GRAMMATICAL SYNONYMY WITH PRESENT AND PAST TENSES IN ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN

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Abstract: An important source of grammatical synonymy is represented by the various ways of expressing the same meaning by using different tenses. Time, tense and aspect play an important role within the linguistic expression of meaning. Present Tenses, Past Tenses, Future Tenses as well as other constructions can be used to convey similar or almost similar meaning. The fact that there seems to be no change in meaning between such constructions as "I have been learning English for 6 years" and "I started learning English six years ago" or between "to be about to" and "to be on the point of" or "be going to" in utterances such as "They are about to leave", "They are on the point of leaving" and "They are just going to leave", makes linguists speak about equivalence of meaning. However, the difference is the grammatical regimen of the constructions as well as the different nuances of meaning suggested. Considering that synonymy implies both a degree of similarity as well as difference between synonymous terms, the present paper will give a brief account of the similarities and differences between the constructions having different time reference both in English and Romanian. The matter of grammatical synonymy will be further applied to the translation process with a view to show that there is both contrast and similarity between language systems.

Keywords: synonymy, grammatical, aspect, tense, present, past

1. Introduction

Synonymy at grammatical level is still a matter to be further discussed and analysed. Although not many linguists admit its existence, various references are made to similarities or equivalences of meaning. Starting from the assumption that grammatical synonymy refers to different structures that convey the same meaning*, the present paper aims at proving that the English verbal system provides rich material* to be analysed from the point of view of the subject matter of *grammatical synonymy*. Grammatical categories of *mood, aspect and tense* are not only interrelated and interdependent, but they can also have the *same semantic content*. Thus, time is expressed by means of different tenses and attitude is expressed by means of moods. Research shows that there is a considerable degree of both similarity as well as contrastiveness in between.

The present study is *structured* along the main grammatical categories under focus: *moods, tenses and aspect*. Each category will be dealt with from the point of view of its various means of expression, which lead to different utterances subject to grammatical synonymy. A comparative analysis will be made in order to highlight the common points between English and Romanian as well as the differences that may turn into difficulties for the foreign language learner or for the translator.

2. Materials and methods

Materials for the present paper have been provided by reference books, grammar books, dictionaries and literary texts. The main purpose was to analyse those constructions and structures which, although different, have the same semantic content.

2.1. Moods, Tenses and Aspect

On the subject of the verb, grammarians have never had the same opinions concerning all its aspects, moods or tenses. Due to the fact that languages were different in their grammatical structure, some of them having certain aspects or moods, some others lacking them, grammarians couldn't agree on a single opinion. For example, there are languages, which have a fairly rich system of moods and others, which entirely lack this category. Some languages display grammatical mans to express aspect while others mark it only lexically.

The purpose of the present paper is to underline those instances, constructions and phrases which, although different, have the same semantic content. Thus, time can be expressed by means of different tenses as well as attitude is expressed by means of moods. Research shows that there is a considerable degree of both similarity as well as contrastiveness in between.

2.1.1. Moods

In the attempt of analysing synonymy at grammatical level, the category of the verb offers rich material of study since there is some common ground between moods, tenses and aspect. Therefore, further mention will be made to the interdependency of these linguistic dimensions/categories. While grammar is the direct correspondent of the universal thought (Popescu, 2001:7), tense, aspect, mood and voice are further subdivisions of grammar, called categories, which are related to verbs. Tense has been defined as that grammatical category by means of which situations are chronologically ordered (2001:10), aspect expresses the way the situations are dealt with by the speaker, whereas mood points to modality. Voice points to the relationship between the subject of the action and the action itself as expressed by the predicate.

According to Bejan and Asandei (1979) mood is the form of the verb, which shows in what relation to reality the speaker places the action or state expressed by the predicate. That is to say, mood is a grammatical category by means of which modality is expressed. In as far as modality is concerned the traditional grammar has defined it as being the speaker's relation to reality, or the speaker's evaluation of state-of-affairs, while contemporary grammarians have concentrated, generally on the speaker's attitude towards the situation in focus.

While some linguists (Palmer, 2001:1-23, 2003:2-4; Leech&Hundt, 2009:71) consider that the category of mood lost its integrity due to the death of the subjunctive. (cited by Leech&Hundt, 2009:71) some others [Leech (2004:114)], describe English Language as having the ability to differentiate between notions of *fact* and *supposition* due to the existence of the Indicative Mood and the Subjunctive. However, these days

Indicative Mood seems to have gained ground over the subjunctive which has become just "a footnote in the description of the language". Even so, the distinctions of meaning between *factual*, *theoretical* and *hypothetical* are still operational.

Starting from this assumption, considerations will be made on the similarity between Present Subjunctive and Present Tense of the Indicative Mood. According to linguists, being an indicator of *theoretical* meaning, the Present subjunctive is most common in *that*-clauses such as:

(1)"*Sarah insisted that he go/should go to the next conference."*

To suggest order,whereasthe Present Indicative would imply the value of a statement, expression of someone's belief as a result of habit

(2)"S*arah insisted that he goes to the next conference*"(I know he usually does)

Floriana Popescu, (2001:97) draws a parallel between The Subjunctive and the Indicative mood with a view to argue against the present tendency to avoid the Subjunctive due to its being replaceable by Indicative forms. The author pleads in favour of the usefulness of the Subjunctive with all its meanings and implicatures. Due to the fact that there are meanings that the Indicative forms miss, we are also bound to be in favour of the same point of view.

As for the Past Subjunctive, which is similar in form with the Past Tense of the indicative Mood, it seems it became quite infrequent nowadays, being mostly replaced by Past Tense of the Indicative Mood in informal language. However, both moods and tenses are still used and therefore there are utterances as the following which although, seem to be similar in meaning, still imply some slight differences:

(3) She speaks as if she were the owner of the house. (but she is not the owner)	*(3a) She speaks as if she was the owner of the house. (maybe she is the owner, we do not know it)*
(4) It is time we started work on the new house. (we are very late)	*(4a) It is time for us to start work on the new house. (the proper moment is now to start work)*

Problems are likely to appear when translating such utterances from English into Romanian as there is no grammatical means to mark this difference in Romanian. Only lexically can this distinction be made clear and therefore translators may find themselves into quite difficult situations. Such examples are the following extracts from David Lodge's novel "Deaf Sentence" translated by Roxana Marin:

(5)"I actually find it charming, the way he says, 'Daniel is thirsty', 'Daniel doesn't tidy up", 'Daniel is shy today', with a perceptible pause for thought before he speaks. It has an almost regal gravity and formality, as if he were a little price or dauphin. Dauphin Daniel I call him." (Lodge 2008:11)	*(5a) "Mie mi se pare chiar dulce cum zice el:"Lui Daniel nu-i sete", „Daniel nu face ordine", „Daniel e rușinos azi", făcând o mică pauză de gândire înainte să vorbească, cu un aer ușor grav, aproape regal, de zici că e un mic prinț sau un delfin. Delfinul Daniel, asa îl alint eu." (Lodge, 2009:17, translation by Roxana Marin)*

Here, the familiar language of the text gave the author the possibility to choose an informal alternative in the TT. However, several other alternatives would have been possible such as: "*ca si cum ar fi un printisor*" or "*de parcaar fi un mic print*". The Romanian Conditional Optativ seems to be a better choice than the Present Tense of the Indicative mood to convey the hypothetical meaning of the comparison in the ST although the one chosen by the translator is more specific to familiar register.

Further examples show the difference between possibility and necessity as corresponding to *factual* and *theoretical* meaning.

(6)	*It's a pity to miss such an opportunity. (theoretical)*	*(7) It's a pity (that) you missed such an opportunity. (factual)*
(8)	*It's good to earn so much money. (theoretical)*	*(9) It's good earning so much money. (factual)*

Although they mainly refer to the same thing, there are subtle differences of meaning as the theoretical examples contain infinitive constructions and do not assume the truth of the sentences, whereas the factual ones contain *that* –clause or V-ing structures and they do assume the truth of the statement. The main difference is that between idea and fact or between being *truth-neutral* or *truth committed.*

For the first pair of sentences the Romanian learner does not have any problem with their translation

(10) "*E păcat să pierzi o astfel de oportunitate.*
(10a) E păcat că ai pierdut o astfel de oportunitate. ",

But with the second, there might be difficult to find a suitable translation since Romanian does not provide the grammatical means to convey the same meaning and therefore lexical additions need to be made:

(11)"*E bine să câstigi atâția bani".*

Here the Conjunctive mood expresses both theoretical and factual meanings.

However, the following sentences, although having similar meaning and therefore being used in similar contexts, still point to the differences between factual and theoretical meaning.

(12)	*It's a great thing that she learns to drive.*	*(13) Learning to drive is a great thing for her.*
(14)	*It's a great thing to learn to drive.*	*(15) It's a great thing that she should learn to drive.*
		(16) It's a great thing that she learn to drive.

All these constructions illustrate the fact that *factual* meaning is mostly suggested by the Indicative Mood in dependent clauses as in example sentence (12) above and by verb-ing constructions as in example (13), whereas *theoretical* meaning is conveyed by means of infinitive constructions in example sentence (14), by should + infinitive in dependent clauses (in British English) as in example sentence (15) or by Present Subjunctive (in American English) in example sentence (16) above.

Due to the fact that the choice of verbal construction triggers the truth-neutral or truth-committed character of the sentence there is unanimity in accepting that there is no difference between *should + infinitive* in the example sentence (17) and the Simple

Present form of the Indicative mood in the example sentence (18), or between the example sentences (19), (20) and (21) below, (Leech, 2004:117; Croitoru, 2002:176). Such sentences could be included in the category of the grammatically synonymous sentences.

(17)	*I'm surprised that your sister should wear that dress.*	*(18) I'm surprised that your sister wears that dress.*
(19)	*Your attendance at the meeting is requested.*	*(20) They requested that you should attend the meeting.*
		(21) It is requested that you should attend the meeting.

Therefore, such utterances can be poof to support the subject matter of grammatical synonymy, as there might be no difference in meaning between certain *that*-clauses with the Subjunctive as exemplified in sentence (20) and *that* -clauses with *should* as in the example sentence (21).

While the English moods display the main distinction between Factual and non-factual, fictional, Indicative and Subjunctive, Romanian counts The Indicative, The Subjunctive, The Conditional and the Imperative to which the Presumptive seems to have been added by contemporary grammars. A similar distinction between certainty and uncertainty/reality vs. irreality is mentioned by the Romanian linguist Irimia (1997:215) as occurring between Indicative and Imperativ and Conjunctiv and Prezumtiv moods (Indicative and Subjunctive moods) as divided into moods of certainty and moods of incertainty. According to Pana Dindelegan (2013) moods are closely interrelated to tenses and aspect and the richest tempo-aspectual system expressed by the Indicative due to the fact that it contains present, past (the past, the simple past, the compound past, the pluperfect and the imperfect) and future tense forms (the future, the future perfect, the future in the past). Furthermore, the author mentions the divisions between synthetic (simple) and analytic (compound) forms. As compared to the English Infinitive, the Romanian Infinitive expresses reality and certainty as well as possibility in utterances such as

(22) Cred ca vine astazi.
(23)I think he comes today.

It is worth mentioning the structural correspondence between the declarative complementizer *că* and *that* appearing in subordinate declarative clauses in the indicative

(24) *Mi-a spus ca vine curand.*
(25) *He told me that he would come soon.*

According to the above-mentioned linguist (2013:54)

"*the option between the Indicative and the Subjunctive is associated with the choice of a specific complementizer. Verbs which take a clausal argument may select: a) only the complementizer că and the indicative mood; (b) only the complementizer să and the subjunctive mood; (c) both complementizers and moods, but with different semantic and pragmatic values.*"

Examples such as the following display obvious semantic difference:

(26) *A aflat că vine astăzi.*

(27) Vrea să vină astazi.
(28) Ştie că el înoată.
(29) Ştie să înoate.

The Romanian mood responsible for expressing possibility and "non-referentiality" and irreality (2013:54) is the Subjunctive and it can have either mandatory (in imperative and optative clauses) or epistemic (in interrogative clauses) values.

(30) Să aduci cartea!
(31) Să fii fericit !
(32) Să fi plecat déjà ?
(33) Să fie cumva târziu ?

PanăDindelegan (2013) mentions the contexts where both Infinitive and the Subjunctive can be used without any difference in meaning.

(34) Pot să plec.
Vs.
(35) Pot pleca.

However, spoken language prefers the subjunctive.

As far as the Conditional Optative mood is concerned, it expresses hypothesis, whereas the Presumtive mood expresses a presupposition about certain present or past events:

(36) Acum o citi, că văd lumină. (he may/might be reading now as I can see light.)
(37) O fi citit toata cartea, că pare că ştie acţiunea. (he may/might have read the whole book, as he seems to know the plot.

According to Elena Croitoru (2002:32-33) the English Subjunctive is mainly translated by means of the Romanian Conditional Optativ mood or Conjunctiv as they manage to convey feelings and attitudes of speakers.

Having analysed the main similarities as well as differences between Subjunctive and Indicative moods in English and Romanian it is obvious that both moods can be used to convey similar meaning and although there are slight differences in between, they can be considered as forming grammatical synonymous structures.

2.1.2. Aspect

Besides mood, the grammatical category of aspect will be considered form the point of view of its various means of expression, which can lead to different utterances subject to grammatical synonymy. According to Leech and Hundt (2009:118) aspect refers to "the manner in which the internal temporal constituency of a situation is represented."

Linguists (Pana Dindelegan, 2013; Popescu, 2000:58) agree on the fact that, as a grammatical category, aspect can be expressed by various grammatical means that combine both temporal as well as apectual elements. Besides grammatical means of expressing aspect, there are also lexical and semantic ways. Aspect implies perfectivity, imperfectivity or durativity, iterativity and intensiveness. Inchoativity or ingressivity as well as resultativity are further divisions of perfectivity. Being a universal

category, aspectuality can be detected in any language and can be expressed by means of grammatical, lexical and syntactical patterns.

All the already mentioned, semantic dimensions have lexical and morphological equivalents in Romanian as English fully grammaticalizes the category of Aspect, whereas Romanian does it only partially. In contrast with English, Romanian displays lexical as well as morphological means to express aspectuality, therefore many attempts have been made to find the best possible equivalents in translation.

The above-mentioned author draws a parallel between the linguistic ways of expressing aspect in both English and Romanian. Therefore, if in English the duration is expressed by means of Continuous or Progressive Aspect, in Romanian it is expressed by either the semantic content of the verb or by the minimal context. Lexically, aspect can be implied by word formation (suffixes and prefixes that suggest ierrativity, perfectivity, etc), perfrastically or by the semantic content of the verb. Mention should be made to the equivalence between the periphrastic constructions that mark aspectuality lexically in both English and Romanian, such as: "*to stop+to+listen*"or "*to finish+to+read*"and the Romanian "*a termina +de+citit*" or "*a înceta să citească*"(Popescu, 2000:70). Semantically, aspect is implied at the level of text and context. Therefore, aspect is marked either lexically or grammatically. FlorianaPopescu (2001:75) mentions the Romanian semi auxiliary verbs that express duration/beginning or end of an action, the aspectual adverbs or inceptive, inchoative verbs. Grammatically, Romanian does not display morphological forms marked for aspect for all tenses. Aspect is grammatically marked for past tense of the Indicative Mood in the differences between Imperfect and Perfect Simplu, Perfect Compus and Mai Mult ca Perfect. As for the Future Tenses, aspectuality is marked by the existence of the different structures containing the auxiliary verb "a fi".

According to Pana Dindelegan (2013), Romanian past tenses only partially express the difference between perfective and imperfective aspect in the difference between Imperfect and Simple Past, The Compound Past. By contrast, the Present is imperfective whereas, future is neutral. Progressive as well as iterative aspects are mainly displayed by the Imperfect. The author mentions that "other aspectual values – prospective, inchoative, terminative and resultative – are not marked morphologically, but only by lexical and syntactic means."

The progressive aspect, under focus at this stage of the analysis, displays a whole new range of meanings as compared to other similar constructions in other languages. These new acquired meanings seem to be connected with the social and stylistic changes within the language. Considered as implying duration and dynamism of an action, the progressive is not only bound to these anymore. As linguists argue, there are instances when the progressive meaning is absent, such as those actions having future realisations, actions that are not limited in time or with non-durative actions. All these have been identified as belonging to 'special uses of the progressive'. Examples of such uses are "the futurate use" and "the expressive or attitudinal functions of the progressive." (Leech&Hundt, 2009:131). If the "futurate use" points to the actions to be actualised in the future, "expressive or attitudinal function" resides in the use of adverbials such as *always, forever, constantly, continually, all the time,* to suggest different attitudes (annoyance, criticism, condescension, amusement) of the speaker. Linguists also mention "the interpretive use" of the progressive (Leech&Hundt, 2009:134) by which "the progressive is used to give meaning to a situation with which

the addressee is assumed to be familiar, either because it is mentioned explicitly or inferable from context."

> (38) *"When Paul Gascone says he will not be happy until he stops playing football, he is talking rot.*
> (39) *In joining the Euro we might be giving away our sovereignty.*
> (40) *You're kidding!"* (2009:134)

According to Siemnund (2003), when dealing with the perfect aspect, a temporal relation needs to be considered between the time of the situation and a reference moment, fact that makes the status of the perfect aspect to be put under the question of relating it to either the category of aspect or that of tense. However, aspect cannot be considered separately from tense since the way the events are perceived by the speaker is closely connected to the time of occurrence of these events.

2.1.3. Time and Tense

Time and tense have long been debated by both philosophy and linguistics alike. While time is a complex notion, independent of language and "common to all human beings" (Popescu, 2001:42), tenses are the linguistic expression of time. Tenses refer to "the order of events in time as related to the speaker who perceives those events."(2001:47)

As already stated, the same way as moods represent the expression of attitude, tenses are the formal expression of time. Research shows that there is a considerable degree of both similarity as well as contrastiveness between different expressions of the same time. Furthermore, following this line of analogies time and tense are two main dimensions which correspond to the categories of grammar and meaning.

Time relations are mainly indicated by tenses as well as time adverbials. Such an example is the time relationship between adverbs such as "*before*" and "*after*", which even if having opposite meanings can be part of different structures with similar meaning: (Leech&Svartvick, 1975:78)

> (41)   *They called after she got home.*   (42) *She got home before they called.*

Similar equivalent sentences are those involving adverbs such as *still/yet* or *already/any more*:

> (43)   *She still works for this company.*   (44) *She hasn't stopped working for this company yet.*
> (45)   *She's already finished writing the letter.*   (46) *She isn't writing the letter any more.*

Commentaries can be added in as far as the tenses in these utterances are concerned. Therefore Simple Present Tense as well as Simple Present Perfect may convey the same meaning since they refer to the same situation. The emphasis is different, however, since it can shift from the action of "working" to the ending moment of this action.

The perfective can mark not only finite verb forms, but non-finite ones or finite verb constructions with modal auxiliaries: (Leech, 2004:44)

> (47)   *He is believed to have resigned.*   (48)*I t is believed that he resigned.*
> (49)   *He may have resigned.*   (50) *It's possible that he resigned.*

The evolution of meaning and language determines some linguists to connect the functional development with the notion of interpretative use of the progressive and therefore to support the "subjectification of meaning, i.e. that over time meanings of grammatical constructions become increasingly based on the speaker's subjective reasoning process." (2004:44)

However, there are specialists who admit the same interpretative force conveyed by the simple aspect too as in

(51) "*When Paul Gascone says he will not be happy until he stops playing football, he talks rot.*"(2009:136)

2.1.3.1.   Present tenses

Tense and time are two main dimensions to be considered before starting the analysis of the subject matter of the present study. These two dimensions correspond to categories of grammar and meaning. When considering 'present time' speakers have in mind a period of time including present time as well as past time and future time. On the other hand, past time would include a time period limited to present time and so would future time. Starting from these limitations, linguists (Leech, 2004:5) mention Present and Past Tenses as corresponding to present time and past time. However, from semantic point of view the limitation between tenses is not so strict.

Present Simple and Progressive may find themselves into a relationship of synonymy especially in the case of those verbs which although usually used as stative verbs may be used dynamically and change meaning when used in progressive, thus adding some modality to the utterance in which they occur:

(52)   *The neighbours are friendly.*   *(53) The neighbours are being friendly.*

In the second sentence the neighbour's quality of "friendliness" may be seen as a form of insincere behaviour. In translation from English into Romanian, to convey the same semantic meaning some lexical specifications should be added:

(54) Veciniisuntprietenosi.
                        Vs.
(55) Veciniisunt curios de prietenosi mai nou.

Synonymy appears between simple present and present progressive with performative verbs used in 1st person in letter writing.

(56) I write / am writing to inform you....

Due to the fact that in Romanian, the distinction between simple and progressive aspect is not marked structurally/grammatically the translation of these two utterances would be the same, i.e. the same verbal tense would be used – Simple Present. However, the difference between Simple and Progressive Present tense would mark the degree of formality. The two utterances have the same meaning although the difference resides in the degree of formality. These are considered, by some authors (Swan, 2015:455), as fixed phrases specific to letter-writing register. And again, in this

case, Romanian lacks the tense and aspect to mark this degree of formality, the only way of marking it being by means of politeness pronouns as

(57) "*îţi scriu* vs. (58) *vă scriu*".

When considering synonymy between Present Simple and Present Progressive, mention should be made to utterances such as

(58) "*I leave early tomorrow.*"
(59) "*I am leaving early tomorrow.*"

Practical grammars do not place these two utterances on the same level of meaning due to the fact that the first implies the certainty of the action whereas the latter suggests further possibility. When translated into Romanian, there is no grammatically possible difference between the two, the translator having at his/her disposal only the lexical addition in order to make the implications clear. However, in spoken English the two utterances seem to occur almost with the same meaning, i.e. the final purpose of leaving the next day.

Further examples support the same fine distinction between two ways of perceiving the same event:

(60) *"I open the cage."* *(Leech,* (61) *"I'm opening the cage."(Leech,*
2004:7) *2004:7)*

According to Leech (2004:7), the first sentence "implies the total enactment of the event just at the moment of speaking" and whether in speech or written form it would need some other helping hints, the second one describes an action with all its constituent stages happening at the same time, which is known to be extremely rare. Consequently, the two utterances convey similar meaning and only fine subtle nuances make a slight semantic difference in between. The Romanian translationwould imply Progressivity of this momentous action without any further implicatures.

(62) *Deschid cusca*

Another similarity occurs between utterances containing verbs of physical feeling used either in Present Simple or Progressive "without much difference in meaning" (Leech, [2004:27], Swan, [2015:455]):

(63) *How do you feel?* (64) *How are you feeling?*
(65) *My back aches.* (66) *My back is aching.*

The slight difference between such utterances would be that "feel" in simple aspect is used as a perception verb whereas in progressive it refers to a kind of external sensation. (Leech, 2004:27)

An interesting case of overlap between Simple and Progressive Present is that of the verbs not normally used in Progressive and their correspondents:

(67) *The dog is asleep.* (68) *The dog is sleeping.*
(70) *The car is in motion.* (71) *The car is moving.*
(72) *The bus is stationary.* (73) *The bus is standing still.*

The sentences on the right contain the verb "to be" used in its sate use, whereas in the utterances on the left the verbs used do imply a limited time interval. (Leech, 2004:31)

Present Perfect Simple and Progressive have different meanings expressing either complete actions or continuous ones. However, there are some cases when both of them express the same meaning as in

(74) "*Indians have lived / have been living in Mauritius for generations.*"

A slight difference of emphasis occurs in utterances where both Simple and Progressive can be used, like

(75) *It's been snowing/It's snowed steadily since last Friday.*

There is similarity of meaning between sentences such as:

(76) *(78)*	*The teacher gives us a test every day.* *The Teacher always gives us a test.*	*(77) The teacher is giving us a test everyday.* *(79) The teacher is always giving us tests. (Eastwood, 2002:85)*

Notice here the element of annoyance of the speaker in the second sentence, this being the main difference between these two pairs of sentences.

According to Quirk et al. (1985), virtual equivalence occurs between the following sentences, emphasising on the similar purpose of the sentences, i.e to find the purse.

(80) "*Where have you put my purse?*"
(81) "*Where did you put my purse?*"

The extended explanation includes the difference implied by the usage of the past tense meant to remember a past action, whereas the present perfect involves the "the purse's present whereabouts" (Quirk et al., 1985:194). Indefinite past actions can be expressed by means of Present Perfect or Past Tense alike. Thus, there is synonymy between sentences like

(82) "*Have the children come back home yet?*"
(83) *"Did the children come back home yet?"*

Swan (2015) brings to the fore the similarities between American and British alternatives that result in synonymic utterances such as:

(84)	*"Did you eat already?"*	*(85) "Have you eaten already?"*
(86)	*"I didn't call Bobby yet."*	*(87) "I haven't called Bobby yet."*

According to the already mentioned author "British English is changing under American influence, so some of these uses are becoming common in Britain as well."(2015:444)Considering the fact that the difference between Past Simple and Present Perfect is not always a clear-cut, he admits the possibility of using either Past Simple or Present Perfect with little or no difference in meaning in utterances such as:

(88) *(90)*	*We have heard you have rooms to let.*	*(89) We heard you have rooms to let.* *(91) Did Mark Phone?*
(92)	*Has Mark phoned?*	*(93) I gave your old radio to Philip.*

> *I have given your old radio to*
> *Philip.*

In these cases, the speaker either concentrates on the present relevance of a past event or on the past details of the event.

A similar synonymic relation can be noticed between utterances such as

(94) "*What have you been doing?*"
(95) "*What have you done?*"

However, there is a difference of emphasis i.e. Progressive Present Perfect emphasises the action whereas Simple Present Perfect concentrates on the result. Sometimes the "difference between Simple and Progressive is a matter of emphasis rather than meaning" (Side&Wellman, 2011:22).

Present tense has future meaning when it refers to actions determined by calendar or timetable or when it refers to actions that are part of a strict plan and in these cases, it can be replaced by future tense with no change in meaning:

> (96). "*When do we get there? "*   (97) "*When will we get there?"*
>   *(Leech&Svartvick, 1975:72)*

Grammatical synonymy with future tenses is subject to a further paper and therefore it will only be briefly considered here.

Studying grammatical synonymy with Present Tenses involve both categories of aspect and tense since structures having the same meaning refer to certain moments in time and can be perceived differently by the speaker.

2.1.3.2. Past Tenses

According to G. Leech (2004:35), past time can be indicated by means of Past Tense and the Perfect Aspect. A combination of these two leads to Past Perfect, which is said to be "a past in the past" (Leech, 2004:35). Perfect Aspect implies considering here Present Perfect Tense, too, due to the fact that this latter is known to mean "past-time-related-to-present-time" (2004:36). What is more, Past Tense and Present Perfect Tense may be both suitable in certain situations.

Cases of synonymy occur with temporal clauses where the past perfective may be seen as redundant due to conjunctions such as "*after*", "*when*", which already imply the existence of anteriority between the actions expressed by the verb.

> (98)   *I ate my lunch when/after Sandra had come back from her shopping.*   (99)   *I ate my lunch when/after Sandra came back from her shopping.*

In such sentences, the conjunction "after" "*places the eating (T2) after Sandra's return (which we may call (T3) so the past perfective which places T3 before T2 is redundant*" (Quirk et al., [1985:197], Leech, [2004:47]). The difference is, however, that of the standpoint of the speaker. In the other sentence, the anteriority of the two actions is only shown by means of the conjunction "*after/when*".

Past Perfect Progressive can be used as a means to make discourse more polite and distant. Here are some such synonymic constructions:

(100) *Can I come? - Most direct*

(101) Could I come? - Polite, tentative
(102) I hoped I could come – Uncertainty creeping in
(103) I was hoping I could come – Even more polite / tentative
(104) I had hoped I could come – Acknowledging unlikelihood
(105) I had been hoping I could come – Politelygiving up hope.

Although conveying the same meaning, such utterances differ stylistically, implying a different degree of formality or politeness.

Past Tense can be used instead of Simple Present in utterances meant to suggest distance and politeness:

(106) Could you show me where the railway station is?   *(107) Can you show me where the railway station is?*

Past Tense can be idiomatically used with adverbs such as "*always*", "*ever*", "*never*" to refer to a state or habit continuing up to the present time as in *I always said that he would end up in jail.*

Floriana Popescu (2000:80) mentions the existence of a morphological common way of marking anteriority in both English and Romanian, i.e. by means of "*have+past participle*" and "*a fi +past participle*". Perfect Tenses seem to have similar values in both languages as in the following examples:

(108) *"have lived/have been living"*   *vs.*   *"am locuit"*
(109) *"had lived/had been living"*   *vs.*   *"locuisem"*
(110) *"will have lived/will have been living"*   *vs.*   *"voi fi locuit"* (2000:80)

Further on, the already mentioned author mentions the synonymy between the Simple Present / Imperfect and the Compound Perfect/the Plu Perfect in Romanian, whenever the verbs are accompanied by specific time adverbs and therefore there may be a perfect equivalence with the English Present Perfect/Past Perfect. However there may be a great amount of ambiguity between the forms of Simple Present and Imperfect which can be avoided only be adding extra temporal specifications and thus being easier to find an appropriate English correspondent.

(111) "I have just received a letter from my best friend" (Lodge, 2008:101)   *(112) "am primit acum o scrisoare de la cel mai bun prieten al meu" (Lodge, 2009 :116, translation by Roxana Marin)*

(113) "I hadn't worn it since Tuesday, because yesterday the weather was mild and wet, but today was chilly again." (Lodge, 2008:101)   *(114) "M-am hotarat sa ma imbrac cu paltonul. Nu-l mai purtasem de marti, fiindca ieri a fostcald si umed, insa astazi s-a racit din nou."(Lodge, 2009 :116, translation by Roxana Marin)*

Interestingly, most exercise books (Evans and Dooley, 2011:20) consider the following utterances ashaving similar meanings:

(115) "*He's never driven a Porsche before.*"
(116) "*It's the first time he has ever driven a Porsche.*"

They are mostly used as paraphrases and therefore being capable of replacing each-other. At a thorough analysis of the utterances it is obvious that the difference lays in emphasis, as already mentioned before. The speaker has the choice to focus

either on the mark of the car, or on the activity of driving such a car for the first time. But the difference is however, subtle.

Other cases of utterances that convey similar meaning with subtle differences can be the following, each with a possible explanation of the differences:

(117) They have never read such an interesting book.
(118) It's the most interesting book they have ever read.

Although the meaning points to the same quality of the book i.e. that of being interesting, it is again the matter of emphasis either on the activity or on the object of it. The Romanian translation of these sentences would mark the same difference as in English with the same final meaning;

(119) "*Nu au citit niciodată o carte atât de interesantă*",
(120) "*Este cea mai interesantă carte pe care au citit-o vreodată.*"

According to Leech (2004:49), there is "virtually a free choice between" Simple or Progressive Present Perfect in certain utterances:

(121)   John has been looking after the   (122)   John has looked after the
business for many years.   business for many years.

Nowadays, linguists admit the frequent use of Present Tense Progressive instead of the correct Present Perfect Progressive in utterances such as:

(123)   "I'm cycling to work since my car   (124) "I've been cycling to work since my
broke down."   car broke down."(Leech, 2004:49)

Some of the uses of Present Perfect have become idiomatic, especially with such verbs as *sit, lie, wait* and *stay* and the use of the Progressive aspect with such temporary state verbs is more frequent:

(125)   I've been waiting here all day.   (126) I've waited here all day.

The same author (Leech, 2004:50) notices the equally acceptable uses of both Simple and Progressive Present Perfect with actions where their finality is not an issue:

(127)   I've taken the dog out.   (128) I've been taking the dog out.

Another equivalence mentioned is that between Past Progressive verbs and the Past Progressive form of *was/were going +infinitive*.

(129)   The sale was taking place the   (130) The sale was going to take place
next day.   the next day.

Both utterances bear the meaning of intention or imminence which is a mark of uncertainty in as far as the real completion of the event is concerned.

3. Conclusion

Time, tense and aspect play an important role within the linguistic expression of meaning. Present Tenses, Past Tenses, Future Tenses as well as other constructions can be used to convey similar or almost similar meaning. Considering that synonymy implies both a degree of similarity as well as difference between synonymous terms,

the present paper gave a brief account of the similarities and differences between the constructions having different time references both in English and Romanian. The matter of grammatical synonymy was applied to the translation process with a view to show that there is both contrast and similarity between language systems.

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