

ADVERBIAL CLUSTERS IN ROMANCE LANGUAGES – A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

ALICE-MAGDALENA BODOC*

Abstract The present paper aims to describe the adverbial clusters in Romance languages from a comparative perspective, a topic that has been little addressed in studies devoted to Romance varieties.¹ Such research can only be carried out by using an extensive corpus, that allows both qualitative and quantitative observations, which is why I chose the ROAMED corpus, consisting of journalistic texts published online, in 2019, and written in Romanian, Italian, Spanish, and French. The analysis revealed that the four Romance languages behave similarly regarding the use of adverbial clusters, and the most commonly used were groups of two situative adjuncts. Their position generally follows the prototypical order, and the examples with topic shift were interpreted as being determined by semantico-pragmatic factors.

Keywords Adverbial clusters, Romance languages, corpus analysis, comparative perspective.

1. Introduction

Adverbial clusters are commonly known as those propositional or non-propositional constituents that occupy adjunct syntactic positions (whether of the same type or distinct), share the same head, and form a “block” before or after the head. Thus, whether we are talking about adverbs, prepositional phrases, nouns, or subordinate clauses, these linguistic units – which will be generically referred to as *adverbials* or *adjuncts* – can appear in various combinations of two, three, or more elements to describe the “circumstances” in which events occur.

* *Transilvania University of Braşov*. alice_bodoc@unitbv.ro.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6160-0518>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.26424/philobib.2026.31.1.12>.

¹ See Hilde Hasselgård, *Adjunct adverbials in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Martin Maiden, John Charles Smith, and Adam Ledgeway (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Romance Languages*, vol. 1 (*Structures*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Adam Ledgeway and Martin Maiden (eds.), *The Oxford Guide to the Romance Languages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

- (1) Ro. [*Mâine*], [*la Biblioteca Județeană*], *va avea loc o lansare de carte*.
 Fr. [*Demain*], [*à la bibliothèque départementale*], *aura lieu le lancement d'un livre*.
 Sp. [*Mañana*], [*en la Biblioteca Provincial*], *tendrá lugar la presentación de un libro*.
 It. [*Domani*], [*presso la Biblioteca Provinciale*], *si terrà la presentazione di un libro*.
 'Tomorrow, at the County Library, there will be a book launch'

1.1. Purpose and objectives of the study

The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive description of these groups in four Romance languages (French, Spanish, Italian, and Romanian), and the derived objectives are as follows: to present, through comparison, the types of adverbials that can be combined in the investigated languages; to conduct a quantitative analysis of the distribution and frequency of these adverbial clusters in the corpus; to identify the (socio)linguistic factors that determine the use of these groups in Romance journalistic texts.

1.2. Methodology

From a methodological point of view, this study combines qualitative and quantitative observations and employs corpus analysis to describe adverbial clusters in contemporary journalistic discourse. In the absence of a corpus covering all four languages under investigation, we drew upon a section of the ROAMED journalistic corpus,² compiled by the author of this paper between 2020 and 2022. The corpus selected for this article comprises online articles extracted from two newspapers and two magazines for each of the four Romance languages. All articles were published in 2019 and contain 212,559 words (around 50,000 words per language). The entire research was conducted manually, through careful reading of each text, as there is no electronic tool to assist in the automatic search for various types of (adverbial) clusters. Thus, after thoroughly reviewing these texts and identifying the groups, all relevant contexts were extracted (755 contexts) and a database for the analysis was created. There were left aside contexts in which adverbs appeared in the syntactic position of a complement, as the focus was on the adjuncts.

The conceptual framework employed is pretty eclectic, combining elements of Morphosyntax, Pragmatics, and Semantics in the description of these linguistic phenomena. In addition, a sociolinguistic perspective on the interpretation of adverbial clusters in Romanian journalistic discourse is also addressed; however, the sociolinguistic approach requires in-depth research, and this will be the subject of a subsequent study.

2. Adverbials – theoretical considerations

According to *The Romanian Grammar* (GALR 2008), adverbial phrases represent a quite heterogeneous set of syntactic positions, characterized primarily by their semantic function:

² Available at <https://roamed.unitbv.ro/en/corpus-roamed>.

“adverbial phrases add various types of specifications regarding the discourse framework or different aspects/sections of this framework.”³ These syntactic constituents have been considered “special” among the elements of the sentence, due to their wide range of semantic roles, multiple forms of expression, and, not least, their topic flexibility.⁴ Given this diversity of roles and meanings, adverbials represent an interesting linguistic phenomenon, having been studied over time both from a syntactic-semantic perspective,⁵ as well as in terms of their diachronic change.⁶ However, very little is known about the social factors that may influence the variation of adverbials; to the best of my knowledge, there is no sociolinguistic study dedicated to adverbials from Romance languages.

The starting point of this analysis is the semantico-pragmatic classification put forward by GALR, according to which, in Romanian, there are four major groups of adverbials: situative adverbials (spatial and temporal), which “provide the spatio-temporal anchoring of the communicated processes,” processual adverbials (of manner, quantity, and instrument), which “provide details regarding the communicated process,” adverbial phrases that “convey logical-semantic relationships established by the speaker between different communicated processes” (of cause, of purpose, conditional, concessive, consecutive), and adverbial phrases that “focus new information on certain sequences of the utterance in which they appear” (oppositional, cumulative, of exception, etc.).⁷ As it will be seen below, all these types of adverbials were identified in the investigated corpus, in varying numbers; however, clusters are not necessarily made of a specific type of adjuncts, but rather, there are various combinations (for example, a spatial adjunct + an instrumental adjunct).

3. Corpus analysis – results

After analysing the selected corpus, 755 adverbial clusters were identified, distributed as shown in Diagram 1:

³ Valeria Guțu-Romalo (coord.), *Gramatica limbii române*, vol. 2 (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), 487.

⁴ Susanne Chrambach, “From time-before-place to place-before-time in the history of English. A corpus-based analysis of adverbial clusters,” in *Developments in English Historical Morpho-Syntax*, ed. Claudia Claridge and Birte Bös (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019), 223.

⁵ See Guglielmo Cinque, *Adverbs and functional heads: a cross-linguistic perspective* (Oxford: OUP, 1999) and Thomas Ernst, *The Syntax of Adjuncts* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), among others.

⁶ Terttu Nevalainen, “Aspects of Adverbial Change in Early Modern English,” in Dieter Kastovsky (ed.), *Studies in Early Modern English* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1994), 243–259.

⁷ Valeria Guțu-Romalo (coord.), *Gramatica limbii române*, 487-488.

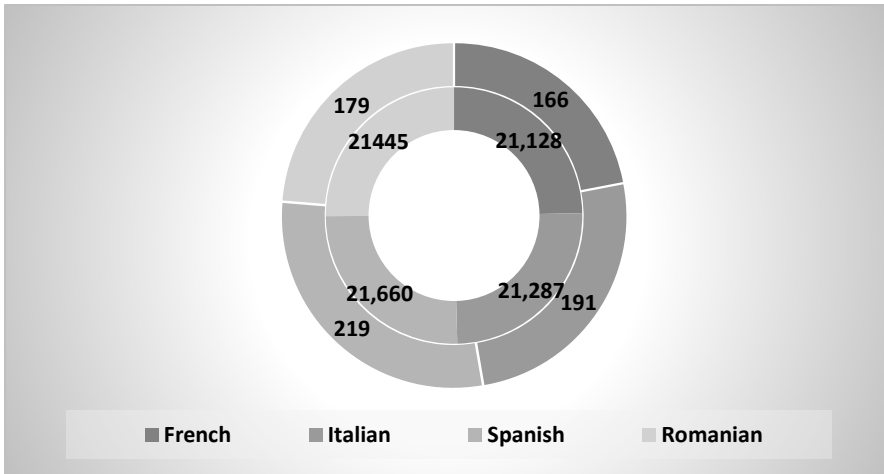


Diagram 1. *Distribution of adverbial clusters in the corpus*

The inner circle shows the number of words for each of the Romance languages investigated, while the outer circle shows the corresponding number of identified clusters. The highest number of groups was identified in the Spanish articles (219 groups, in 21,660 words), followed by Italian, in which 191 adverbial clusters were identified, in 21,287 words. Romanian ranks third, with 179 groups identified in 21,445 words, and French ranks last, with 166 adverbial groups identified in 21,128 words.

Analysing these quantitative data, it can be said that the results were somehow intuitive, given that it was expected for the Romance *sisters*-languages to behave similarly with regard to the linguistic phenomenon under investigation. Based on the direct contact with all these groups of speakers (Italians, Spanish, French), I understood that the lowest percentages would be found in French texts, because I perceived them as rather introverted and reserved people. In contrast, Italians and Spanish are very friendly and extroverted people, even volcanic sometimes, a fact that is also reflected in their communication.

As concerns their structure, the groups identified in the corpus consist of two, three, and up to six constituents, as shown in the following table:

Language	Publication	Total number of adverbial clusters	2 adv.	3 adv.	4 adv.	5 adv.	6 adv.
Romanian	<i>Adevărul</i>	33	26	6	0	1	0
	<i>Evenimentul Zilei</i>	43	34	5	2	2	0
	<i>Elle</i>	49	37	9	2	1	0
	<i>Femeia</i>	54	39	7	1	3	4
	TOTAL	179	136	27	5	7	4
French	<i>Elle</i>	43	31	6	6	0	0
	<i>Femme Actuelle</i>	51	29	7	14	0	1
	<i>Le Figaro</i>	31	24	7	0	0	0
	<i>Le Monde</i>	41	32	4	2	3	0
	TOTAL	166	116	24	22	3	1
Italian	<i>Elle</i>	45	34	9	2	0	0
	<i>Una donna</i>	48	36	8	3	1	0
	<i>Il Fato Quotidiano</i>	49	35	7	6	1	0
	<i>Il Foglia</i>	49	39	7	1	0	2
	TOTAL	191	144	31	12	2	2
Spanish	<i>El Mundo</i>	47	39	4	2	1	1
	<i>El Pais</i>	43	33	8	1	0	1
	<i>Elle</i>	56	49	6	1	0	0
	<i>Mujerhoy</i>	73	61	10	1	1	0
	TOTAL	219	182	28	5	2	2

Tabel 1. *Distribution of adverbial clusters according to their structure*

The combinations of adverbials in a cluster are varied, with situative adjuncts and combinations of spatial and processual adjuncts being the most common. Here are some examples:

➤ adverbial clusters of 2 constituents:

- (2) Ro. ...a postat, [**Juni**], [**pe pagina**] *sa de socializare*
‘posted on Monday, on his social media page’
- (3) Sp. *Felipe VI lo ejerció* [**con acierto**] [**en 2017**].
‘Felipe VI exercised it successfully in 2017’

➤ adverbial clusters of 3 constituents:

- (4) Fr. *Sa forme sphérique lui permet de se déplacer* [**rapidement**] [**au sol**] [**pour interagir**] *avec les jeunes patients autistes*.
‘Its spherical shape allows it to move quickly on the floor to interact with young autistic patients’
- (5) It. *I fastidi delle gambe gonfie possono però essere alleviati* [**con qualche accorgimento**], [**con uno stile**] *di vita più sano, e* [**con qualche specifico prodotto**].

‘However, the discomfort caused by swollen legs can be relieved by taking a few simple steps, by adopting a healthier lifestyle, and by using certain specific products’

➤ adverbial clusters of 4 constituents:

(6) Ro. *Aceasta este zona unde anomalia apărea [în fiecare iarnă], [între 1974] și [1976], [înainte de a dispărea] în gheață, crezându-se pentru totdeauna.*

‘This is the area where the irregularity appeared every winter, between 1974 and 1976, before disappearing into the ice, seemingly forever’

(7) It. *Un ottimo trattamento da provare è Mineral 89, da applicare [mattino] e [sera] [per idratare] e [rafforzare] l’epidermide.*

‘A great product to try is Mineral 89, which should be applied in the morning and in the evening to hydrate and strengthen the skin’

➤ adverbial clusters of 5 constituents:

(8) Sp. *En momentos de crisis graves o vacíos de poder, como sucedió [en Bélgica] [en el último año] o [en España] [en 2016] y [a finales] de 2017.*

‘In times of serious crisis or political deadlock, as was the case in Belgium last year or in Spain in 2016 and at the end of 2017’

➤ adverbial clusters of 6 constituents:

(9) Ro. *...după care freacă spatele cu partea dorsală a degetelor, începând [de la talie] [spre omoplați] și [înapoi], [apoi] [dinspre coloana vertebrală] [în lateral].*

‘then rub the back with the backs of your fingers, starting at the waist toward the shoulder blades and back, then from the spine outward’

From a structural point of view, it can be noticed that groups can be heterogeneous (composed of adverbial phrases of different types) (10) or homogeneous (with adverbial phrases of the same type) (6):

(10) It. *se si parla di “controrivoluzione” si deve presumere che [da qualche parte] e [in qualche modo] ci sia stata una rivoluzione nel mezzo.*

‘If we speak of a ‘counter-revolution’, we must assume that somewhere and in some way there has been a revolution in between’

In Italian, there were identified many semi-adverbs that precede the adjuncts, and this can be explained by the fact that Italians tend to give many explanations in their everyday communication, to gesticulate a lot, and even to exaggerate at times. The excessive use of such semi-adverbs in journalistic language aims to capture the readers’ attention and, of course, to persuade them.

(11) It. *I sintomi si manifestano soprattutto [la sera], specialmente [al termine] di una giornata faticosa, oppure [quando si rimane seduti o in piedi per lungo tempo].*

‘The symptoms mainly occur in the evening, particularly at the end of a tiring day, or when sitting or standing for long periods’

With regard to homogeneous groups, quantitative analysis (see Table 2) has shown that they are significant in number and based on the syntactic relationship of coordination. We noticed many examples in which situative adverbials express temporal or spatial extension and are associated with specific prepositions (12), but also examples with the omission of the preposition (13):

- (12) Ro. *Eram anul al II-lea de facultate pe atunci, repetam [de la 8 dimineața] [până la 10-12 seara], eram destul de ruptă de realitate.*
 ‘I was in the second year of college at the time; I was rehearsing from 8 a.m. until 10 or 12 p.m., and I was pretty out of touch with reality’
- (13) Fr. *[Dans les universités] allemandes et [les organismes] sérieux spécialisés, les travaux de recherche sur les mouvements d’extrême droite sont très nombreux.*
 ‘In German universities and reputable specialist organisations, there is a great deal of research into far-right movements’

Language	Total number of adverbial clusters	Number of clusters with coordinated adjuncts
Romanian	179	83
French	166	108
Italian	191	98
Spanish	219	103
TOTAL	755	392

Table 2. Total number of adverbial clusters and number of clusters with coordinated adjuncts

It should be noted that this category also includes contexts such as:

- (14) Ro. *L-a atacat [luni] [dimineață].*
 ‘He attacked him on Monday in the morning’
- (15) Fr. *[Plus tard] [en septembre] ce fut au tour du padded headband de marquer de son sceau le monde la mode.*
 ‘Later in September it was the turn of the padded headband to make its mark on the fashion world’

which were not treated as appositions, because there is no equivalence between the constituents; rather, the first term (*Monday, later, or then*) essentially opens up a time interval, while the second term specifies the precise moment, which is why they were considered coordinated adverbials.

Examples such as 14 and 15 have received various interpretations in Romanian and international studies, and, in what follows, a few of them will be presented, precisely to support

the previous opinion. The starting point is the pair of correlative elements “then...when” or “there...where,” whose purpose is to emphatically mark the relationship of subordination. Examples of such elements have been present in the Romanian language since ancient times,⁸ where they were used at a distance; subsequently, the situation gradually changed, with the correlative and the connector becoming so close that some linguists consider them fused/linked structures, adverbial phrases.⁹ GALR gives another interpretation of these constructions: whether the *when/where* clause is isolated by a comma from an adverb such as *then/there*, if the relative pronoun is preceded by the adverb, the subordinate clause introduced by this connector is an appositive relative clause,¹⁰ because the two elements form “a referential and informational unit.”¹¹ Furthermore, it is considered that, despite their “apparently adverbial, temporal/spatial meaning,” these clauses are “detached constructions” and provide only supplementary information, which is not required to identify the referent of the group.¹²

As for me, I have already demonstrated in an earlier study (2018) that there cannot be a relationship of equivalence¹³ between the two elements simply because an adverb such as *then* or *there* cannot be interpreted as a fully referential term, but rather as a generic, anaphoric, or cataphoric term. Therefore, the *when/where* clause cannot be an apposition that derives its reference from the base, as it is generally the case with structures in an apposition/equivalence relationship. Therefore, I will continue to support the interpretation advanced by GBLR,¹⁴ considering the *when/where* clause and the correlative element as two distinct temporal/spatial adverbials in a meronymic relationship,¹⁵ the latter functioning, from a pragmatic standpoint, as an anaphoric or cataphoric of the relative subordinate clause.

Concerning the head, most of the adverbial clusters in the investigated journalistic texts depend on verbs (16), but they may also have an adjectival head (17):

- (16) Sp. *Ayer estuve cenando [con Mar C.], [Valentina V.] y [Aina C.]*.
‘Yesterday I went for dinner with Mar C., Valentina V. and Aina C.’
- (17) Fr. *Les résultats, publiés [cet été] [dans la revue] scientifique Journal of American Medicine Association, sont prometteurs.*
‘The findings, published this summer in the scientific journal *Journal of the American Medical Association*, are promising’

⁸ Alice Bodoc, *Adjuncții situativi în limba română veche* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2018).

⁹ Alexandru Graur, Mioara Avram and Laura Vasiliu (coord), *Gramatica limbii române*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei RSR, 1966), 386.

¹⁰ Valeria Guțu-Romalo (coord.), *Gramatica limbii române*, 497.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 655.

¹² *Ibid.*, 658.

¹³ Alice Bodoc, *Adjuncții situativi în limba română veche*, 102.

¹⁴ Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (coord.), *Gramatica de bază a limbii române* (Bucharest: Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2010), 535.

¹⁵ Isabela Nedelcu, *Categoria partitivului în limba română* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2009), 13.

The numerical differences between the two types of heads are significant for all the four Romance languages, as shown in the diagram below:

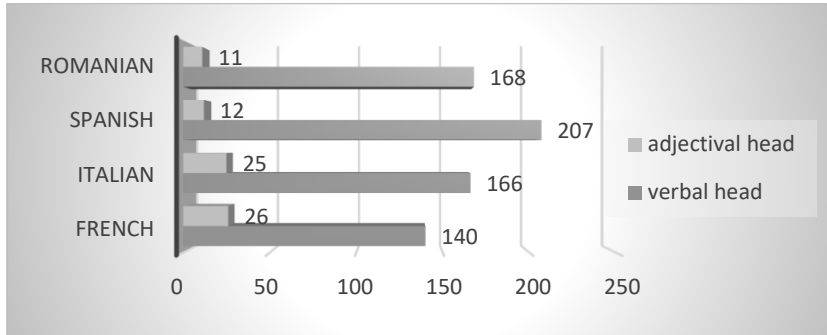


Diagram 3. Values of the verbal and adjectival heads in the corpus

Another aspect that can be analysed from a quantitative perspective concerns the position of these groups in a sentence. Since we investigated only structures that form “a block,” the only possible word order was before or after the head, and the results are summarized in Diagram 4.

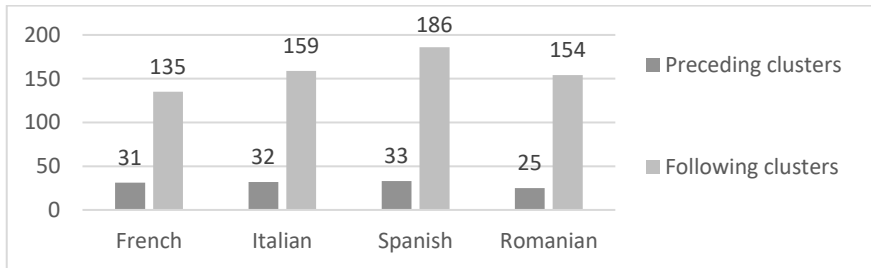


Diagram 4. Number of adverbial clusters that precede or follow the head

- (18) It. *In modo preventivo è consigliabile prendere un cucchiaino della miscela [a stomaco vuoto], [tutti i giorni].*
 ‘As a preventive measure, it is advisable to take one tablespoon of the mixture on an empty stomach, every day’
- (19) Ro. [*Conform dermatologilor*], [*după 40 de ani*] *rata de producere a celulelor este de doua ori mai lentă.*
 ‘According to dermatologists, after age 40 cell regeneration slows down by half.’

It can be observed that most contexts follow the prototypical adverbials' word order,¹⁶ i.e., placing them after the head of the clause, but there are also clusters placed before the head, in similar proportions across all four languages, a phenomenon that can be explained by various pragmatic-discursive factors (topicalization, focalization, etc.),¹⁷ as it will be seen in the following section.

4. Interpretation of the results

4.1. Preliminary remarks

One might argue that the results of this corpus analysis are relatively easy to interpret and that the use of adverbial clusters in the online investigated articles is simply a consequence of the conventions of journalistic and/or advertising language. However, this is not entirely the case. Beyond adherence to conventions, it seems reasonable to assume that journalists' decision to use as many adverbial clusters as possible in their articles is also significantly influenced by individual stylistic preferences or by certain social (or even psychological) factors. For example, we all know that it's important for journalistic communication to provide a description of events as detailed as possible, including information about place, time, and other relevant observations to the interested reader (20), but the excessive use of adverbials or the overloading of a sentences with intensifiers can only be a sign of the journalist's individual and social profile, because the way we write is "determined not only by the ideas we want to convey, but also by the impression we want to leave on others and the social identity with which we want to be associated."¹⁸

(20) *It. R.A. fornisce una risposta articolata e molto interessante, ma per conoscerla invito a comprare il libro, oppure ad andare [alla sua presentazione] [il 3 novembre prossimo] [al Macro Asilo] di Roma, via Nizza 138, [ore 11-13].*

'R.A. offers a detailed and fascinating response, but to find out more, I invite you to buy the book or attend his presentation on 3 November at Macro Asilo in Rome, Via Nizza 138, 11am–1pm'

4.2. Factors influencing the occurrence of adverbial clusters in journalistic texts

Whether we are discussing specific features and conventions of journalistic discourse or the individual styles of the authors of these articles, the approach to interpreting adverbial clusters in the investigated Romance languages must be pluridimensional. Therefore, in what follows, there

¹⁶ Susanne Chrumbach, "From time-before-place to place-before-time in the history of English. A corpus-based analysis of adverbial clusters," in *Developments in English Historical Morpho-Syntax*, ed. Claudia Claridge and Birte Bös (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2019), 223–246.

¹⁷ Knud Lambrecht, *Information structure and sentence form: Topic, focus, and the mental representation of discourse referents* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 5.

¹⁸ Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor, *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), 48.

will be presented the most important factors that influence the use of these clusters in the journalistic texts.

a. Conventions of journalistic discourse

Undoubtedly, one of the main factors motivating the use of adverbial clusters in the investigated texts relates to the conventions of journalistic discourse, more specifically to the writers' intention to be as persuasive as possible in front of the readers to whom they are conveying information. An essential feature of this type of discourse is truthfulness, which can only be achieved through the accuracy of the information provided. This is one of the reasons why journalistic discourse abounds in numerical indications of many kinds, that is, in groups of quantitative or temporal adverbial elements: the number of participants, their age, the date and time of events, numerical descriptions of objects/things (weight, size), etc.

- (21) Fr. *si le réveil sonne [à 7 heures] [pour l'école], couchez votre enfant de 5 ans [vers 19h30], [20 heures] à 6 ans, [20h15] à 7 ans, [20h30] à 8 ans... et ainsi de suite.*
 'If the alarm is set for 7 am for school, put your 5-year-old to bed around 7.30 pm, your 6-year-old at 8 pm, your 7-year-old at 8.15 pm, your 8-year-old at 8.30 pm... and so on'

In a study published in 1988, van Dijk highlighted this idea and made the following observation: "Imagine a report about a demonstration without an estimate of the number of demonstrators, often a fact in dispute between the authorities (the police) and the organizers of the demonstration. Imagine a report about an accident or a disaster without an indication of the number of victims. Few rhetorical ploys more convincingly suggest truthfulness than these number games."¹⁹ Like any form of media discourse, journalistic text is addressed to a broad audience that shares, from a social and cognitive standpoint, a considerable amount of knowledge, beliefs, norms, and values, without which the content could not be understood. Furthermore, the style must be formal and, at least theoretically, impersonal, yet the texts under investigation contain many elements that determine us to believe that journalists' attitudes and beliefs are not so easily suppressed and can surface in many ways, such as the selection and elaboration of topics, as well as the use of adverbial clusters, whether or not accompanied by intensifiers. "Formal style is associated with long and complex sentences with frequent embeddings and selected lexical registers featuring technical words, jargon,"²⁰ and thus with a routinized syntax and vocabulary. "We may expect fixed patterns of sentences, strategically effective schemata that can be used frequently to describe recurrent properties of news events."²¹ In terms of syntactic complexity,

¹⁹ Teun A. van Dijk, *News as Discourse* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1988), 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

there were identified many complex sentences consisting of various types of clauses (whether coordinated or not), and these “branches” are often groups of adverbials.

- (22) Sp. *Iker no ha tenido el éxito tan asegurado [porque, [aunque sí que ha invertido] y [ganado mucho dinero], [y ser un futbolista más que reconocido internacionalmente], sus aventuras en los negocios han sido más turbulentas].*

‘Iker hasn’t had such a guaranteed path to success because, although he has invested and made a lot of money and is a highly renowned international soccer player, his business ventures have been more turbulent’

The content itself requires further organization in order to be retained, understood, noticed, and, ultimately, believed and integrated. For this reason, the specialists discuss a series of standard strategies that journalistic discourse employs “to promote the persuasive process for assertions.”²²

After examining van Dijk’s journalistic strategies, we retain below only those identified in the investigated corpus that involve the use of adverbial clusters: “(A) Emphasize the factual nature of events, e.g., by: 1. Direct descriptions of ongoing events (21). 2. Using evidence from close eyewitnesses. 3. Using evidence from other reliable sources (authorities, respectable people, professionals) (23). 4. Signals that indicate precision and exactness such as numbers for persons, time, events, etc. (24) (B) Build a strong relational structure for facts, e.g., by: 1. Mentioning previous events as conditions or causes and describing or predicting next events as possible or real consequences”²³ (25, 26):

- (23) It. *Il presidente del Consiglio è arrivato [nell’auditorium] della Cava del Sole [per la giornata] inaugurale al quale è prevista anche la partecipazione di Sergio Mattarella.*
‘The Prime Minister arrived at the auditorium of the Cava del Sole for the opening ceremony, which Sergio Mattarella is also expected to attend’
- (24) Ro. *[Conform dermatologilor], [după 40 de ani] rata de producere a celulelor este de doua ori mai lentă.*
‘According to dermatologists, after age 40 cell regeneration slows down by half’
- (25) Sp. *El Festival O Son do Camiño tendrá lugar [los días 13, 14 y 15 de junio] [en la capital gallega].*
‘The O Son do Camiño Festival will take place on 13, 14 and 15 June in the Galician capital’
- (26) Ro. *Pe scurt, să gândim pe termen lung, [astfel încât [atunci] [când facem bilanțul la final de an] să vedem] ce rezultate am obținut.*
‘In short, let’s think long-term, so that when we take stock at the end of the year, we can see what results we’ve achieved’

²² Teun A. van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, 84.

²³ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

b. Semantico-pragmatic factors

The starting point regarding the placement of these groups within the sentence was the assumption that certain key discursive factors are crucial. Hence, the corpus analysis revealed a fairly high degree of freedom in the placement of adverbial clusters within the journalistic texts, a freedom that can be explained by the intention to “mark the Topic-Comment/Rema (thereby contributing to discursive coherence) and to produce effects of emphasis (focalization).”²⁴

i) Topic-Comment Information Structure

According to GBLR, in a sentence, “the Topic represents the given element from which the production of information begins,” while the Rema/Comment is the new, unknown information.²⁵ Therefore, when they appear in the prototypical position, i.e. after the head or even at the end of the sentence, adverbial clusters represent new information (Rema) (which cannot be inferred from the linguistic or extralinguistic context²⁶) and, in this case, the adverbials provide answers to specific questions such as when?, where?, why?, etc. (whether directly stated or just implied):²⁷

- (27) Fr. *Selon le World Resources Institute, les progrès sont insuffisants [dans le secteur de l'énergie], [dans les transports] et [l'utilisation des sols].*
 ‘According to the World Resources Institute, progress has been insufficient in the energy sector, in transport and in land use’

However, if a journalist chooses to place an adverbial cluster at the beginning of a sentence, it is because he has a valid reason for doing so. For example, shifting the topic of the adverbial clusters and placing them before the head or at the beginning of the sentence involves a process of Topicalization or Fronting, with a double purpose: establishing a coreferential relationship with a preceding context and establishing a (spatio-temporal) framework for the events to be presented. Fournier (1997) notes that “in French, an adverbial is placed at the beginning of the sentence when it is thematized, being considered the known starting point in the discourse.”²⁸ According to the same author, Thematization can occur in two ways, one of which, called anaphoric thematization, involves the resumption of the preceding context. In this case, the initial adverbial constructs the thematic progression of the text through the anaphoric resumption of an

²⁴ Rodica Zafiu, “Structura informațională,” in *O gramatică a limbii române altfel*, ed. Gabriela Pană Dindelegan and Martin Maiden (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic Gold, 2019), 493–499.

²⁵ Gabriela Pană Dindelegan (coord.), *Gramatica de bază a limbii române*, 612.

²⁶ Michael A.K. Halliday, “Notes on transitivity and theme in English. Parts 1 and 2,” *Journal of Linguistics*, no. 3 (1967): 37–81/199–244.

²⁷ Renaat Declerck, *When-Clauses and Temporal Structure* (London: Routledge, 1997), 187.

²⁸ Nathalie Fournier, “La place du sujet nominal dans les phrases à complément prépositionnel initial,” in *La place du sujet en français contemporain*, ed. Fuchs Catherine (Louvain-la-Neuve: Duculot, 1997), 97–132.

element from the preceding context, as illustrated in (28), in which the term *la veille* refers anaphorically to *jeudi 24 janvier*, from the preceding sentence:

- (28) Fr. *Juan G. a fait la «une» de la presse latino-américaine, jeudi 24 janvier. [La veille], [à Caracas], le tout nouveau président de l'Assemblée nationale vénézuélienne s'était autoproclamé président de la République par intérim.*
 'Juan G. made the headlines in the Latin American press on Thursday 24 January. The day before, in Caracas, the newly elected president of Venezuela's National Assembly had declared himself interim president of the Republic'

Another way to achieve Thematization is to construct a "frame of reference" within the sentence, a frame in which "the content of the sentence is then validated." In this case as well, the initial adverbial cluster becomes the thematic reference point from which the rest of the utterance proceeds, but "it has no direct anaphoric relation to a previous context and does not contribute to the construction of thematic progression."²⁹ The results of the quantitative analysis showed that a significant number of adverbial groups in initial position include situative adjuncts, which provide the spatio-temporal anchoring of the events presented in the articles, a function referred to as "scene-setting topic" by Lambrecht.³⁰

- (29) Sp. *[En sus siete meses] [en Santa Cruz], el primer ministro de Exteriores de la primera Monarquía democrática española se fijó las siguientes prioridades para el nuevo régimen.*
 'During his seven months in Santa Cruz, the first Foreign Minister of Spain's first democratic monarchy set the following priorities for the new regime'
 (30) Ro. *[În ultimul timp] [în industria frumuseții] se pune accentul pe vitamine.*
 'Lately in the beauty industry, there has been a focus on vitamins'

This function can also appear in so-called narrative adverbial clauses (according to Declerck's typology³¹), in which the connector is synonymous with the "and then", serving the pragmatic function of an "axis/node that relaunches the narrative."³² Some French or even Romanian causal adverbials have a similar function and tend to use a specific subordinating conjunction to mark the initial position, namely the French marker *car* "because." It should be

²⁹ Soili Hakulinen and Meri Larjavaara, "Adverbiaux initiaux: perspectives en français et en finnois," *Études finno-ougriennes*, no. 46 (2014): 107–133.

³⁰ Knud Lambrecht, *Information structure and sentence form: Topic, focus, and the mental representation of discourse referents* (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), 125.

³¹ Renaat Declerck, *When-Clauses and Temporal Structure* (London: Routledge, 1997).

³² Mihaela Gheorghe, *Propoziția relativă* (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 2004), 183.

noted that these adverbial clauses are used “to link two paragraphs, that is, two thematic sections, enhancing the coherence of the discourse.”³³

- (31) Fr. *Un aspect important dans la quête du «perfect match». [Car les consommatrices sont encore et toujours à la recherche d'un fini naturel].*
 ‘An important factor in the search for the “perfect match.” After all, consumers are still looking for a natural finish’

From a semantic perspective, adverbs of place indicate the spatial position of events or situations, movement as a shift in space from a source to a destination, as well as the general direction along a trajectory. In addition, this category of adverbs of place also includes adverbs that indicate distance as spatial extent:

- (32) Sp. *Las cápsulas de Vitamina C de E.A., biodegradables y herméticamente selladas, trabajan [desde el exterior] [hacia el interior], transformando la tez apagada.*
 ‘E.A.’s biodegradable, hermetically sealed Vitamin C capsules work from the outside in, transforming a dull complexion’

Similarly, adverbials of time locate events and states in time or indicate the duration of a situation or event, and in such cases they can refer either to the entire period (interval) or only to the beginning (start) or end of that period (end). The frequency of an action can be indicated using definite adverbs, such as *every week/year* (33), or indefinite adverbs, such as *often/frequently* (34).

- (33) Fr. *[Chaque année], [au mois de décembre], les British Fashion Awards récompensent le meilleur de la mode anglaise.*
 ‘Every December, the British Fashion Awards honor the best in British fashion’
- (34) Ro. *Cu toate acestea, mii de reprezentate ale sexului frumos, femei importante de carieră, ocupate și din plin în alertă, se înecă [frecvent] [în stresul] cotidian.*
 ‘Nevertheless, thousands of women – successful, career-driven, busy, and constantly on the go – often find themselves overwhelmed by the stresses of daily life’

ii) Developing emphasis effects (Focus)

Sometimes, the thematization of an adverbial cluster can be associated with the phenomenon of contrastive focus.³⁴ Focusing of a constituent is a technique for placing discursive information at the centre of the journalist’s communicative interest, in accordance with their intentions.³⁵ Thus,

³³ Holger Diessel, “Adverbial subordination,” in *Bloomsbury Companion to Syntax*, ed. Silvia Luraghi and Claudia Parodi (London: Continuum, 2013), 341–354.

³⁴ Hilde Hasselgård, *Adjunct adverbials in English*, 60.

³⁵ Mihaela Gheorghe, *Propoziția relativă*, 315.

the adverbials take on a Focus position, representing the Theme of the utterance and functioning as the new information of the sentence.

- (35) It. [**A Milano**] [*all'interno della sinistra*] *c'era paura a parlare di sinistra.*
'In Milan within the left people were afraid to talk about the left'

In certain contexts, the Focus can be used contrastively, that is, "it introduces a contrast with the expectations of the informational background, triggering presuppositions," and this is marked by changes in topic or by the use of focalizers. Thus, both the Theme and the Focus tend to appear in the initial position; "the difference lies in the fact that the Theme is unmarked, whereas the Focus appears under phrastic stress and may be preceded by focalizers."³⁶

- (36) Ro. *Și chiar [la bancomate] sau [supermarketuri] nu există posibilități de parcare/legare a bicicletei.*
And even at [ATMs] or [supermarkets] there are no places to park or lock your bike.

c. Sociolinguistic implications of the use of adverbial clusters in journalistic discourse

Considering the previous observations, it can be argued that the use of adverbial clusters in Romance journalistic texts is also influenced by social factors, such as: context, participants, topic, and purpose of communication. Undoubtedly, there is "a mutual conditioning between language and society, with the study of language in a social context being the main focus of sociolinguistic research."³⁷ Consequently, "examining the way people use language in different social contexts provides a wealth of information about the way language works, as well as about the social relationships in a community, and the way people convey and construct aspects of their social identity through their language."³⁸

Journalistic language is often presented as an impartial medium, designed to report facts with clarity and neutrality. However, even in highly objective articles, subtle linguistic choices influence the way in which readers interpret events, actors, and actions. One such linguistic choice is the use of adverbials, constituents that provide information regarding place, manner, time, frequency, quantity, cause, consequences, etc. Far from being mere stylistic devices, adverbials play a central role in how journalism balances factuality and evaluation, shaping social meaning in ways that have profound sociolinguistic implications.

- i) **Context.** Regarding the first social component, namely the social setting or context of the interaction ("Where does the communication take place?"), it should be considered that all

³⁶ Rodica Zafiu, "Structura informațională," 498.

³⁷ Sorin Guia, "Aspecte sociolingvistice în realizarea anchetelor dialectale," *Fonetică și Dialectologie*, no. XLI (2022): 117–127.

³⁸ Janet Holmes, *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics (Fourth Edition)* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 1.

the investigated contexts represent selections of written language, published in formal settings. This implies a careful and conscious selection of words on the part of journalists, with very few spontaneous interventions and the possibility of returning to what has been written for all the necessary corrections.

- ii) **Participants.** The second social factor is represented by the participants in the communication process, namely “who is speaking to whom?”. Clearly, articles are not produced by isolated individuals,³⁹ and this idea highlights the fundamental relevance of the social context of the linguistic phenomenon under investigation. From this perspective, we have, on the one hand, the journalists (the authors of the articles) and, on the other hand, the readers. It is assumed that journalists are aware of the target audience of the newspapers and magazines under investigation, as this is one of the journalism’s fundamental principles. The journalistic style, like any style, is determined by the communicative context, but also by the relationship between the participants in the communication. Thus, readers, as partners, are present only indirectly and implicitly in journalistic discourse,⁴⁰ exerting certain feedback constraints regarding the received message. “Journalists typically take into account what they assume the average reader will understand, and this assumption influences their style.”⁴¹
- iii) **The topic and purpose of communication** are also important factors in language choice (“What are the participants discussing, and why are they communicating?”). From this perspective, the goal of magazine articles is to persuade or even manipulate the reader, whereas the primary purpose of newspaper articles is to provide information. Consequently, the lexical selection and syntactic structure of utterances can be influenced by topics belonging to different domains, such as politics, social life, sports, art, health, etc. For example, the style of a report on a pop concert is less formal than that of a report on an international summit of political leaders.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, modal adverbs or semi-adverbs used as intensifiers undermine the claims of neutrality in journalistic style and highlight the role of language as a mediator of social reality. They remind us that journalistic discourse is never purely descriptive, but actively shapes the public’s understanding. Intensifying adverbs are used to emphasize the effect and satisfy an audience seeking the sensational, while adverbs of probability are used to signal caution and maintain credibility.

- (37) Sp. *Evidentemente*, los entrenamientos han cambiado, [**con sesiones de cardio**] de **baja intensidad**, [**repeticiones**] **con menos peso o sin saltos**, pero su fuerza de voluntad sigue intacta.

‘Obviously, his training regime has changed – with low-intensity cardio sessions, reps with lighter weights or no jumping – but his willpower remains undiminished’

³⁹ Teun A. van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, 99.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 81.

Conclusion

Based on the corpus analysis, the article has shown that the four Romance languages exhibit similar patterns regarding the use of adverbial clusters. Thus, the most frequently used groups consisted of two adverbials, typically situative ones; however, in all the investigated languages, there are clusters containing up to five, or even six, adverbials. Their position generally follows the prototypical word order, that is, the placement of the group after the head, but there are also examples with topic shift, and we considered this to be due to factors related to the informational structure of the utterance, namely the placement of the group in the Focus or Topic position. These observations fit significantly into the framework of Romance comparative syntax and information structure. In historical Romance philology, the structural organization of sentence modifiers is a classic indicator of how these languages evolved from Latin's relatively flexible constituent order to modern SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) configurations.⁴² In addition, the occurrence of long clusters containing up to five or six adverbials illustrates both syntactic layering and a historical tendency for languages to use multiple modifiers for nuance and specificity, traits evident in classical Latin style but streamlined and reconfigured in newer Romance varieties.⁴³

Regarding the sociolinguistic implications of adverbials in journalistic communication, we highlighted the fact that the language used in newspaper and magazine articles is never neutral. Adverbials serve as subtle yet powerful tools for framing events, asserting authority, and persuading the public. They are used abundantly precisely to lend credibility to the information conveyed, and they are more prevalent in magazines because these publications also have a commercial purpose: selling products.

Beyond all the discussed factors, the journalist's intention to demonstrate that they are presenting events as faithfully and truthfully as possible takes precedence, and the presentation is based on concrete data. The rhetoric of the investigated articles involves the use of strategies that convey the idea of truthfulness, fairness, accuracy, credibility, etc. Among these strategies are adverbial clusters, which can provide valuable insights into journalistic communication in the four languages under investigation. These help journalists evaluate the events presented, establish a certain epistemic authority, and adapt to the diverse personalities of their readers, with language thus becoming not only a means of communication but also a genuine social practice.

⁴² Adam Ledgeway, "From Latin to Romance: Configurationality, Functional Categories and Head-Marking," *Transactions of the Philological Society*, no. 110(1) (2012): 1–22.

⁴³ Guglielmo Cinque, *Adverbs and functional heads: a cross-linguistic perspective*, 106–107.