Ion a fost adus la judecată.*  
          Ion has been brought to trial.  
          'Ion has been brought to trial.'

3.2. *PE DPs lack the property reading.*

Romanian disposes of one type of DP/NPs which can only express *properties*, these are the *bare singular NPs* (cf. Kalluli (1999)). There are predicates whose object position allows only a property denotation, so that the verb and the direct object make up a derived complex predicate. Thus, in the intended reading only bare singulars or singular indefinites (which both allow the property reading) may be used as objects of such verbs. An example of this kind is the verb *avea*

'have'. Notice that, while the non-prepositional indefinite is perfect, the PE indefinite is excluded (see (18c)) even though the lexical head is person-denoting.

- (18) a. *Ion are nevastă tânără.*  
 Ion has wife young .  
 b. *Ion are o nevastă tânără.*  
 Ion has a wife young.  
 c. \**Ion (o) are pe o nevastă tânără.*  
 Ion has PE a wife young.  
 'Ion has a young wife.'

Other verbs that belong to the same paradigm are the following: a *pretinde* 'claim, demand', *cere* 'request' *dori* 'wish' *vrea* 'want'. Notice that they are all intensional verbs:

- (19) a. *Ion pretinde/ cere/ vrea/ dorește nevastă tânără.*  
 Ion claims / requests/ wishes wife young.  
 b. *Ion pretinde/ cere/ vrea dorește o nevastă tânără.*  
 Ion claims / requests/ wishes a wife young.  
 c. \**Ion (o) pretinde/ cere/ vrea dorește pe o nevastă tânără..*  
 Ion (her)-claims / requests/ wishes PE a wife young.  
 'Ion claims / requests / wishes a young wife.'

With some of these intensional verbs *pe* DPs are possible, but the meaning is significantly different.

- (20) *Ion a cerut-o pe o fată frumoasă.*  
 Ion has requested-her PE a girl beautiful.  
 'Ion has proposed to a beautiful girl.'

It is expected that the *kind* reading which is related to the property reading (even though exactly how is a matter of some controversy) is also impossible with *pe* DPs. This prediction is borne out (see below).

Thus the proposed interpretation of *pe* DPs - semantic gender entailing individual object readings - correctly draws the boundaries of the distribution of this nominal type, specifying those contexts where it is obligatory and those where it is impossible.

On the other hand, in contexts where both <e> and <et> interpretations are allowed, the Prep Acc competes with non-prepositional one, the choice of either form often having interpretative consequences.

#### 4 Glancing at functional explanations.

The alternation between the prepositional and the non-prepositional Acc in marking the direct object cross-linguistically has been a matter of considerable interest among functional grammarians, who discussed it from a pragmatic-typological perspective. Several relevant generalisations have been discovered in this area of apparently free syntactic variation. As will be seen, the Romanian data corroborate this pragmatic typology, but the functional explanations remain partial.

From a functional semantic perspective, the use of a Prep Acc, alongside of a non-Prep Acc can be related to (at least) two phenomena: a) the contrast between "high transitivity" and "low transitivity" present in many languages (cf. Hopper&Thomson (1980)); b) the correlation between argument structure and grammatical functions (cf. Comrie (1981)).

According to Hopper & Thomson (1980), transitivity is a matter of degree. The highest degree of transitivity is manifest in sentences whose direct object is, in order, a proper name, a person denoting noun, an animate DP, a concrete DP, a DP in the singular, a countable DP, a referential or



definite DP. DPs in the upper part of the list are "prominent". Different strategies of Direct Object marking are used to mark more or less prominent types of DPs.

Viewed from this angle, the use of *pe* with Direct Object is a means of marking the higher transitivity of sentences having proper names or person-denoting common names as objects. At the other end of the scale, to express low transitivity, Romance languages may use reflexive verbs with prepositional objects, to replace the transitive verbs with Acc objects (prepositional or not), since the use of the Acc indicates higher transitivity. Also, to express low transitivity, a more prominent Accusative may get replaced by a less prominent inherent prepositional case. Romanian makes use of both strategies of marking low transitivity, illustrated below:

- (21) a. *Ion întâlnește (pe) un prieten.*  
 Ion meets PE a friend.  
 b. *Ion se întâlnește cu un prieten.*  
 Ion SE meets with a friend.
- (22) a. *Mi-l amintesc pe Ion.*  
 (I) to me-him -remember PE Ion.  
 'I remember Ion.'  
 b. *Îmi amintesc de Ion.*  
 (I) -to me-him -remember of Ion.  
 I remember about John.

The hypothesis that PE marks the high transitivity of sentences having person-denoting direct objects fails to explain the optionality of PE with person-denoting DPs.

A functional hypothesis is also advanced by Comrie (1981). According to him, prototypically and statistically, subjects are usually [+personal] and [+definite], while objects are typically [-personal] and [-definite]. When the object is above or equal to the subject in rank, regarding these features, this degree of prominence in the object requires special marking. The prediction will be that [+Person, ± definite] objects may require special type of marking, especially when the subject is [-Personal].

*Summing up, these two proposals, we may say that PE is used to up-grade, re-rank the DO, giving it (at least) the same rank as the subject.*

A recent variant of the same principle, discussed in connection with Spanish data, is Torrego's "Agentivity Constraint": The object is marked as prominent if it is [+Animate] (for Spanish) and if the subject is active, that is, it is thematically an Agent or a Cause.

- (23) Agentivity Constraint (Torrego, 1999)  
 If the verb has an object in marked (=prepositional) Accusative, then the subject must be an Agent or Cause.

In Romanian, the prepositional Acc seems to be preferred when the object is [+Person] while the subject is an abstract Cause (i.e. [-Person]), being active but lower than the object on the personhood scale. This preference is a manifestation of the same Agentivity/ Cause Constraint.

- (24) a. *Vinul l-a îmbătat pe căpitan.*  
 Wine-the him-has got drunk PE captain.  
 b. *\*?Vinul a îmbătat căpitanul.*  
 Wine-the has got drunk captain-the.  
 'The wine has got the captain drunk.'
- (25) a. *Haina face pe om.* (Proverb)  
 Coat-the makes PE man  
 b. *\*?Haina face omul.*  
 'It is the coat that makes a man.'  
 c. *Mânia îl orbește pe om.* (Slavici)

Anger him blinds PE man.  
'Anger blinds man.'

REMARK. In Romanian, in the context of a preposition, the definite article is not used if the noun it determines has no modification. The interpretation is definite, as can be seen from the glosses in (24/25) and elsewhere in the text. On the missing article see Giusti (1992).

In Romanian the Prep Acc is particularly frequent when the subject is a Cause, though not when it is an Agent. Notice an example where the subject and the object are both person-denoting, the subject is an Agent, but *pe* is not used.

- (26) ....unii năpăstuiesc omul chiar pe sfânta dreptate (Creangă)  
'some wrong man-the even against holy justice'  
...some people will wrong a man even against holy justice.

The relevance of the thematic role of the subject (Cause, Agent) may be seen in examples where the subject, though definite is not a Cause. The preposition *pe* is dispreferred.

- (27) a. *Situația cerea un conducător ferm.*  
Situation-the demanded a leader strong.  
b. ?*Situația cerea pe un conducător ferm.*  
Situation-the demanded PE a leader strong.  
'The situation demanded a strong leader

Marking a DP as semantically non-neuter may be a means of upgrading the referent on the scale of animacy, as in the case of personifications:

- (28) *Ana nu-i putea suferi pe acești câini.*  
Ana not-them could stand PE these dogs.  
Ana couldn't stand those dogs.

The general point one can make summing up on the functional proposals, is that *pe* is used to upgrade or re-rank the DP, giving it (at least) equal rank as the subject. These metaphorical explanations are suggestive and should be used in an attempt to give a more precise and complete description of the phenomenon.

Taking stock of the observations made so far, semantic gender is formally marked, if the referent is individualised, i.e., *treated as* a person and therefore upgraded; formally that amounts to saying that the DP must be assigned an e-type, or <<et>t>> denotation.

While the choice of *pe* depends on the semantic gender of the noun, the interpretation of the *pe* DP naturally *also depends on the determiner*. In the following, we examine the behaviour of PE with indefinite and definite DPs.

### 5. PE with indefinites

As already stated, our main hypothesis is that *pe* induces an object level reading. Furthermore, in the case of indefinites, an upgraded, individualised reading will amount to *discourse linking and specificity*.

Of the three related types of specificity discussed in Farkas (1995), relevant for the use of *pe* is a (relativized sort of) *epistemic specificity*: Farkas discusses epistemic specificity in relation to the view proposed earlier by Fodor and Sag (1982) that indefinites are lexically ambiguous between a referential and a quantificational use. Fodor and Sag's intuitive characterization of the ambiguity is that in the case of the specific reading, the speaker has an intended *referent in mind*. The indefinite has *widest* scope, because it is a constant which does not in fact participate in scope ambiguities. In the non-specific use, the indefinite is quantificational and therefore it does not refer. Farkas's

epistemic specificity is a reinterpretation of the referential use. The advantage of her analysis is that it can naturally be extended to other cases which may be described as *epistemically specific*, though they are not referential in the understanding of Fodor and Sag. Such an extension is to be found in Kennelly (1999).

Let us assume, with Farkas (1995), that the *context of the speech act* includes a set of propositions  $P_0$  which are the *common ground* of the conversation, which determine a set of possible worlds  $W(P_0)$ , called the *context set*. Similarly, we may assume that the cognitive state of an individual  $i$  is represented by a set of propositions  $P_i$ , the propositions  $i$  takes as being true of the actual world. The propositions in  $P_i$  represent the *epistemic modal base of  $i$* , determining a set of worlds  $W(P_i)$ . Assertions made in a context will affect the common ground and the epistemic model of the speaker.

a) We may now characterize *epistemic specificity* in terms of the status of the indefinite term with respect to the *speaker's epistemic model*. If the indefinite is epistemically specific, the speaker will be taken to have fixed the referent, so that the indefinite *refers rigidly* with respect to the worlds in the *epistemic modal base of the speaker*, though not necessarily with respect to the worlds in the common ground. We thus get a notion of *speaker specificity*, the referent of *the indefinite is anchored with respect to the speaker*.

b) But as shown in Kennelly (1999) an indefinite may also be anchored with respect to some other referent already introduced in the discourse. Thus the referent of an indefinite direct object may be rigidly determined with respect to the epistemic set of the subject or an indirect object. There is some text-internal relation which makes the indefinite salient (and thus rigid) for the referent of the subject or the indirect object. Indefinites whose interpretation is dependent on that of other referents, which locally bind the indefinites are labelled *specific d-linked indefinites* by Kennelly. As stressed by Kennelly, specific indefinites are intrinsically *relational*. In Turkish, for instance, if there is a conventionalised relation between the subject /object co-arguments of a predicate (such as the relation car vs. car mechanic in the example below), the object is formally marked as specific, by using an Accusative clitic.

- (29) ?Su tamarici bir arabayı tamir etti ( from Kennelly 1999: 7)  
 That mechanic a car-Acc repaired  
 'That mechanic repaired a (specific) car.'

c) At the limit two co-arguments in a sentence may also be related as the domain and the range of some function explicit or implicit in the context. Both arguments are defined on the domain of the discourse of the context of speech. The referent of the indefinite is precisely the range of such a function. This gives rise to a *functional interpretation of the indefinite DP*. (See examples in (32)).

Kennelly notices that in Turkish in all of the situations a)-c) an indefinite bears an Accusative clitic as a marker of specificity. Kennelly thus interprets specificity as the possibility of anchoring the indefinite with respect to the speaker or to another DP, calling this "specificity as d-linking". The relation between specificity as d-linking and epistemic specificity should be obvious.

We believe that indefinites marked by *pe* exhibit the same sort of (epistemic) specificity, more generally interpreted as d-linking, in the sense explained above.

a) There are thus examples of *pe* DPs which are *speaker specific*. The speaker "has in mind" a particular referent. The DP is referential. The specific DP is a term and has wide scope (or rather, it does not participate in scope ambiguities).

- (30) a.....unde să vizitez pe niște vechi și buni prieteni, familia Ronetti Roman. (Caragiale)  
 ...where (I) should visit some old and good friends, family-the Ronetti Roman.  
 '...where I should visit PE some good old friends, the Ronetti Roman family.'  
 b. Ion l-a întâlnit la Paris pe un fost prieten al meu.  
 Ion him-has met in Paris a former friend of mine.  
 'Ion met a former friend of mine in Paris.'

b) In the second place, the specific indefinite DP may be bound by a DP in the local context. For instance, the specific *pe* DP object may be linked to the subject or the indirect object of the sentence, i.e. the referent may be rigid with respect to the subject or the indirect object, uniquely determined with respect to the respective epistemic sets. These are the cases described above by functionalists as “re-ranking” of the object, i.e., upgrading of the direct object to express a special (specificity) relation with the subject or with another argument. Here are examples.

- (31) a. O femeie numai în cămașă ține strâns de piept pe un om îmbrăcat în uniformă.  
(Caragiale 15)  
A woman only in nightie grabs tightly by the chest PE a man dressed in uniform.  
b. Întreb cu respect pe un domn impiegat "pe ce linie est tras trenul de Iași." (Caragiale)  
(I) ask with respect PE a railway clerk "on what platform has pulled in the train to Iasi.

c) It is important to stress that specificity (and discourse-linking) *is not the same as referentiality*, or widest scope, since as will be seen, a DP can be specific, without designating a particular individual and without having wide scope

In fact, *pe* indefinite DPs *may have narrow scope and exhibit referential multiplication*, if they are focussed and if they are bound by an appropriate *distributive subject or indirect object*, in functional readings. Thus, in the following examples, there is multiplication and narrow scope, in spite of *pe* and of clitic doubling. The anchoring specificity relation is often expressed by the indefinite DP itself. For instance, in b) below the anchoring relation is *friend(x, y)*, a binary relation that links each member of the distributive subject, *every member of parliament* to some friend of his, salient enough to have become his secretary.

- (32) a) Fiecare ziarist (l)-a prezentat pe un anumit ministru.  
Every journalist has presented PE a certain member of parliament.  
'Every journalist has presented a certain member of parliament.'  
b) Fiecare parlamantar l-a numit secretar pe un prieten.  
Every member of parliament him-has appointed secretary PE a friend.  
'Every member of parliament has appointed a friend (of his) as secretary.'  
c) Fiecare doctor a îngrijit cu devotament pe un cunoscut al său.  
Every doctor has treated with devotion PE an acquaintance of his.  
'Every doctor has treated an acquaintance of his with devotion.'  
d) I-am încredințat fiecărui părinte pe fiul său.  
(I) have entrusted to every parent PE his son.

In all these examples, the object is focussed and locally bound by a distributive quantifier functioning as subject (32 a-c) or as indirect object (32d). The *pe* indefinite has narrow scope and shows referential multiplication. In such examples *pe* DPs are not referential, but quantificational in the sense of Fodor & Sag. However they are specific, that is, d-linked. It is obvious that the difference between the Prep Acc and the non-Prep Acc is not that between referential and quantificational DPs, since *pe* DPs cannot be both referential and quantificational.

The *pe* DP is referential if it is anchored by the speaker or if the subject or indirect object cannot distribute. In such cases, PE disambiguates an indefinite DP towards the referential reading. For many examples of this type see Dobrovie-Sorin (1994).

- (33) a. În fiecare zi, Ion întâlnește o fată la cinema. (ambiguous).  
'Every day, Ion meets a girl at the cinema.'  
b. În fiecare zi, Ion o întâlnește pe o fată la cinema. (non-ambiguous)  
Every day, Ion her-meets PE a girl at the cinema.  
'Every day Ion meets a girl at the cinema.'

In other words, the only thing *pe* guarantees for indefinite DPs is *an object-level d-linked interpretation* –referential or quantificational-, a reading which excludes the property denotation. D-linking signals particular epistemic states of the speaker or of other discourse referents, but does not influence truth conditions.

The non-prepositional object alone allows the object to have the property reading: a situation where the direct object does not multiply and is not salient either.

- (34) In pauză, unii parlamentari fumau o țigară, alții citeau un ziar.  
'During the break, some parliament members would smoke a cigarette, others would read a newspaper.'

In addition to the property reading, the non-Prep Acc, which is semantically unconstrained, may also have both readings of the Prep Acc: referential and quantificational:

- (35) a. *De câțva timp, Ion vizitează zilnic o anumită femeie.* (referential).  
For some time, Ion visits daily a certain woman.  
'For some time, Ion has paid daily visits to a certain woman.'  
b. *Fiecare examinator va examina un student pe zi.* (quantificational)  
Every examiner will examine a student by day.  
'Every examiner will examine one student a day.'

The effect of PE is to restrict the possible denotations of the DP, excluding the property reading.

**CONCLUSION** The discussion of indefinites leads to several conclusions: Indefinite *pe* DPs are specific in the sense that they are d-linked. Specific *pe* DPs may be *speaker specific* (i.e., known to the speaker) or locally bound by another discourse referent (i.e., anchored by a local subject or indirect object). When the indefinite *pe* DP is locally bound, it may participate in scope ambiguities, and crucially, it may have narrow scope with respect to the DP which binds it, allowing it to multiply. Romanian *pe* DPs behave like DPs marked by Accusative clitics in Turkish, where the clitic is also a mark of d-linking. *Specificity as d-linking is a concept close to, if not identical with, what Farkas (1994) called epistemic specificity.*

## 6. PE DPs with definite DPs.

As already noticed for indefinites, the effect of *pe* is to upgrade the referent of the DP on the epistemic scale, treating it as d-linked (known, salient. i.e., "more individualised"). The semantic effect of the preposition goes in the direction of the determiner, since the definite article also marks a DP as 'familiar' (cf. Heim (1982)). The intuitively felt contrast between the Prep and the non-Prep Acc may be appreciated in pairs like the following:

- (36) *Ghița luă pe copil în brațe și-l sărută.* (Slavici)  
Ghita picked [PERF] up PE child in his arms and-him kissed.  
'Ghita picked up the child in his arms and kissed him.'  
(37) *Duminică, bătrâna primea copiii...* (Slavici)  
Sunday, old woman-the washed[IMPERF] children-the.  
'Sunday, the old woman would wash the children.'

The non-prepositional Acc was chosen in the habitual sentence, which employs the Imperfect tense-form. The DP without *pe* is easily incorporated into the verb so that kissing the children becomes a derived predicate, an activity, in keeping with the aspectual choice of the Imperfect. In contrast, *pe* was preferred for the accomplishment reading in the first example, where the Simple Perfect tense is used, signalling an episodic reading.

Throughout this section, remember that in Romanian, in the context of a preposition, the definite article does *not appear* in the s-structure, if the noun it determines has no modification. The

article reappears if the preposition is absent or the noun is modified. The interpretation is *definite*, as can be seen from all the glosses below. On the missing article see Giusti (1992).

6.1 In the present context, we would only like to stress that definite *pe* DPs further confirm our hypothesis that *pe* DPs have only argumental <<et>t> and <e> denotations, by showing the absence of the *kind-generic* reading with these nominals. The absence of the kind interpretation is expected since the *kind* interpretation is *related to the property* reading, deriving from it by means of a type shifting or coercion rule. (For different solutions to the formalisation of the relation between properties and kinds, see Dobrovie& Laka (1996) and Chierchia (1998)).

As known, Romanian like other Romance languages, uses definite descriptions singular and plural for kind generics:

- (38) a. Leul este un animal feros.  
'The lion is a fierce animal.'  
Leii sunt animale feroase.  
'The lions are fierce animals.'

Thus an interesting consequence of the context-boundedness of the *pe* DPs is that they actually lack the kind generic reading both for plural and for singular definite descriptions. As will be seen, plural *pe* DPs are compatible with a universal reading, which is close to a generic reading, without being a *kind generic* reading.

We will consider plural definite descriptions first. Carlson (1977) first stresses that kinds are intensional individuals, presupposing reference to several possible worlds, so that the genuine kind generic reading is modal and normative.

Our suggestion is that *pe* DPs range only on the entities of the discourse, or context-world, so that a true modal dimension, conferred by reference to possible worlds, is missing.

One way in which the d-linked, non- modal nature of *pe* DPs can be noticed is that *pe* DPs are incompatible with subjunctive relatives. Subjunctive relatives suspend the presupposition/ implication that the referent exists in the context world, placing the referent in an alternative possible world which satisfies the relevant norms. Thus (d) is awkward because the presence of *pe* signals d-linking, an epistemically salient referent of the DO for the subject ( or for the speaker) in the context world, while the subjunctive signals that there may not be any referent for the *pe* DP in the context world.

- (39) a. Ion caută o fată care știe fizică.  
Ion is looking for a girl who knows[IND] physics.  
b. Ion o caută pe o fată care știe fizică.  
Ion is looking for PE a girl who knows[IND] physics.  
Ion is looking for a girl who knows physics.  
c. Ion caută o fata care să știe fizică.  
Ion is looking for a girl who would know [SUBJ] physics  
d. \*Ion o caută pe o fata care să știe fizică.  
Ion is looking for PE a girl who would know[SUBJ] physics  
'Ion is looking for a girl who would know physics.'

Thus, PE DPs apparently operate only on the domain of the discourse of the context-world.

The absence of the kind reading can best be appreciated by considering verbs which allow the kind reading , but *not* the property reading, in object position: *iubi* 'love', *urî* ' hate', *admira* 'admire' respecta 'respect'. The absence of the property reading is suggested by the impossibility of using bare singular DPs. Bare plurals are equally excluded since these verbs would require a generic reading of the bare plurals, but bare plurals lack the universal generic reading in Romance. Plural definites without *pe* are felicitous and allow the kind interpretation. It is easy to see that *pe* DPs in the plural are infelicitous with such verbs if the generic reading is intended.

- (40) a. *\*Ion iubește femeie.*  
 Ion loves woman.  
 b. *\*Ion iubește femei.*  
 Ion loves women.  
 c. *Ion iubeste femeile.*(generic)  
 Ion loves women-the.  
 d. *??Ion le iubește pe femei.*(generic).  
 Ion them-loves PE women.  
 'Ion loves women'.

A *pe* DP in the singular is possible, but the interpretation is not generic. A discourse bound definite description will naturally receive a referential interpretation. The interpretation is that Ion loves a particular woman. In sharp contrast, a non-prepositional definite object in the singular may be generic, and is preferably generic in examples like (41) below

- (41) a. *Ion iubește femeia.*(generic)  
 Ion loves woman-the.  
 'Ion loves the woman.'  
 b. *Ion o iubește pe femeie (și n-o va părăsi.)* (non-generic)  
 Ion her-loves PE woman (and not-her will abandon.)  
 'Ion loves the woman (and will not abandon her).'

There are other facts which confirm the absence of the kind reading with *pe* DPs. For instance, it is suggestive that kind-denoting NPs kind ( *tip* 'type' *fel* 'kind' etc.) cannot appear with PE, clearly, because they are not of the appropriate semantic gender.

- (42) a. *Ion iubește acest tip de femeie.*  
 Ion loves this kind of woman  
 b. *\*Ion iubește pe acest tip de femeie.*  
 Ion loves PE this kind of woman.

However even if kind-generic interpretations of the PE DPs are not available, both singular and plural *pe* DPs are open to universal interpretations very close to the generic ones.

- (43) a) *El îi tratează pe pacienți cu grijă.*  
 They them -treat PE patients with care.  
 'They treat patients with care.'  
 b) *Haina face pe om.*  
 The coat makes PE man.  
 'It is the coat that makes a man.'

Without going into details, we suggest that such examples exhibit other types of genericity than kind genericity. The mechanism at stake is likely to be that of quantificational genericity.

Plural generics with *pe* have the flavour of what Condoravdi (1994) called *degenerate genericity*. Degenerate genericity is the case when a generic generalisation reduces to an actual generalisation. Degenerate genericity implies a generic operator with a trivial modal dimension, in other words, the domain of quantification is that of the context world; this is natural since the *pe* DP is still d-linked. In contrast, true generic readings arise when the generic operator has a non-trivial modal dimension and normativity can be expressed. Notice the following contrast, which seems to confirm these remarks. Example b) is awkward, since the use of *pe* suggests saliency of the object for the subject, while the continuation contradicts this expectation. No such difficulty arises for example (a), where the non-presuppositional DP expresses allows a kind modal reading.

- (44) a. *Ion iubește prințesele, dar n-a cunoscut nici una până acum.*  
 Ion loves the princesses, but not-has met no one till now.  
 'Ion loves princesses, but he has not met any one so far.'  
 b. *?Ion le iubește pe prințese, dar n-a cunoscut până acum nici una.*  
 Ion loves PE the princesses, but not-has met no one till now.  
 'Ion loves princesses, but he has not met any one so far.'

Singular *pe* DPs that read generically are likely to rely on quantificational genericity. The generic reading vanishes if the tense is not appropriate ( see the contrast between (a, b) but re-emerges if some quantificational operator is introduced.

- (45) a. *Mânia îl orbește pe om.*  
 Anger him-blinds PE man  
 b. *??Mânia l-a orbit pe om.*  
 Anger him-blinded PE man  
 c. *Mânia l-a orbit pe om întotdeauna*  
 Anger him-has blinded PE man always.

Thus, the point is that even if a generic reading is possible, it is not a kind generic reading, since PE DPs are not generic when they occur with verbs that allow kind generic reading, such as *iubi* 'love', *admira* 'admire', etc. With these verbs, the singular *pe* DP has a referential non-generic reading.

## 7. Conclusions:

1. A unitary account of PE DPs has been presented starting from the idea that the use of PE in Romanian is a means of expressing *semantic gender*. Semantic gender distinguishes between non-neuter gender (personal gender) and neuter gender (non-personal) gender.

2. This hypothesis proved fruitful in describing the use of PE with lexical DPs, but also with pronouns and quantifiers, capitalizing on the difference between grammatical and semantic gender, as well as on the internal layered structure of the DP.

3. The presence of PE with lexical DPs places constraints on their denotations. DPs which are salient enough for their inherent "personal" gender to be marked always have *object level* readings. Of the specific denotation of DPs, they select the argumental denotations <e> and <<et>t>. Crucially, they *lack the property reading* <et>, and are simply excluded from those contexts which require property readings. Likewise, *pe* DPs lack the *kind* interpretation which is related to the property reading.

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