

THE COMPLEXITY AND ACCURACY OF NOUN PHRASES WITH MODIFIERS IN WRITTEN PRODUCTIONS OF LEARNERS OF ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT. *The Complexity and Accuracy of Noun Phrases with Modifiers in Written Productions of Learners of Romanian as a foreign language.* The paper analyses the complexity and accuracy of noun phrases with modifiers in a corpus of 84 written productions by learners of Romanian as a foreign language of different L1 backgrounds. The analyzed samples are short (70-80 words), descriptive texts written by students at level A2 in Romanian. The adjective constructions present in this corpus are classified according to their complexity as well as to their typology (constructions with descriptive adjectives, with pronominal adjectives, and mixed), while their accuracy is scrutinized from two different perspectives: word order and noun-adjective agreement. A statistical analyses of the frequency of certain types of errors is offered for each group of learners that share the same linguistic background. Moreover, the data obtained from the written productions of an individual group of L1 speakers is compared to that of the others in order to highlight possible implications in teaching and assessing Romanian as a foreign language.

Keywords: *noun phrase, modifier, adjective, accuracy, complexity, statistical analysis, Romanian as a foreign language, learners of different background*

REZUMAT. *Complexitatea și acuratețea grupurilor nominale cu modificatori în producțiile scrise ale vorbitorilor de limba română ca limbă străină.* Lucrarea analizează complexitatea și acuratețea grupurilor nominale cu modificatori dintr-un corpus de producții scrise aparținând unor studenți de diferite origini și cu diferite limbi materne care învață româna ca limbă străină în România. Mostrele analizate sunt texte descriptive scurte (70-80 de cuvinte) scrise de studenți de nivel A2. Sintagmele adjectivale identificate la nivelul corpusului sunt clasificate în funcție de complexitatea și de tipologia lor (sintagme cu adjective propriu-zise, cu adjective pronominale și mixte). Acuratețea acestora este examinată atât din punctul de vedere al topicii, cât și din cel al acordului. Frecvența anumitor tipuri de greșeli este prezentată statistic atât la nivel global,

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cât și la nivelul subclaselor reprezentate de studenții care au ca limbă maternă araba, albaneza sau o limbă asiatică (= limbile materne cel mai bine reprezentate în corpus). În plus, rezultatele obținute la nivelul subclaselor anterior amintite sunt comparate între ele cu scopul de stabili posibile implicații ale limbii materne în predarea și evaluarea limbii române ca limbă străină.

***Cuvinte-cheie:** grup nominal, modificator, adjectiv, acuratețe, complexitate, analiză statistică, limba română ca limbă străină, vorbitori de diferite origini și cu diferite limbi materne*

1. Introduction

An objective assessment of the language productions of speakers of Romanian as a Foreign Language can only be done, from our point of view, on the basis of a grid capable of distinguishing between these production according to specific criteria, such as: *complexity* (= the range and appropriate use of vocabulary), *accuracy* (= grammatical precision), *coherence*, *thematic development*,² etc. Starting from the premise that the more detailed these descriptors are, the more objective the assessment will be, we have attempted to statistically analyse a corpus of written productions and to identify the average number of adjectives (qualifiers and participials) used by A2-level users and the ratio between correct and incorrect adjective forms, considering that these figures could be transposed into descriptors for maximum score as regards the complexity and accuracy of adjective use at this level of linguistic competence.

2. Description of the corpus

In order to obtain these statistical data, we have analysed a corpus consisting of 84 productions written by students from 23 different countries: Afghanistan, Albania, China, Korea, Australia, France, Germany, Greece, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Morocco, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Slovakia, Spain, United States of America, Thailand, Turkey and Turkmenistan, enrolled in the academic year 2015-2016 in the preparatory year of Romanian for Foreign Students. The productions were extracted from the written section of the A2-level exam, which they took after 260 course hours. Within the written exam, one of the two topics required the

² These criteria (*range of vocabulary, appropriate use of vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, coherence, thematic development*), taken from the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Learning. Teaching. Assessment*, Language Policy Unit, Strasbourg, published in a translation coordinated and revised by George Moldovanu, Chișinău, Tipografia Centrală, 2003, p. 146, are considered relevant criteria for the assessment of oral productions, but they can also be applied, in our opinion, in assessing written productions.

students to describe, in 70-80 words, a beautiful area in their own country, indicating where it is located, what landforms, plants and animals can be found there, what the weather is like, and what tourist sites can be visited.

The subject the students approached is, according to *CEFR*, specific to the A2 level, at which, in creative writing activities, the user of a foreign language: “**Can write about everyday aspects of his/her environment**, e.g. people, **places**, a job or study experience in linked sentences. Can write very short, basic descriptions of events, past activities and personal experiences.”³ Hence, the results concerning the use of adjectives should be relevant for this level of linguistic competence.

3. The cases analysed. Work method

The research of the 84 samples of written productions focused, initially, on the range of vocabulary, which is why all the occurrences of a qualifying or participial adjective in the entire corpus were recorded in order to identify the average number of their occurrences in an A2-level descriptive text. Subsequently, the double occurrences of one and the same adjective within a production were eliminated in order to obtain the average number of different adjectives in a text. A comparative analysis of these figures determined the average level of adjective repetition. In the situations that were considered relevant, the same statistical data were offered for the best represented groups of subjects, i.e. native speakers of Arabic (36 subjects), native speakers of Albanian (17) and native speakers of Asian languages, specifically Chinese and Korean (12).

In the inventory of adjectives obtained from research done on the corpus there were included adjectives with four forms (qualifying and participial adjectives because, in teaching, no distinction is made between the two types of adjectives up to the A2 level, only the prototypical class being presented: adjectives with four forms, and not the subclass of participials too),⁴ adjectives with three

³ *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Learning. Teaching. Assessment*, Language Policy Unit, Strasbourg, published in a translation coordinated and revised by George Moldovanu, Chişinău, Tipografia Centrală, 2003, p. 52.

⁴ Elena Platon, Ioana Sonea, Dina Vilcu, *Manual de limba română ca limbă străină (RLS). A1-A2*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărţi de Ştiinţă, 2012, pp. 133-141, Ada Iliescu, Bucureşti, *Manual de limba română ca limbă străină*, Editura Didactică şi Pedagogică, 2012, p. 39. In some textbooks: Cristina-Valentina Dafinoiu, Laura-Elena Pascale, *Limba română. Manual pentru studenţii străini din anul pregătitor. Nivel A1-A2*, third edition, Bucureşti, Editura Universitară, 2005, Olga Bălănescu, *Limba română pentru străini*, Bucureşti, Editura Ariadna '98, 2003 and in *Descrierea minimală a limbii române. A1, A2, B1, B2* (Elena Platon, Ioana Sonea, Lavinia Vasilescu, Dina Vilcu), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Casa Cărţi de Ştiinţă, 2014, participial adjectives are not mentioned/exemplified in the sections in which the adjective with four forms is introduced. However, in *Limba română ca limbă străină. Dosare pedagogice* (edited by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Andra Vasilescu), Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2006, there is a theoretical note that makes a distinction between adjectives proper and those derived from other parts of speech: verbal participles and adverbs (p.184).

forms, adjectives with two forms and invariable adjectives. The only situation in which the adjective was not recorded was that in which the phrase from the topic requirement was reproduced as such: “zonă frumoasă” [“beautiful area,” at the beginning of the text, in examples such as: “O zonă frumoasă din țara mea...” [“A beautiful area in my country ...”] (requirement: *Descrieți o zonă frumoasă din țara dumneavoastră* [Describe a beautiful area in your country]).

After this stage, in order to determine the degree of accuracy in the use of adjectives, all correct and incorrect forms were inventoried:

1. nominal groups with a noun head and a:
 - a. *modifier*, consisting in an adjectival group with the head represented by an adjective proper (*vreme caldă* [warm weather]) or a participial adjective (*vreme plăcută* [pleasant weather])
 - b. *possessor*, consisting in the non-clitic possessive (*orașul meu* [my town])
 - c. *quantifier*, consisting in indefinites indicating an unspecified, undefined quantity (*mult, puțin* [much, little]), and indefinites indicating quantity in a global manner (*tot, fiecare* [all, every])
 - d. *determinant*, respectively the deictic of closeness (*this*), prepositioned or postpositioned;⁵
2. verbal groups, with the verb “to be” as the head and a *predicative* consisting in an adjective (*vremea este caldă* [the weather is warm]);
3. degrees of intensity:
 - a. *comparative* (of superiority, equality and inferiority)
 - b. *superlative* (relative and absolute).

Some of the levels listed above, namely: adjectives with four flexional forms, the comparative of superiority, the absolute superlative with *foarte* [very]), possessive pronominal adjectives, indefinite pronominal adjectives (*mult, puțin, tot, fiecare* [much, little, all, every]) are, as described in the *Minimalist Description of the Romanian Language. A1, A2, B1, B2*, specific structures of the A1 level, whereas: qualifying adjectives with three forms, those with two forms and invariable adjectives, the comparative of equality and that of inferiority, the relative superlative, the absolute superlative with *extrem de* [extremely] and demonstrative adjectives of closeness are the specific structures of the examined level, i.e. the A2 level.⁶ In view of this aspect, it was expected that the structures introduced and assessed at level A1, reinforced through repetition at level A2, would be more frequent and more correctly used than those at A2 level, but the findings did not always confirm these expectations.

⁵ CF. *GBLR*, 2010, p. 80-82, *GALR*, 2005, I, pp. 100-101.

⁶ Elena Platon, Ioana Sonea, Lavinia Vasiliu, Dina Vilcu *Descrierea minimală a limbii române. A1, A2, B1, B2*, Editura Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, p.19 și p. 38.

Like in the previous situation, the correct and the incorrect forms identified in the corpus were processed statistically, on the whole and by subclasses (for example, the ratio between the correct and the incorrect forms of nominal groups with a *possessive* adjunct), compared with each other (for example, the ratio between the correct and the incorrect uses of the adjective, in its capacity as a *modifier*, within the structure of a nominal group, or as a *predicative*, within the structure of a verbal group) and restricted to classes of speakers of Romanian as a Foreign Language, who share the same mother tongue (Arabic, Albanian or an Asian language).

4. The range of vocabulary

In terms of range of vocabulary, 76 different qualifying and participial adjectives have been identified in the analysed corpus, amounting, in various flexional forms, to 464 occurrences. Of these, 64 are adjectives with 4 forms: *frumos* [beautiful] (114 occurrences), *cald* [warm] (37), *turistic* [tourist] (21), *interesant* [interesting] (19), *bun* [good] (18), *tradițional* [traditional] (11), *diferit* [different] (12), *minunat* [awesome] (9), *plăcut* [enjoyable] (7), *important* [important] (6), *sălbatic* [wild] (6 occurrences, but only in the syntagm *animale sălbatic* [wild animals]), *extraordinar* [extraordinary] (5), *perfect* [perfect] (5), *ieftin*, *înalt*, *special* [inexpensive, high, special] (4), *amabil*, *amuzant*, *confortabil*, *cunoscut*, *scurt* [friendly, funny, comfortable, known, short] (3), *alb*, *antic*, *atractiv*, *bogat*, *delicios*, *gros*, *normal*, *periculos*, *popular*, *puțin*, *scump* [white, ancient, attractive, rich, delicious, thick, normal, dangerous, popular, little, expensive] (2), *aglomerat*, *central*, *decorat*, *deschis*, *domestic*, *drăguț*, *entuziasmat*, *extins*, *fain⁷*, *fericit*, *internațional*, *istoric*, *întins*, *magnific*, *modern*, *monumental*, *natural*, *neobișnuit*, *obosit*, *plin*, *potrivit*, *rar*, *rău*, *respectiv*, *romantic*, *senin*, *similar*, *splendid*, *străin*, *unic*, *urât*, *ușor* [crowded, central, decorated, open, domestic, nice, excited, extensive, cool, happy, international, historical, vast, magnificent, modern, monumental, natural, unusual, tired, full, suitable, rare, evil, respective, romantic, serene, similar, splendid, foreign, unique, ugly, gentle] (1); 5 are adjectives with 3 flexional forms: *mic* [small] (11 occurrences), *lung* [long] (7), *nou* [new] (3), *adânc*, *roșu* [deep, red] (1); 5 are adjectives with 2 flexional forms: *mare* [large] (54 occurrences), *vechi* [old] (25), *verde* [green] (6), *tare* [hard] (2) and *rece* [cold] (1) and 2 are invariable adjectives: *maro* [brown] (1) and *roz* [pink] (1).

The adjectives *maro* [brown] and *roz* [pink] have been identified, in incorrect forms, in a single written production, as part of an enumeration of

⁷ The presence of the adjective *fain* [cool], a synonym of the adjective *frumos* [nice], in a corpus of Romanian as a Foreign Language, A2 level, is probably due to the fact that the subject who used it in the written production learned Romanian in Cluj, hence, in a linguistic environment in which this form has been preserved and it is used with some frequency.

colours: “Parc Majorelle este foarte frumos, el are floare de toți culoare: verde, roșu, **rose, maron** și alb” [“Parc Majorelle is very beautiful, it has flower in all colour: green, red, **rosy, maroon** and white”]. They were included in the inventory of adjectives identified in the corpus because, from our point of view, the intention of the person who learns Romanian as a Foreign Language is to use them, but because of insufficient knowledge, they mistake the correct forms for their French equivalents.⁸

The very high frequency of the adjective *frumos* [beautiful], 114 occurrences, which accounts for almost one quarter (= 24.56%) of the total situations in which adjectives such as those previously mentioned were used, is explicable by the fact that the topic required the respondents to describe “o zonă frumoasă” [“a beautiful area”]. Therefore, this adjective is present in 68 of the written productions analysed, being doubled, in various circumstances (after or before the noun, after the verb “to be” or in the structure of degrees of comparison), in 24 productions, or tripled in 9 other productions, while in just one case it occurs 5 times in one and the same text. The task, which explicitly required the subjects to state what the weather was like, also clarifies the numerous uses of the adjective *cald* [warm], often identified in examples such as “the weather is warm.” On the other hand, the reduced frequency of the antonym *rece* [cold], which we would have expected to identify in similar examples, is explained by the subjects’ tendency to render the idea of *vreme rece* [cold weather] by using the adverb *frig* [it’s cold], used more or less correctly: “Acolo, vremea e foarte **frig**” [“There, the weather **it’s** very **cold**”], “Veremea aici nu este plăcut. În vara este foart caldă și în iarna afara este **frig**.” [“The wheather here it is not pleasant. In the summer it is ver warm and in winter **it is cold** outside”], “Vremea nu este foarte **frig**, dar nu este foarte cald” [“The weather **it is** not too **cold**, but it is not very warm”], etc. Paradoxically, the only use of the adjective *rece* [cold] does not appear in context of the noun *vremea* [weather], but of the noun *apă* [water]: “Sunt zeci piscine în zonă cu apă *rece*” [“There are dozens of pools in the area with *cold* water ...”].

The higher frequency of certain adjectives like: *frumos*, *mare* [beautiful, large] (54), *cald*, *vechi* [warm, old] (25), *turistic* [touristic] (21), *interesant* [interesting] (19), *tradițional* [traditional] (11), etc., was thus determined by and circumscribed to the type of work task ahead: the *description of a region*. Surely, certain commonly encountered adjectives in this corpus would not have had the

⁸ In addition to the form *maro*, Romanian dictionaries also record the form *maron*, an obsolete variant, rarely used in the contemporary Romanian language. Whereas it is unlikely that the speaker of Romanian as a Foreign Language, level A2, is aware of this variant, we believe that its presence in the text is a direct result of the influence exerted by the French language. We believe, therefore, that the subject made a confusion resulting in an incorrect form.

same frequency in a corpus consisting of written productions that started from a different topic, such as the *description of a person*, where, presumably, adjectives like: *înalt, scund, lung, scurt, gras, slab* [long, short, tall, short, fat, skinny] would have been more frequent than those that we came across in the analysed corpus.

The same frequency was broadly encountered in the written productions of subjects whose mother tongue is Arabic, Albanian or an Asian language: Chinese or Korean – see the table below. Small differences consist in the preference of certain subjects who share the same mother tongue for certain adjectives, which are less used by others. Thus, the subjects whose mother tongue is Arabic use adjective *tradițional* [traditional] more frequently, those whose native language is Albanian have a preference for the adjectives *vechi* [old] and *antic* [ancient], while speakers of Asian languages are the only ones who use the adjective *amuzant* [funny].

<i>The frequency of adjectives according to the criterion of the mother tongue</i>			
	Arabic	Albanian	Asian languages
1	<i>frumos</i> (56)	<i>frumos</i> (19)	<i>frumos</i> (12)
2	<i>mare</i> (26)	<i>vechi, mare</i> (14)	<i>mare</i> (6)
3	<i>cald</i> (21)	<i>bun, turistic</i> (6)	<i>cald</i> (5)
4	<i>turistic, bun</i> (8)	<i>antic, cald, interesant</i> (4)	<i>interesant</i> (3)
5	<i>tradițional</i> (6)	<i>extraordinar</i> (3)	<i>mic, lung, amuzant</i> (2)

In the 84 analysed texts there has been identified a total of 464 cases⁹ in which the 76 adjectives enumerated above were correctly or incorrectly used, meaning an average frequency of 5.52 occurrences/text. Albanian speakers and Arabic speakers are situated just above the overall average, with 5.83 occurrences/text and, respectively, 5.69 occurrences/text; by contrast, the speakers of Asian languages fall far below this average, registering only 4.08 occurrences/text.

The elimination of situations in which adjectives are doubled/tripled within one and the same written production, in order to identify the average number of different qualifying or participial adjectives used in the same text, reduces the total number of adjectival occurrences to 364 (compared to 464, the number recorded initially). Therefore, the average of non-doubled adjectives is 4.33/text. In the written productions of Albanian speakers the percentage recorded was, this time too, above average, respectively, 4.94 adjectives/text, while in those of Asian-language speakers, the percentage was well below average: 3.58 adjectives/text. A little under the general average were speakers of

⁹ In two written productions there has been identified no adjective, in 40 productions there were recorded between 1 and 5 adjectives, in 40 others there were between 6 and 10 adjectives, and in two texts there were recorded over 10 adjectives.

Arabic, with 4.27% adjectives/text (versus 5.69 occurrences/text), which denotes a greater degree of repetitiveness: 1.33% repeated adjectives, compared to 1.17% repeated adjectives in the case of speakers of Albanian as their native language, and 1.13% repeated adjectives in the case of speakers of Chinese or Korean as their native language.

5. Grammatical accuracy

The analysis of the corpus from the standpoint of the accuracy of syntagms which include qualifying, participial and possessive pronominal adjectives, indefinite (*mult, puțin, tot, fiecare* [much, little, all, every] and demonstrative adjectives (*acest* [this]) indicates 796 occurrences, consisting of 499 correct uses (= 62.68%) and 297 incorrect uses (= 37.31%).¹⁰ In the written productions of the subjects whose mother tongue is Albanian there is a smaller percentage of errors compared to the overall average: 75.26% correct uses vs. 24.84% incorrect uses, while in the texts of Asian-language and Arabic speakers the ratio between the correct and the incorrect forms is almost 1:1 (speakers of Asian languages: 57.44% correct forms vs. 42.55% incorrect forms; native speakers of Arabic: 54.14% correct forms vs. 45.85% incorrect forms).

The general ratio of about 2/3 correct uses – 1/3 incorrect uses is also encountered in the case of the adjectival uses of possessive, indefinite and demonstrative pronouns, where there are identified 332 occurrences, 224 correct uses (= 67.46%) and 108 incorrect uses (= 32.53%). Albanian speakers and the speakers of Asian languages made fewer mistakes than the average at the level of the corpus, namely: 26.25% and 29.43%, while native Arabic speakers recorded a percentage above the average: 39.04%.

The possessive pronominal adjective, used most often in the first person, in fixed structures like “orașul meu” [“my city”], “țara mea” [“my country”], “după părerea mea” [“in my opinion”], memorized through frequent repetition, but also in the other persons, in combination with various nouns: “iubita ta” [“your sweetheart”], “numele lor” [“their names”], “bagajele noastre” [“our luggage”], “ochii noștri” [“our eyes”], etc., is generally correctly used. Of the 100 occurrences, 91 are correct and 9 are incorrect. The mistakes identified are either agreement errors (“țara meu,” “orașul mea”) or spelling errors (“țara mia”), the latter occurring under the influence of other Romance languages and/or of Romanian pronunciation.

¹⁰ Lavinia-Iunia Vasîu and Antonela Arieșan speak about the accuracy of using certain adjectives in “Romanian as a foreign language-the complexity of grammar and accuracy in speaking, level A1 (case study),” in *Acta Tehnica Napocensis* (volume of the Conference on Cultural Diversity and Plurilingualism), Series Language for Specific Purposes, 2016, vol. 16, no. 4, U.T. Press, Cluj-Napoca, pp. 233-234, but their study refers to a corpus of oral productions, level A1, restricted to only a few categories of adjectives.

Indefinite pronominal adjectives, which are introduced, like the possessive pronominal adjective, also at the A1 level, are correctly used in 69.20% of the cases and incorrectly used in a proportion of 30.79%, with significant differences at the level of subclasses. Thus, although it appears extremely rarely (6 occurrences out of a total of 796 registered at the corpus level) and only in structures of the type: “în fiecare noapte” [“every night”], “în fiecare zi” [“every day”], *fiecare* [every] is always correctly used. On the other hand, the adjectives *mult* [much] and *puțin* [little], well represented at the corpus level (151 occurrences), are recorded 65 times (= 43.04%) with incorrect forms. In all the 65 cases, we deal with agreement errors: “multe deal”, “mulți muzee”, “puțin dealuri”, “mulți personae”. The last of them, *tot* [all], appears much less frequently than *mult/puțin* [much/little] (45 uses), but registers similar percentages in terms of the ratio of correct uses (57.77%) and wrong uses (42.22%). Of the 19 wrong uses of this adjective, 17 feature agreement errors: “toată râu”, “toate timpul”, “tot personi”, “toți lumea”, while 2 are grouped under the generic name of “other errors”, because they are non-existent forms: “toț lucrurile” or forms with multiple errors (agreement + article): “toatele orași”.

The pronominal demonstrative adjective, the only one among the analysed pronominal adjectives introduced at the A2 level, being therefore a representative structure for this level, has been identified 30 times in the corpus: it was properly used in 15 cases and incorrectly used in the other 15. In the case of this adjective, there have been identified both errors of agreement: “țara acest” and word-order errors: “aceasta casa”. Statistically, the demonstrative adjective is the pronominal adjective with the highest percentage of incorrect uses: 50%, a rather high percentage, from our point of view, for a structure that is specific to the assessed level.

Qualifying and participial adjectives have been analysed both globally and by category of inflection, by types of structures: nominal group, verbal group, and in the structure of degrees of comparison. The global analysis, at the level of the entire corpus, reveals that they are used correctly in a percentage of 59.20% and incorrectly in a percentage of 40.79%. In the written productions of the subjects whose mother tongue is Arabic or an Asian language there are more incorrect than correct forms: 48.95% vs. 51.04% (native speakers of Arabic) and 46% vs. 54% (native speakers of Chinese and Korean). The texts produced by Albanian speakers are more correct grammatically, as adjectives are used correctly in 76% of the cases and incorrectly in just 24% of the cases.

In the case of qualitative and participial adjectives, wrong forms were not generally recorded by subcategories, but on the whole. Thus, language mistakes mean here: **agreement errors**: “vremea este rău”, “flori și copaci verde”, “mare hoteluri”, “dacă suntem fericit”, “oamenii normal”, “un frumoasă oraș”, etc.,

spelling errors, which may be due to the influence of the mother tongue and other languages familiar to the subjects: “diferente tradiție”, “țare diferente”, “Paris este foarte agglomerate”, “loc este emportant”, “grădina zoologică cel mai mure din toată lumea”, “o persoană din Franța foarte cunosc”, “vezie copaci (instead of “copaci verzi””, “piscina deschisa”, **errors of word order**: “tradițională mâncare este foarte bine”; **errors in the structure of degrees of comparison** (of agreement, word order, spelling): “cel mai verde casă”, “cei mai lung munte”, “ce mai frumos loc”, “vremea este fort cald”, “orașul este mult vechi” (în loc de “foarte vechi”) etc. Although errors have not been processed statistically by subcategories, direct observation allows us to state that at the level of the analysed corpus the errors that are best represented are those of agreement, frequently identified within the nominal group: “animale sălbatici”, “grădini splendid”, but also well represented within the verbal group: “vremea este minunat”, “această casă este special”.

An examination of the corpus from the perspective of flexional subcategories highlight the fact that adjectives with a single form and those with three forms are rarely used. In the case of the former, we have identified, as already stated above, only two adjectives: *maro* and *roz*, used incorrectly, in an enumeration of colours: “Parc Majorelle este foarte frumos, el are floare de toți culoare: verde, roșu, **rose**, **maron** și alb.” Adjectives with three forms are somewhat better represented at the corpus level, totalling 22 occurrences. In the verbal group they are always correctly used; by contrast, in the nominal group, the ratio between the correct forms and the incorrect forms is 50%-50%. They never appear in the structure of the comparative and are registered eight times in superlative structures. While the reduced frequency of adjectives with an inflected form is, to some extent, explicable given the nature of the topic: the *description of a region*, the low frequency of adjectives with three forms, a language structure specific to level A2, is more difficult to explain, as some of them: *mic*, *nou*, *lung* [*small*, *new*, *long*] are appropriate for such a topic.

Adjectives with two flexional forms are well represented at the level of the corpus (90 entries, of which more than half are occurrences of the adjective *mare* [large]) and are generally correctly used. The percentage of incorrect uses registered here is far below the overall average: 24.32% compared to 37.31% (the average number of mistakes at the level of the entire corpus) or 40.79% (the average number of mistakes in the case of qualifying and participial adjectives). Based on data extracted from the written productions, we can say that this structure, specific to the A2 level, has been learned by the subjects, being generally correctly used.

As expected, the best represented at the corpus level are adjectives with four flexional forms, taught and assessed since the A1 level. Despite the fact that

they are considered to be assimilated structures, the number of recorded errors is higher than we might have expected. Thus, out of 350 entries, in 195 of the cases (= 55.71%) these adjectives are used correctly, while in other 155 cases (= 44.28%) they are used incorrectly. Similar averages were obtained for the nominal group: 53.28% correct uses – 46.71% incorrect uses. In the verbal phrase, the average number of mistakes is lower: 36.84%.

As regards the degrees of intensity of the adjective, the analysis of the corpus highlights the subjects' preference for the absolute superlative, built with the adverb *foarte* [very]: "locul este foarte interesant și este foarte frumos" ["the place is very interesting and it is very beautiful"], "Apolonia este foarte veche" ["Apolonia is very old"] or with *extrem de* [extremely]: "flori extrem de frumoase" ["extremely beautiful flowers"]. Except for situations of the type: "persoanele sunt foarte bună", "vremea nu este foarte cald", where the adjective belongs to the structure of the absolute superlative, but there is an agreement error, this degree of comparison is generally correctly used. The recorded errors are isolated and are limited to the incorrect spelling of the adverb: "vremea este fort cald", to the use of *mult/multă* [much] instead of *foarte* [very]: "avem o stradă multe frumoasă", "orașul este mult vechi", or to the use in the superlative of adjectives that do not accept degrees of comparison: "mâncarea este foarte delicios". The latter was not registered as a mistake, because at the A2 level no distinction is made between adjectives that accept degrees of comparison and those that do not have this grammatical category.

The relative superlative is used rarely and only in contexts that show superiority: "cel mai interesant stadion" ["the most interesting stadium"], "cel mai mare oraș" ["the largest city"]. Like in many of the situations described above, the most common mistakes recorded here concern agreement. Sometimes lack of agreement is registered only at the level of *cel/cea/cei/cele*: "muntele cea mai mare", "cei mai mare muzeu", while at other times, only at the level of the adjective: "zona mea este cea mai frumos". In some cases, errors are identified at the level of both flexional components: "panda este cea mai drăguți". besides those cases of lack of agreement, there were also recorded isolated word-order mistakes: "zona este mai cele frumoasă" or errors concerning the use of *ce*, invariably instead of *cel/cea/cei/cele*: "ce mai lung munte din Africa", "ce mai frumos loc". Though repeated, the mistakes involving the use of *ce* instead of *cel/cea/cei/cele* are encountered in a single written production, being therefore atypical.

The comparative, restricted to the paradigm of superiority, is very rarely used, having been recorded just 10 times in the entire excerpted corpus. The adverb *mai* [more] is correctly used from the point of view of the word order and form, but the second term of comparison is often not introduced properly:

“castele în orașul meu sunt mai vechi i toț Europa”, “mâncarele sunt mai ieftin decât Beijing”. Taking into account the reduced frequency, the absence of the comparative of equality and that of inferiority and the difficulties in expressing the second term of comparison, we believe that this grammatical category has not been sufficiently assimilated. In its case, it is necessary to conduct other studies regarding the frequency and accuracy of its use in level A1 and A2 corpora, to see if it occurs often enough to be declared a representative structure for level A1 (comparative of superiority) and, respectively, A2 (comparative of equality and of inferiority). If the findings resulting from the analysis of this corpus are confirmed, we consider that the assessment of the structure in question should be postponed until level B1.¹¹

6. Conclusions

In terms of the range of vocabulary, the findings of the analysis conducted on the corpus indicate an average frequency of 5.52 (qualifying and participial) adjectives¹² with multiple occurrences/text and 4.33 adjectives with a single occurrence/text, indicating a degree of repetitiveness of 1.27%. Transposing these data into criteria from the assessment grid, we could say that for maximum score, an A2-level user should use at least five qualifying and participial adjectives in a written production; four of these should be different, while one can be repeated.

Qualifying, participial, and pronominal adjectives (possessive, indefinite and demonstrative) are used correctly in 62.68% of the cases and incorrectly in 37.31% of the cases. The general ratio of about 2/3 correct uses vs. 1/3 incorrect uses registers, however, a significant variation at the level of subclasses. For example, the indefinite pronominal adjective *fiecare* [every] is always used correctly; the possessive pronominal adjective registers 91% correct uses and 9% incorrect uses; qualifying and participial adjectives with four flexional forms are used correctly in 55.71% of the situations and incorrectly in 44.28%, while demonstrative pronominal adjectives account for 50% correct uses vs. 50% incorrect uses.

The contents which are specific to the A1 level and are, in general, correctly used, albeit with great variations as regards frequency, include: the

¹¹ The *threshold level* registers this structure among those which should be mastered by the independent user, cf. *Nivel prag pentru învățarea limbii române ca limbă străină*, Victoria MOLDOVAN, Liana POP, Lucia URICARU, Departamentul de Limbă, Cultură și Civilizație Românească Facultatea de Litere, Universitatea “Babeș-Bolyai” Cluj-Napoca și Institutul Limbii Române Ministerul Educației și Cercetării București, Consiliul de Cooperări Culturale, Strasbourg, 2001, p. 242.

¹² If we also take into account possessive, indefinite and demonstrative adjectives, the average of adjectives with multiple occurrences is 9.47 adjectives/level-A2 written production.

possessive pronominal adjective, the indefinite pronominal adjective *fiecare* [every] and the absolute superlative formed with the adverb *foarte* [very]. Adjectives with complex inflection (= four forms): qualifying, participial, indefinite pronominal (*mult, puțin, tot* [everything, little, all]) may be well represented in the corpus, but evince an above-average percentage of errors (between 42.22% and 44.28%). The comparative of superiority is used rarely and with mistakes in the introduction of the second term of comparison: “castele în orașul meu sunt mai vechi i toț Europa”.

The structures that are specific to the A2 level are either absent from the excerpted corpus: the comparative of equality and of inferiority, the relative superlative of inferiority, or underrepresented in the corpus and with a higher percentage of mistakes than the average (= 37.31%): qualifying adjectives with three flexional forms, invariable adjectives and demonstrative pronominal adjectives. An exception concerns qualifying adjectives with two flexional forms and the absolute superlative with *extraordinar de* [extraordinarily], which are generally correct and are frequently used.

The analysis of the corpus according to the criterion of the subjects' mother tongue reveals the fact that users whose mother tongue is Albanian are above average as regards both the range of vocabulary and grammatical accuracy: 5.83 adjectives/text (4.94 not reiterated) and a ratio of 75.26% correct uses vs. 24.84% incorrect uses. Arabic speakers also use more adjectives than overall average, but are more repetitive: 5.69 adjectives/text (4.27 not reiterated, which shows a degree of repetitiveness of 1.33%, the highest level recorded at the level of the corpus) and lower grammatical accuracy: 54.14% correct uses vs. 45.85% incorrect uses. The speakers of Asian languages have a poorer vocabulary in terms of the adjectives they use: 4.08 occurrences/text (3.58 not reiterated), but are less repetitive than those who speak Arabic or Albanian as their mother tongue. From the perspective of grammatical accuracy, the results registered in their case are a little above the results of Arabic speakers: 57.44% correct uses vs. 42.55% incorrect uses.

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