

IDENTITY AND DENIAL. THE PRAGMATICS OF «SAME» AND «SELF»

MARÍA MANOLIU-MANEA
University of California, Davis.

RESUMEN

Analizando la diferencia entre «same» y «self» como medios de negación en rumano, la autora demuestra la necesidad de introducir la dimensión pragmática de «espectativa», como una variable importante en la definición de la semántica de los medios de énfasis, así como en la explicación de su evolución. Tanto «same» como «self» afirman una identidad, negando una no-identidad, pero difieren en cuanto a la extensión de la negación: el primero expresa el hecho de que dentro de la negación se sitúan los argumentos, mientras el segundo, que dentro de la negación se sitúa el predicado. La misma hipótesis puede explicar también la relación entre el orden de las palabras y los distintos medios de énfasis expresados por los continuadores de *metipse* en las lenguas románicas: cuando preceden al nombre, fr. *même* y esp. *mismo* indican que los argumentos se sitúan dentro del campo de la negación; cuando siguen al nombre y por tanto preceden al predicado, indican que dentro del campo de la negación se sitúa el predicado. Diacrónicamente, el que el lat. *ipse* tomara las funciones de *ídem* puede explicarse por el hecho de que el primero expresa cuatro negaciones: la negación de que el predicado no se refiere a un candidato no esperado (x), la negación de que el predicado se refiere a otro argumento (y), la negación de que el candidato no esperado y su contra-candidato pertenecen a la misma clase de referentes.

ABSTRACT

By analyzing the difference between «same» and «self» as means of denial in Romanian, the author demonstrates the necessity of introducing the pragmatic dimension of «expectation» as an important variable in defining the semantics of the means of emphasis as well as in explaining their evolution. Both «same» and «self» assert an identity by denying a non-identity but they differ as to the scope of the denial: the former refers to the fact that the arguments fall within the scope of the negation, while the latter expresses the fact that the predicate falls within the scope of the negation. The same hypothesis can also explain the relation between word order and the various means of emphasis expressed by the reflexes of *metipse* in Romance: when preceding the noun, Fr. *même* and Sp. *mismo* express the fact that the arguments fall within the scope of the negation; when following the noun and thus preceding the predicate, they refer to the fact that the predicate falls within the scope of the denial. Diachronically, the fact that Lat. *ipse* took over the functions of *idem* can be explained by the fact that the former is the expression of four denials: the denial of the fact that the predicate does not apply to the unexpected candidate (x), the denial of the fact that the predicate applies to another argument (y), the denial of the fact that the unexpected candidate and its counter-candidate belong to the same class of referents.

As is very well known, Romanian is the only Romance language to have recreated the difference between Lat. *idem* «same» and *ipse* «self» by developing two different expressions, namely *același* and *însuși*, on the basis of the demonstrative of «non-proximity», *acela* «that» + *și* «reflexive», and a form of Lat. *ipse* «self», contaminated with a preposition containing an —n—, such as *în* «in» or *din* «from». In spite of the rich literature on the history of demonstrative pronouns in Romance, the evolution of the so-called emphatic pronouns such as *ipse* and *idem* (which I prefer to call **p r o n o u n s o f i d e n t i t y** for reasons that will be explained later) is far from having been accounted for in a satisfactory way¹. If one examines the interchanges between *ipse* and *idem*, between *ipse* and the reflexive pronouns, between *ipse* and demonstrative pronouns, various thought-provoking questions arise:

(a) Are *idem* and *ipse* demonstrative pronouns, as Latin grammars used to consider them? If the morphology of the pronouns of identity is similar to that of demonstratives, their semantics and their syntax are often presented in connection with *alius* «other», an indefinite pronoun. For example, in Leumann *et al.* (1965, 2: 189), *ipse* is translated as «he and not another» [Germ. «er und kein anderer»]; in Oudot (1964) *idem* and *alius* are presented under Chapter XX, «Identité et diversité», etc. Corresponding Romance forms such as Fr. *même* or Rom. *însuși* are not considered as demonstratives at all. If demonstrative pronouns —as well as Romance personal pronouns of the third person— may also pronominalize an NP in conditions of referential identity, what semantic features characterize the pronouns of identity?

(b) According to Ernout and Thomas (1959: 189), *ipse* «est proprement un intensif, qui s'emploie avec une idée d'opposition latente». So the question is, what are the terms of this «opposition»?

(c) Is there any explanation for the fact that *idem* may be replaced by other demonstratives, as happened in Vulgar Latin (see for example (1), where the idea of «same» is expressed by the demonstrative *is* (viz. *eo ... quo*)), and was later lost?

| | | | | | |
|-----|----------------|-------------|---|----------------|---------------------|
| (1) | <i>Movetur</i> | <i>eo</i> | <i>timore quo</i> | <i>nostrum</i> | <i>unusquisque?</i> |
| | Is he-moved | by-that | fear by which | of us | each one? |
| | «Is he moved | by the same | fear as we are?» | | |
| | | | (Cicero, <i>Pro M. Fonteio</i> , 12.27) | | |

Cf. the Fr. translation in Oudot (1964): 471: «Epreuve-t-il la même crainte que nous?»

(d) How can one explain the fact that *ipse* lost its capacity for expressing an «opposition» and became a personal pronoun in several Romance languages, such as Italian (see *essi* < *ipsi*) or Romanian (cf. *dînsul* «he» [mild degree of politeness] < *din* + *însu* [*ipse*] + *l* [*illu*])?

(e) Ernout and Thomas (1959: 191) have pointed out that «*ipse*, à partir des tours *hic ipse*, *ille ipse*, *ipse ipse*, se rapprochait de *idem*» (see for example 2):

- (2) *ista* *ipsa* *lege* *quae ...* [Cicero, *R. Am.* 125]
 this itself law which ...'
 «the very [same] law which ...»

But *idem* vanished and *ipse* (in most of the Romance area in the form of the compound **metipse*, where *met* was also an emphatic morpheme, e.g. *egomet ipse* «I-self self' i.e. «I myself») became the expression of both «self» and «idem». If everybody agrees that *idem* expresses an «identity», it seems difficult to find a semantic definition which would assign such a feature to *ipse* (See however, Cose-riu, who defines *ipse* as the expression of «one's identity with one-self», as NPs containing a personal pronoun show: *ego ipse*, *tu ipse*, etc.; see also Abel, 1971: 27).

While not claiming to provide a complete answer, we shall bring forward evidence in support of the hypothesis that several pragmatic reasons can account for the phenomena under discussion. Demonstrative pronouns are closely linked to the speakers' knowledge about the space and time of uttering and their function as «shifters» has already been fully described (see R. Jakobson 1963, Benveniste 1966, Kleiber, 1988, and, more recently, the variety of opinions and solutions in Morel and Danon-Boileau (eds.), 1992). We would merely like to add a new dimension, namely *e x p e c t a t i o n*, which could account for the difference between «true demonstratives», such as «this» and «that» on the one hand, and the pronouns of identity on the other hand.

According to Martin (1983), «expectation is a way of representing a possible world, that is, the world which has the best chances of realization according to the speakers' universe of beliefs». In negative sentences, there always is a canceled expectation (see 3):

- (3) *Nu te iubesc și nu mă mărit cu tine.*
 «I do not love you and I shall not marry you.».

which has the expectation «you think I love you and, consequently, you expect me to marry you, and I know that you are expecting me to do so».

1 THE SEMANTIC STRUCTURE OF «IDENTITY»

1.1 Identity as a denial of an expected non-identity

Take the following sentences:

- (4) Rom. *răspunde mereu același student (deși aș vrea să răspundă studenți diferiți).*
 «the same student always answers (despite the fact that I would like different students to answer).»

Sentence (4) denies the following expectation:

- (5) «the student who speaks at time n is not the one who answers at time $n+1$, or $n-1$ ».

In terms of symbolic logic, the meaning of (4) is a complex sentence which can be represented by the following formula:

$$S_4: \exists_x (A_{tn(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (A_{tn+1(y)}) \cdot \sim (x =/= y)$$

i.e. «there is a person x , who answers at time n , and there is a person y , who answers at time $n+1$, and it is not true that x and y are not identical». As we have already pointed out, «the proper meaning» of (4) has the expectation (5) « x and y are different», which may be formulated as follows:

$$EXP_4: \exists_x (x = \text{student}) (A_{tn(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (y = \text{student}) (A_{tn+1(y)}) \cdot (x =/= y).$$

In other contexts, the terms compared are two states of mind or two physical conditions of the same person or thing, as is shown by (6).

- (6) *M-am întâlnit ieri cu Radu. Era același om bun și vesel, numai că puțin îmbătrânit. Viața grea nu reușise să-i schimbe firea.*
 «Yesterday I met Radu. He was the same kind and joyful man, only a little aged. His (difficult) life had not succeeded in changing his character.»

The proper meaning of (6) thus states that «Radu's character at the time T_{n+1} is identical to Radu's character at the time T_n , and the expectation is «life had changed him».

Lat. IDEM has a similar function in utterances such as (7) or (8).

- (7) *idem uultus* (Ernout-Thomas, 1959: 189)
 «the same face»
- (8) *eosdem quos reliquae portus capere non potuerunt* (Caesar, *B. G.* 4, 36.4)
 «they could not reach the same harbors as the rest [of the ships].»

We can therefore assume that Rom. *același* like Lat. *idem* (at least in some contexts) has a special function in the act of denial; they both deny an expected non-identity of the arguments.

1.2 Identity and emphasis

Romanian grammars have always devoted a special chapter to the «pronoun of reinforcement» [Rom. *pronume de întărire*]. For example, according to Graur ed. (1963. 1: 54), «*însuși* accompanies a substantive or a pronoun in order to specify the determined object»². But what demonstrative pronoun does not have the same function? In fact, this definition does not identify any semantic feature which could account for the specific difference between *însuși* and other means of specification. According to our hypothesis, the

emphatic pronoun *însuși* also denies an expectation but in a different way than *același*. Take sentence (9):

- (9) *M-am întâlnit cu însuși împăratul.*
«I met the emperor himself.»

Meeting an emperor is not a usual event. We do not normally expect to meet the emperor down the street. The expectation of (9) thus is:

- (10) «the one I met was not the emperor»,

which I am denying by using the emphatic pronoun. In other words, *însuși* expresses the fact that the predicate «to meet» does not apply to the expected argument, x, that is «the person I could possibly meet», but to another argument. In reality, (9) does not merely state that the person I met was the emperor, which is expressed by (11):

- (11) *M-am întâlnit cu împăratul.*
«I met the emperor.»

Însuși in fact establishes a relation between two possible worlds: the world of my expectations, in which the predicate «to meet» applies to somebody who is not an emperor, and the world of real events, which does include this value. In logical terms, the expectation of (9) is:

$$\text{EXP}_9: : \exists_x (x = \text{«emperor»}) . \sim (\text{Meet}_{I(x)}) . \exists_y (y = \text{«non-emperor»}) . (\text{Meet}_{I(y)})$$

where x and y do not belong to the same class, and y is defined as non-x.

The meaning of (9) can be formulated as follows:

$S_9: \exists_x (x = \text{emperor}) (\sim (\sim \text{MeetI}_{(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (\sim (\text{MeetI}_{(y)}) \cdot (y = \sim x))$

In brief, in (9) the predicates fall within the scope of the denial.

Take another sentence such as (12):

(12) *Deși nu se simțea prea bine, a dus el însuși scrisoarea la poștă, nu a vrut să lase pe altcineva.*

«Although he did not feel well, he mailed this letter himself, he did not want anybody else to do so.»

The expectation of (12) is «since he did not feel well, somebody else should have gone to the post office to mail the letter». *El însuși* thus denies the expectation asserting that the predicate «to mail the letter» does not apply to «he» (i.e. the one who was not expected to do so).

Therefore both *același* and *însuși* assert an identity by denying a non-identity, but they differ as to the terms of this relation and the scope of the negation. *Același* denies an expected non-identity between the arguments representing various values of the same variable (corresponding to the class as defined by the noun), the arguments fall within the scope of the negation. *Însuși* denies the fact that the predicate does not apply to the value of the variable in question, the predicate thus falls within the scope of the negation.

The same type of expectation illustrated by formula EXP₉ may be found in Latin utterances including IPSE. See, for example (13) or (14):

(13) *ualuae [...] se ipsae aperuerunt* (Cicero, *Diu.* 1)

«the doors opened by themselves»

One usually thinks that a door does not open by itself (at least at that time, when photocells had not yet been invented).

(14) *ego [...] Bruti rem sic ago ut suam ipse non ageret.* (Cicero, *At.* 5.8.4)

«I take care of Brutus's business in such a way as he himself would not take care of his [business].»

1.3 Denying an identity

In the same framework, the «pronouns of alterity» (here termed «pronouns of non-identity»), such as *altul* (*altcineva*, *altceva*) «other» («somebody else», «something else») may be described as denying an expected identity as in (15):

- (15) *A plecat Ion? - Nu, altcineva (a plecat în locul lui).*
 «Has John left? - No [he has not left], somebody else (has left in his place).»

The expectation denied by (15) is: «the one who was expected to leave was John», that is $\exists_x (x = \text{John}) (\text{Left}_x)$. The meaning of (15) may be thus stated as follows:

$$S_{15}: \exists_x (x = \text{John}) \sim (\text{Left}_x)$$

In this case, *altcineva* «somebody else» is opposed rather to *însuși* than to *același*, since the predicate is within the scope of the negation. But compare (4) and (16):

- (4) *Răspunde mereu același student.*
 «The same student always answers.»

and

- (16) *Răspunde mereu alt student.*
 «Another student always answers.»

which is ambiguous in the following way: it may state that

- (a) «each time I ask a question, a student I do not expect to answer answers» (see 16a)

or

- (b) «the student who answers at time n is different from the student who answers at time $n+1$, or at time $n+2$, or at time $n+n$, and so on» (see 16a).

Meaning (16a) accounts for the fact that *alt* is the counterpart of *însuși*, since the predicate falls within the scope of the negation.

$$S_{16a}: \exists_x (x \in \text{«student»}) . \sim (\text{Ans}_x) . \exists_y (y \in \text{«student»}) . (\text{Ans}_y) . \\ . (y = \sim x)$$

where \in means: «belongs to the class ...», and the Expectation is:

$$\text{EXP}_{16a}: \exists_x (x \in \text{«student»}) . (\text{Ans}_x)$$

According to interpretation (16b), *alt* «other» is the counterpart of *același* «same», since the identity of the arguments falls within the scope of the negation expressing that «there is a person x, who answers at time n, and there is a person y, who answers at time n+1, etc., and x and y are not identical». In short, the meaning of (16b) is:

$$S_{16b}: \exists_x (x \in \text{«student»}) (A_{n(x)}) . \exists_y (y \in \text{«student»}) (A_{n+1(y)}) . \sim (x = y)$$

while the expectation is:

$$\text{EXP}_{16b}: \exists_x (\text{Ans}_{n(x)}) . \exists_y (\text{Ans}_{n+1(y)}) . (x = y)$$

1.4 Expectation and speech acts

The type of speech act may affect the degree of intensity of the denial. Take an interrogative utterance such as (17), which requests information about the identity between x and y:

- (17) A: - *Vorbește același senator?*
 B: - *Da.*
 A: - *Atunci nu vin mâine la Senat!*
 A: - «Is the same senator going to speak?»
 B: - «Yes.»
 A: - «Then I shan't come to the Senate tomorrow.»

Speaker A's hope (rather than expectation) is «that a different senator will speak tomorrow morning», in brief

$$\diamond (\sim (x = y)),$$

where \diamond stands for «it is possible that».

In an interrogation such as (18):

- (18) A: - *Vrei pepene sau altceva?*
 B: - *Dă-mi mai bine o piersică.*
 A: «- Do you prefer a water-melon or something else?»
 B: «- I prefer to have a peach.»

the expectation is that «you want a fruit (a dessert) but I have doubts about the identity of my preference for water-melon with your (the addressee's) preference, so I give you a choice between a water-melon and something else, which is not a water-melon» (in other words, it might be a water-melon or not). But a sentence such as (18) is unacceptable in a declarative act such as (19).

- (19) * *Vrei pepene sau altceva.*
 «You prefer water-melon or something else»

because it violates «the law of minimal consistency of the speaker» (for which see Vanderveken (1990): 141-143).

Pronouns such as *altul* «other» may thus syncretize two pragmatic functions:

(a) they may serve to express a denial focussing on the arguments (as *același* does) and

(b) they may be markers of a denial focussing on the predicate (as *însuși* does). The actual semantic interpretation depends on the context. This is an important phenomenon which might suggest that, in given historical contexts, the same morpheme may also syncretize the meaning of a «pronoun of identity» and the meaning of an emphatic pronoun. This seems to be the case of Vulgar Latin as exemplified by (14) and (20). If in (14) *ipse* means «he himself», in (20) it means «the same»:

- (20) *non ipsa parte exire habebamus qua intraueramus*
 not the same side go/INF had-to/we which/ABL got-in/we
 «we did not have to go out the same way as we had gone in»
 (*Peregr. Aeg.* 4,5)

If for personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns coreferentiality is a condition of pronominalization, for pronouns denying a (non)identity coreferentiality is more than that: it is also a part of the asserted information.

1.5 Word order and focus

The difference in the scope of the negation may also account for the way in which word-order is used for expressing the difference between «self» and «same» in other Romance languages such as French, Spanish or Italian. If the determiner precedes the noun (DET N), the corresponding arguments fall within the scope of the negation and, consequently, the meaning «same» is actualized (see 21):

(21)

- Fr. *le même étudiant vient toujours à mes heures de consultation*
 Sp. *el mismo estudiante viene a mis horas de consulta.*
 «the same student always comes to my office hours.»

In turn, «self» corresponds to the reverse word-order (that is N DET). When the determiner *même* follows the noun, the rest of the utterance, i.e. the predicate, falls within the scope of the negation (see 22).

(22)

- Fr. *le directeur (lui-) même est venu me voir.*
 Sp. *el director mismo me ha visitado.*
 «the director himself came to see me.»

2 PRAGMATIC REASONS FOR LINGUISTIC CHANGE

2.1 Since the «pronouns of reinforcement» assert a coreferentiality by denying any other virtual competitor, it seems that the most

natural way of classifying them would be to include them among the means of emphasis. According to Lakoff (1971), generally speaking, emphasis (termed as focus) is defined as an assertion of identity which denies an expected identity. Take utterance (23):

- (23) *Tarta cu căpșuni mi-a plăcut (nu prăjitura de ciocolată).*
 «(It was) the strawberry tart (that) I liked (not the chocolate cake).»

where «the strawberry tart» is under focus (and bears the strongest stress), because it represents the unexpected candidate for the predicate «I liked»; in other words, by stressing the phrase «strawberry tart», the speaker intends to express the fact that his candidate for the argument of the predicate «I like» is not coreferent with his addressee's candidate (which is «the chocolate cake»).

If the pronouns of (non-)identity are included in the general category of the means of emphasis, it is possible to understand the bleaching and even the loss of their capacity for expressing denial. As it is usually the case with means of emphasis (including various forms of negation) in spoken registers, they end up by being felt as insufficiently marked for conveying a denial (otherwise termed as emphasis), therefore other means are sought in order to reinforce their function. In Vulgar Latin, for example, bound or free morphemes were added to the old emphatic forms, as shown by compound phrases such as: *nobismet ipsis* «to us self self», *ipsimet ipsis* «selfself self», *metipsimus*, etc. (see Löfsted (1956) 2: 138). This phenomenon has two important consequences:

- (a) On the one hand, the «bleached *ipse*» could be assimilated to other means of text reference, as is shown by the widely attested so-called confusion between *ipse* and various anaphors such as *ille* «that», *is* «this» (which is exclusively endophoric) and even *hic* «this».

- (b) On the other hand, it is not at all surprising if *ipse* (and especially its reinforced compound variants) might have been felt as more powerful in denying a non-identity in general and took over the functions of *idem* (which denies a non-identity between two arguments), as the disappearance of the latter suggests. Focussing on the predicate and, denying, implicitly, a non-identity between a specified argument (from the real world of events) and an expected non-specified argument, *ipse* is in fact the expression of four denials (see below the semantic structure of *însuși*)³.

For the purpose of comparison, the logical expressions corresponding to *același* and *însuși* are reproduced below in a more general form, in which V represents any predicate:

$$S_{același}: \exists_x (V_{tn(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (V_{tn+1}(y)) \cdot \sim (x =/= y)$$

where x and y belong to the same class, with the expectation:

$$EXP_{același}: \exists_x (A_{tn}(x)) \cdot \exists_y (A_{tn+1}(y)) \cdot (x =/= y)$$

As the following formulae show, *însuși* represents a stronger act of denial, since it rests on four negations, in addition to the fact that the verbal arguments x and y do not belong to the same class.

$$S_{însuși}: \exists_x (\sim (\sim V_{z(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (\sim (V_{z(y)}) \cdot (y = \sim x))$$

with the expectation:

$$EXP_{însuși}: \exists_x \cdot \sim (V_{z(x)}) \cdot \exists_y (V_{z(y)}) \cdot (y = \sim x)$$

where x and y do not belong to the same class, and y is defined as non-x.

2.2 —ȘI as the romanian equivalent of— MET

As we have already pointed out, Romanian has a peculiar position within the Romance domain since it is a reflexive dative pronoun which serves the purpose of reinforcing the denial function. The relationship between emphatic pronouns and reflexives goes back to their Indo-European functions. As Ernout and Thomas (1959: 184) have pointed out, the Latin reflexive still preserves its etymological meaning of «himself» [Fr. translation *soi-même*] in certain combinations; its possessive counterpart, *suus*, may be sometimes translated by «his own» [Fr. *son propre*]. Confusions which arise between *se* and *ipse* in Vulgar Latin are mere consequences of the fact that they have certain semantic features in common. But the spread of the dative reflexive as an «emphatic bound morpheme» in Old Romanian goes much further than mere confusion: -ȘI as a means of expressing an unexpected identity was even used with the first and second persons (see 24), added to a stressed reflexive form (see 25) or even to adverbial deictics (see 26).

(24) *mineși* «me myself», *tineși* «you yourself», *noiși* «we ourselves» (see Densusianu (1961) 2: 118-119)

(25) *luați-vă aminte voi sine cu sine* (Coresí, *Pr.* 44)
«pay attention you yourselves to yourselves»

(26) *atunceși* «the same time», *acoloși* «in the same place», etc.

In fact —ȘI became an equivalent of Lat.— *MET* and spread to the results of *ipse* (Rom. *însu-*), which began to be used as a mere personal pronoun (see the contemporary form *dînsul* «he», *dînsa* «she», preferred in some areas as a more polite expression of the 3rd person singular «he» or «she»), as well as to demonstrative pronouns (cf. *acestași* (CC₂: 240) lit. «the same this», *celorași(i)* (Coresí, *Pr.* 63) «to the same persons» - see Densusianu (1961) 2: 121, in the same way as *ipse* was added to *hic*, *is* or *ille* in spoken Latin.

The fact that a dative was preferred must have been connected to its relatively higher degree of accessibility to topics. As Hyman and Zimmer (1976) and Givón (1984) have pointed out, a dative has greater chances of being treated as topic or focus than any other oblique case⁴. Other factors might have also favored the development under discussion, such as the predominance of [+Human], as well as the development of an «interest value» in the micro-semantic area of the dative (cf. the *ethic dative* in Romanian):

- (27) *De ce nu mi te scoli la timp?*
 «Why don't you get up on time?»

where *mi* me/DAT is not to be translated, since it is a marker of the speaker's psychological involvement in the events.

CONCLUSIONS

The pronouns of identity are in fact means of denial. They serve to deny an expected non-identity. Personal and demonstrative pronouns pronominalize in the conditions of coreferentiality, but they do not assert or deny a coreferentiality (or identity). The denial of a non-identity also obeys the condition of coreferentiality. This semantic relationship may account for the fact that the latter can be a compound of the former: cf. Lat. *ipse* from IS «this- endophoric» + PSE, *idem*, from IS + - DEM; Rom. *același* from *acela* «that» + *și* «reflexive dative», *însuși*, from *însu*, a personal pronoun + *și*, etc.

As means of denial they obey the general rules governing the evolution of expressive morphemes. In certain historical conditions (such as long periods of social changes, resulting in the weakening of the «norm») their capacity for functioning as means of denial may weaken and, consequently, other entities and proce-

dures may come into play intensifying or even completely eliminating them.

NOTES

- 1 The present hypothesis is in line with the data analyzed in Manoliu (1981) and (1985).
- 2 «*însuși* însoțește un substantiv sau un pronume cu scopul de a preciza obiectul determinat»
- 3 The accumulation of negations in the semantics of IPSE may explain Ernout and Thomas' definition of *ipse* as the «expression of an opposition».
- 4 According to Givón (1984: 139), the *topic hierarchy* is a ranking order of the various semantic Roles according to their probability of becoming the more continuous topic in discourse, and it may be formulated as follows:
Agent › *Dative* › *Patient* › *Locative* › *Instrument* › *Manner*.
 The *Patient* (also called Undergoer) is the affected participant, «being-in-a-state» or «undergoing a change-in-state». The *Dative* is an Experiencer (for example the subject of verbs of knowledge or feelings) or a Beneficiary (when involved in receiving/giving activities, etc.). In Romance languages, the *Agent* corresponds most frequently to the subject (of an active construction), the Experiencer to the subject or to the indirect object (bearing a dative case or a prepositional marker), the *Patient* is the prototypical role of the direct object in the accusative, and the *Locative* prefers prepositional constructions.

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