ON THE NUMBER OF PARADIGMS IN THE ROMANIAN
PRESUMPTIVE MOOD (MODUL PREZUMTIV)

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Marius Sala, who has contributed so much to the study of language contact, has recently mentioned in passing future perfect and conditional perfect constructions of the type voi fi adunar and aş fi fumat, as among those of recent origin and thus not due to more ancient (Slavic) external influence (Sala 1997:178; cf. Rosetti 307–308). In this article dedicated to Professor Sala, I wish to examine a different aspect of these constructions in a comparative Balkan light. The previously mentioned constructions, together with the perfect subjunctive of the type să fi fumat are sometimes also described as belonging to the presumptive mood (modul presumtiv), a construction, or paradigmatic set, in which we find the same complex of non-confirmative meanings that occur in the Albanian and Aromanian (Fârsălo dialect of Beala di Supră) admistrative, as well as the marked uses of the old perfect in Macedonian and Bulgarian (as well as in Turkish and elsewhere), i.e. supposition, (ironic) doubt, surprise, report (see Friedman 1988, 1994). There are three elements that combine to form the presumptive: a) the future or conditional auxiliary or the subjunctive or future particle plus b) the invariant non-finite form fi ‘be’ plus c) the gerund or, according to some scholars, the past participle of the main verb1. Sentences (1–5) are typical examples of the present presumptive:

(1) — Ți zice ținută “Niculaie Minică”?
       — Mi-o fi zicând. (Iorgu and Robu 1978: 473)
       — Do they call you “Nick the liar”?
       — They [supposedly] call me that.

(2) Doar, n-o fi având purici!
       ‘Surely he doesn’t have fleas!’ (Ioana Chișitor, Conversation, 98.II.06)

(3) Rugăm pe toți românii iubitori de istoria nației să ne facă cunoscută hrisoavele ce vor fi având și care au o importanță istorică. (Vasiliu 1966: 224)
       ‘We ask all Romanians who are fond of the history of the nation to make known to us the charters which they might have and which have historical significance.’

(4) Mihai, oare să fi existând strigoi? (Vasiliu 1966: 223)
       ‘Mihai, do ghosts really exist?’

(5) Pe lângă urs se spune că ar fi având și această păjură care-l privigea.$ (Vasiliu 1966: 224)

1 For the sake of conciseness, I shall use the term formant when referring to the first element in the presumptive regardless of whether it is an auxiliary or particle.

‘Alongside the bear there is said to be this golden eagle that keeps a vigil over him.’

There is disagreement, however, concerning precisely which paradigms enter into this mood and even whether it constitutes a paradigmatic set. The majority of scholars treat the presumpive as a paradigm but disagree concerning which constructions are to be included in it. Dimitriu (1979: 269–1, 311–2), Iorgu and Robu (1978: 473), Irimia (1976: 117–3), Goulet (1977), and others (see Halvorsen 1973: 28–0) all represent the maximalist approach, i.e. the presumpive is said to constitute a separate mood consisting of both a present and a past (perfect) and making use of all the possible formants. Mallinson (1968: 284, 289) and Siever (1953: 161) take a minimalist stance, citing only the future format + fi + gerund as presumpive, without any indication that this position is open to debate. Vasiu (1966: 216, 271) and Beldescu and Popescu (1972: 145, 221) hold an intermediate position that can be termed partialist, treating the present presumpive as a separate mood making use of any of the possible formants but classifying past presumpive constructions as modal uses of the future, subjunctive, and conditional perfect, with which they are totally homonymous. Lux’s (1970: 127) description represents a reduced version of the maximalists: she treats the presumpive as a separate mood and admits all the possible present constructions, but for the past (perfect) she cites only constructions with the future formant. Halvorsen (1973: 28–0) represents the syntagmatic position, i.e. presumpive constructions do not constitute a mood (paradigmatic set), but rather peripheral constructions. Vasiu (1966: 216) also states that insofar as there is no difference in meaning among the uses of the various formants, the presumpive does not constitute a proper mood in the sense of a conjunctural modal category. Although she does not use the term, she implies that the constructions constitute a discourse function. Nonetheless, for the purposes of her exposition she treats the presumpive in the conventional modal framework. Similarly, Mănoliu-Mancea (1994: 270, 273, 307–3) does not directly address the question of paradigmatic presumpivity, but in her presentation of the presumpive in her account of the grammaticalization of discourse functions it is implicitly maximalist or reduced maximalist. We can note here in passing that at the other end of the grammatical spectrum, Slave (1957) treats the presumpive as a separate, peripheral conjugation with three moods (indicative, subjunctive, conjunctive). Dimitriu (1979: 269) dismisses this view by pointing out that there is no difference in meaning among the three types of formants when used in the presumpive. The arguments for treating the presumpive paradigmatically invoke its distinct intonation, the fact that it is used in absolute constructions, that it is contextually unambiguous, and, in the case of the present presumpive, the fact that there is no possible homonymy with any other category or usage. Arguments for treating the presumpive pragmatically include the fact that there is no semantic differentiation among the formants and there is total homonymy between the past presumpive and the modal perfects. Regardless of the solution chosen, the Romanian constructions are clearly closer to discourse functions than the paradigms of Albanian and Aromanian (see Friedman 1994).

Examples (6–12) illustrate constructions of the type formant + fi + past participle, which have been adduced to illustrate the difference between a past presumpive and the modal perfects. Examples (6) and (7) are identified as pure presumpives with subordination to the verb of reporting providing the clarifying context. Examples (8–12) contain constructions that can be interpreted as presumpive or non-past presumpive depending on the context. In (8), the first sentence can be interpreted either as a presumpive or a future perfect and is disambiguated by the second. Example (9) by itself would be interpreted as presumpive with any of the three formants, and (10–12) show how the same clause, when part of a complex sentence, functions as a future, subjunctive, or conditional perfect, respectively.

(6) Iar doamna lui Dragoș-vodă, așa povestescu oamenii acei de loco, de la târgul Siretului, cum să fie fost de leage sacă. (Moldavian chronicle, cited in Mănoliu-Mancea 1994: 310)

‘But king Dragoș’s lady, as the people of the market town of the river Siret, say, was of Saxon religion.’

(7) Zice că ar fi citit lecția. (Dimitriu 1979: 269)

‘He says that he has read the lesson’

(8) Va fi citit el acest roman?

(a) Mă indoiesc. (b) Vom sta de vorbă numai după ce-l vei fi citit și tu. (Irimia 1976: 118)

Will he have read this novel?

(a) I doubt it. (presumptive) (b) We’ll talk only after you will have read it, too.’ (future perfect)

(9) Va/Să/Ar fi ajuns el până acolo? (Dimitriu 1979: 271)

‘Has he gotten there?’ (presumptive)

(10) Când ea va fi acasă, el va fi ajuns până acolo. (Dimitriu 1979: 271)

‘When she gets home, he will have gotten there.’ (future perfect)

(11) În alte condiții, nu ar fi fost posibil să fi ajuns el până acolo. (Dimitriu 1979: 271)

‘Otherwise, it wouldn’t have been possible for him to have gotten there.’ (subjunctive perfect)

(12) Dacă ar fi ajuns el până acolo, alta ar fi fost situația. (Dimitriu 1979: 271)

 Henceforth, we shall use the term modal perfects to refer to the future, conditional, and subjunctive perfects as a group of distinct paradigms. We shall use the term past presumpive to refer to the homonymous constructions in which the formants can be used interchangeably.
‘If he had gotten there things would have been different.’ (conditional perfect)

As noted above, the past presumptive is always morphologically homonymous with a modal perfect. This situation is reminiscent of the multiply homonymous verbal paradigms of traditional Bulgarian grammar as codified by Andreječin, e.g., Bulgarian *bil pravil* is described as belonging to three distinct and totally homonymous paradigms: the reported perfect of *pravil e*, as the reported pluperfect of *beše pravil*, and as the emphatic reported aorist of *pravi* (Andreječin 1938: 57; cf. Aronson 1967, Friedman 1986). It is at this point that I should like to turn to some comparative Balkan data. If we compare the Romanian translation of the Bulgarian novel *Baj Ganjo* (Konstantinov 1964) to its Bulgarian original (Konstantinov 1895), we find uses of the past presumptive that must be interpreted as something other than a modal perfect. Let us first consider, however, some present presumptives and their Bulgarian originals. Example (13) is a clear instance in which the Romanian present presumptive corresponds to a Bulgarian non-confirmative past. In the context of this example, the speaker is emphasizing that he has no basis for vouching for the information other than the words of someone else:

(13) Când se întoarse, veni cu surdonutul, îmi spuse cum că băiatul ar fi având în Bulgaria un frate ofer, ori functionar – nu mi-aduc aminte –, care avea să-i trimită câte-o supt de franel pe lună...

Kato dojde taži godina s gluhanjamento momče, kaza mi, če tuj momče imalo u vas, v Bäljarja, brat činoynik ili oficernen-pe pomnja,-kojto šijal da mu otpušta po sto franka ēzemesčeno...

‘When he came back that year with a deaf-mute lad, he told me that this boy had a brother who was an official or an officer – I don’t remember which – in your country, in Bulgaria, who was going to send him one hundred francs a month....’

Examples (14) and (15) express doubt and surprise, and yet Romanian uses a presumptive while the Bulgarian original has a plain present tense. In both cases, the voice is the narrator’s making an aside, which suggests a discourse function.

(14) Orice fel de raporturi sau acțiuni care nu i-ar fi adus lui Botkov... vreun folos ori chilipir erau lipsite de sens pentru el. (Or fi existând oare în limbile europene cuvinte care spun: ‘In the station’? (IX)

Nikakvi dejstva i otnosnijia njamah smisil za Bodkova... ako ot tjeh ne proizriznije nešto khoravo, njakoj kelepir. (Dali ima v evropskite ezici dimi, sotvetstvujuci na tija, v tova im znanije?) (VII)

‘No actions or relations had any sense for Bodkov... unless they resulted in something khoravo [‘something for nothing’] in some sort of kelepir [‘free ride/free lunch’]. (Do the European languages have words that correspond to these in their meanings?)’

(15) De unde i-or fi trecând prin minte asemea nea năzbătii?

Ode mi udat na um tija komedii. (XII)

‘Where does he get these comedies from?’

Examples (16–18) are all identical to past conditionals in form, but clearly presumptive in content, and they correspond to non-confirmative pasts in Bulgarian. Example (16) is dubitative (ironic), whereas example (17) is a more neutral reported.

(16) Bai Ganju îmi ceru să-i fac cineste, deoarece pe drum aș fi fumat din tutunul lui.

Baj Ganjo poiska az da počepjia, ponež iz paťa sâm pušil ot negovija tujrutn. (IX)

‘Baj Ganjo wanted me to treat him, since on the road I had smoked some of his tobacco.’

(17) Dar cică la plecare ar fi spus studentului bulgar care -l însoțea la gardă: ...

Samo na trągvané kazal na studenta bălgarin, kojto go izpraštal na garata: ...

(IV)

‘Only as he was leaving, he said to a Bulgarian student who was seeing him off at the station: …’ Example (18) is a complex narrative involving non-confirmativity. The speaker is Baj Ganjo, who is relating a story told to him by a student. Baj Ganjo’s narrative carries a tone of surprise and indignation but not irony.

(18) De mult ar fi iesit doctor, dar oamenii de pe aici sunt îndarântini, încăpă -tânași... Rectorul nu-l sălbăste, zice el. Cică i-ar fi spus: ‘Nu se poate să te faci doctor în trei luni!’”. Așa cică i-ar fi ăș. Da’ cum să nu poată, când băiatul știe?!

Dosega da e stanai veke doktor, ama inat hora tukašnite. Rektora, kaj, ne go ostava. Ne može, kaj, kazal mu, za tri meseca da staneš doktor, kaj. A be kak da ne može, kogato momčeto znae (VIII)

‘He should have been a doctor already by now, but the people here are spiteful. The rector, he says, won’t let him. “It is impossible” – he says [that] he said to him – “for you to become a doctor in three months” – he says. Well, but how can it be impossible when the fellow knows [everything]?’

It is clear from these examples that the clauses in question are not conditional in meaning but simply presumptive. (The exception is *ar fi iesit*, which, although used in a presumptive type of context, nonetheless corresponds to a conditional or modal type of clause in both Bulgarian and English.) The question remains, however, how to treat these usages and how to relate them to Bulgarian and the broader Balkan context. It is clear that the meaning of the past presumptive is distinct from that of the modal perfects, and moreover, the semantic parallel with non-confirmativity in Bulgarian and other Balkan languages is striking. From the point of view of synchronic (descriptive, structural) grammar, it
can be argued that here we have a case of genuine homonymy rather than polysemy.

Given the existence of the present presumptive on the one hand and the independent future, subjunctive, and conditional on the other, it would appear that the use of the past participle with the presumptive, while appearing in form like a modal perfect, nevertheless is so clearly distinctive in content that it is fair to treat the presumptive as having a present and a past.

The interchangeability of forms does provide a challenge to the notion of paradigmaticity, but if grammaticalization is treated as a cline rather than as an absolute, then the presumptive is arguably sufficiently grammaticalized to be included in a paradigmatic type of analysis, albeit one that admits of variation. With regard to the question of the role of language contact in the emergence of the presumptive, while its recent nature indeed calls into question the validity of arguing from the use of 'be' as a transitive auxiliary (Seidel 1958) as a diagnostic, nonetheless the striking parallel in semantics permits us to argue that even if the morphological developments are independent, the semantics themselves could owe something to the multilingual environment of the Balkans during the early modern period.

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