

Focus on Restrictive Adverbial *Pentru că*-Clauses

Lorena DAVID

University of Bucharest

Abstract

*The paper proposes a syntax-semantics mapping of Romanian restrictive adverbial clauses of reason introduced by *pentru că* 'because' within the framework of generative syntax and event semantics (Davidson 1966/1967, Herburger 2000, Larson 2004, Kawamura 2007).*

*Restrictive *pentru că*-clauses are analyzed as focal structures on a par with standard focalized constituents, because they inherently express new information in a complex sentence when placed after the main clause, as well as on account of their possible association with focus sensitive items such as negation. Such elements always give rise to ambiguities when occurring in constructions containing a focalized constituent. More specifically, sentences containing negation and a focus are ambiguous between two readings: a focus-associated reading and a non-associated one. We show that in their non-epistemic/restrictive reading Romanian *pentru că*-clauses display the same type of ambiguity.*

Keywords

adverbial clauses of reason, information structure, focus, syntax-semantics mapping

1. Introduction

The paper aims at offering a syntax-semantics mapping of restrictive clauses of reason introduced by *pentru că* 'because' (see 1) within the framework of generative syntax and event semantics (Davidson 1966/1967, Herburger 2000, Larson 2004, Kawamura 2007).

- (1) Maria emigrează [**pentru că** regimul de la Bucuresti încurajează corupția].
Maria emigrates because regime.the from at Bucharest encourages corruption.the
'Maria emigrates because Bucharest's regime encourages corruption.'

Pentru că-clauses are analyzed as focal structures because they inherently express new information in a complex sentence when they are located to the right of the main clause, as well as on account of their behavior in the presence of focus sensitive items such as negation. It is well-

known that such elements always give rise to ambiguities when occurring in constructions containing a focused constituent. More specifically, sentences containing them are ambiguous between two readings: a focus-associated reading and a non-associated one.

The discussion is organized as follows: Section 2 shows that in their non-epistemic/restrictive reading *pentru că*-clauses are inherently focalized elements and that they sometimes behave like foci, associating with negation. Section 3 presents a syntax-semantics mapping of *pentru că*-clauses along the lines of Herburger (2000), Larson (2004) and Kawamura (2007). More specifically, adverbial clauses of reason and standard focalized constituents receive a uniform analysis. Section 4 summarizes the conclusions of the paper.

2. Focal status of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses

We begin by looking at the informational structure of a complex sentence containing a clause of reason headed by *pentru că*. We will show that in their non-epistemic/restrictive reading the meaning of *pentru că*-clauses can be defined in terms of discourse newness as they convey new information and pattern with foci in that they sometimes associate with focus sensitive elements such as negation.

For one thing, compare (1) and (2):

- (1) Maria emigrează [**pentru că** regimul de la Bucuresti încurajează corupția].
 Maria emigrates because regime.the from at Bucharest encourages corruption.the
 ‘Maria emigrates because Bucharest’s regime encourages corruption.’ (*restrictive pentru că-clause*/ “non-epistemic reading”)
- (2) Maria emigrează, [**pentru că** m-am întâlnit cu mama ei adineaori].
 Maria emigrates because REFL_{1.SG.ACC}-(I)have met with mum her just now
 ‘Maria emigrates, because I have just met her mother.’
 (*non-restrictive pentru că-clause*/ “epistemic reading”)⁷

In (1) the *pentru că*-clause conveys the underlying reason for Maria’s actions, while the *pentru că*-clause in (2) explains how the speaker came to know about Maria's actions. The two types of clauses are called “restrictive/non-epistemic” and “non-restrictive/epistemic reading”,

⁷ See Rutherford (1970) and Hooper and Thompson (1973) for English.

respectively and they can be shown to differ in terms of informational structure.

A first piece of evidence comes from *yes-no* questions. A *yes-no* question of the main clause always asks about the content of the restrictive *pentru că*-clause and never about the content of the non-restrictive *pentru că*-clause.

- (3) (Oare) Maria are de gând să emigreze [pentru că regimul de la București încurajează din nou corupția] ? (*restrictive*)

(3) does not ask whether Maria emigrates or not. It asks whether the regime of Bucharest makes Maria emigrate. This indicates that the content of the subordinate clause represents the main assertion of the complex sentence. This is not the case in (4), where the *yes-no* question of the main clause asks about the content of the main clause.

- (4) Oare Maria are de gând să emigreze (?), [pentru că m-am întâlnit cu mama ei adineaori]. (*non restrictive*)

(4) asks whether whether Mary emigrates. The *pentru că*-clause now explains why the speaker asks this question about Maria. This suggests that the main clause is not presuppositional. What is more, the presupposition-main assertion split does not exist in (4).

In sum, the difference between (3) and (4) can be explained in terms of informational structure: the *pentru că*-clause in (3) expresses the main assertion of the complex sentence, while the information in the main clause represents the presupposition (see Hopper and Thompson 1973 for English).

- (5) Maria emigrează [pentru că regimul de la București încurajează din nou corupția]. (*restrictive pentru că*-clause)
Presupposition: main-clause (*Maria emigrează*)
Main assertion: restrictive *pentru că*-clause
(*The cause is: the regime of Bucharest is encouraging corruption*)

Another argument for the focal status of *pentru că*-clauses comes from their behavior in the presence of focus sensitive items such as negation. It is well-known that negation gives rise to ambiguity when used in focal constructions. A sentence such as (6) is ambiguous between a bound (focus associated reading) and a free reading:

- (6) Ion **nu** a venit IERI la facultate.
Ion not has come yesterday to faculty

- a. Ion came to the faculty. It was **not** yesterday, but on some other day.(bound reading)
- b. Ion **didn't** come to the faculty. It happened yesterday. (free reading)

In (6) the bound reading is the most salient reading. In (6a) negation associates with the focalized constituent, while in (6b) negation associates with the TP.

As can be seen in (7) restrictive *pentru că*-constructions are also ambiguous when the predicate of the main clause is negated.⁸

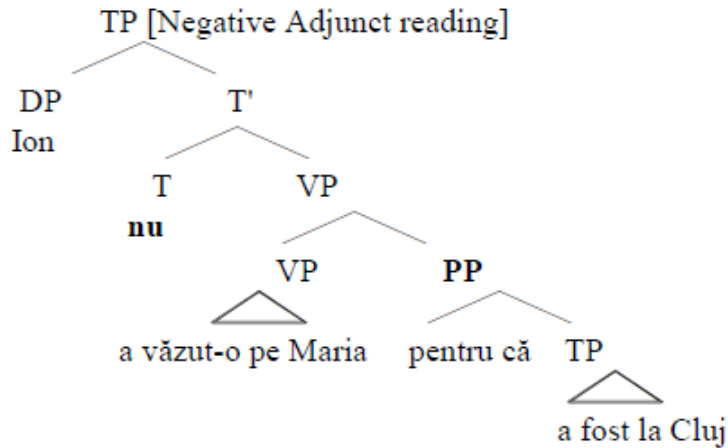
- (7) Ion **nu** a întâlnit-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a fost la Cluj].
 Ion not has met -CL_{3SG.F.ACC} PE Maria because (he) has been at Cluj
 'Ion didn't meet Mary because he visited Cluj.'
 i. Reading: focus-associated reading (*negative adjunction (NA) reading*)
 (a) Ion nu a întâlnit-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a fost la Cluj].
 (Paraphrase: = A întâlnit-o pe Maria, dar nu pentru că a fost la Cluj.)
 Ion met Mary. The reason was not that he visited Cluj.
 ii. Reading: free reading (*negative head (NH) reading*)
 (b) Ion nu a întâlnit-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a fost la Cluj]
 (Paraphrase: = Ion nu a întâlnit-o pe Maria pentru că a fost la Cluj.)
 Ion didn't meet Maria. The reason was that he visited Cluj.

The same has been observed for English *because*-clauses by Johnston (1994) who refers to the first reading as the "negative adjunct (NA)" reading and to the second reading as the "negative head (NH)" reading. On the first reading Ion visited Cluj and Ion met Mary, but the reason for him meeting her was not the visit of the city, but some other reason. On the second reading, Ion visited Cluj and Ion did not meet Mary, the reason for this being that Ion visited the city of Cluj. While in the first case *nu* 'not' negates the cause expressed by the adverbial clause of reason, in the second case *nu* 'not' negates the VP of the main clause.

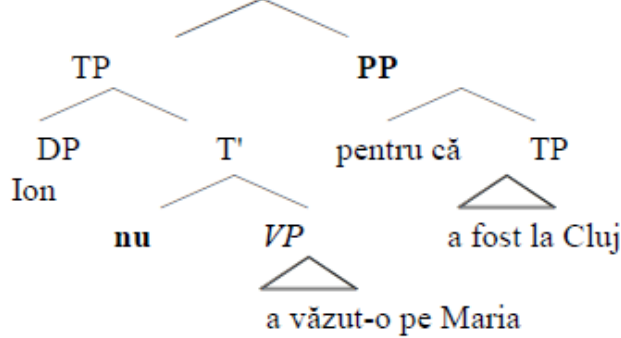
Under Johnston (1994)'s analysis the two readings result from different adjunction sites of the adverbial clause, VP and TP respectively, as illustrated in (8-9). (8) represents the structure of the negative adjunct-reading and (9) represents the structure of the negative head-reading.

⁸ The same has been observed for English with *because*-clauses (Linebarger (1987)

(8)



(9) TP (Negative Head reading)



On this view, *pentru că* is assumed to be an operator. In (8), we have adjunction of the clause of reason to VP. Since negation takes scope over the *pentru că*-clause, negation associates with the *pentru că* operator. In (9), the *pentru că*-clause is adjoined to TP. Since *pentru că* operator does not intervene between negation and the VP, negation takes scope over the VP.

However, this analysis becomes problematic when applied to temporal adverbial clauses. Assuming that temporal adverbial clauses have two possible adjoining sites (VP and TP) predicts that negated complex sentences containing temporal adverbial clauses display the same ambiguity in the presence of negation. Nonetheless, the negated complex sentence in (10) is not ambiguous in the presence of negation.⁹

⁹ Note that if a focalized element occurs in temporal adverbial clauses, they become ambiguous between the two readings as well.

- (10) Ion **nu** a întâlnit-o pe Maria [**când** a vizitat Clujul].
 Ion not has met-CL_{3SG.F.ACC} PE Maria when (he) has visited Cluj.the
 ‘Ion didn’t meet Mary when he visited Cluj.’

In (10) the negative phrase only negates the main clause predicate expressed by the verb phrase. It only says that Ion went to Cluj and during that time, he didn't meet Maria. Temporal adverbial clauses are inherently presuppositional, they do not express the main assertion of the sentence, unlike *pentru că*-clauses.¹⁰ This is apparent if we use a *yes-no* question. The answer to (11) refers to the contents of the main clause, indicating that the main clause represents the main assertion of the complex sentence.

- (11) Ion a întâlnit-o pe Maria [**când** a vizitat Clujul]?
 Ion has met-CL_{3SG.F.ACC} PE Maria when (he) has visited Cluj.the
 ‘Ion met Mary when he visited Cluj.’
 Presupposition: *când*-clause (Ion a vizitat Clujul)
 Main assertion: main clause (Ion a întâlnit-o pe Maria)

What is more, negation makes the sentence ambiguous only in the case of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses which express the main assertion of the complex sentence. Consider (12) containing a non-restrictive *pentru că*-clause. Here *nu* ‘not’ does not associate with the adverbial clause because it expresses a presupposition.

- (12) Maria nu emigrează, [pentru că m-am întâlnit cu mama ei adineaori].
 Maria emigrates because REFL_{1.SG.ACC}-(I) have met with mum her
 just now
 ‘Maria emigrates, because I have just met her mother.’ (*non-restrictive pentru că*-clause)
 Presupposition: *pentru că*-clause (M-am întâlnit cu mama ei adineaori)
 Main assertion: main clause (Maria emigrează,)

This shows that the *pentru că*-clauses are ambiguous just in case the adverbial *pentru că*-clause expresses the main assertion. Therefore, ambiguity of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses in a negative environment is due to its informational structure properties.

¹⁰ The same has been observed for English (Heinämaa 1978).

3. Mapping of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses from syntactic structure to logical representation

In what follows we propose a syntax-semantics mapping of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses along the lines of Herburger (2000) and Kawamura (2007). The latter argues that ambiguities with *because* constructions in the presence of focus sensitive elements such as negation and ambiguities with constructions containing a focalized constituent in the same environment can be explained uniformly. Note that the cartographic approach cannot account for the data in section 2 in a straightforward way (see Cinque 2002, Rizzi 2003, and Belletti 2004 for a general overview of the framework).

Our analysis relies on event semantics (Davidson 1966/1967, Parsons 1990 a.o). On this view, sentences are descriptions of events. In contrast with the traditional view according to which a sentence like (13a) is considered a predication in which the verb *visit* is a two-place predicate taking *Ion* and *Cluj* as its arguments - as shown in (13b), verbs are assumed to further decompose.

- (13) a. *Ion a vizitat Clujul.*
Ion has visited Cluj.the
'Ion visits Cluj.'
b. *visit (ion, cluj)*

The sentence '*Ion vizitează Clujul*' decomposes into an event of visiting where *Ion* is the visitor and *Cluj* is the visited entity as illustrated in (14).

- (14) *Visit (e) & Visitor(e,ion) & Visited(e,cluj)]*

Interestingly, on this view, all verbs are taken to be one-place predicates of events, regardless of whether they are syntactically unaccusative, intransitive, transitive, or ditransitive. The arguments of the verb (e.g., *Ion* and *Cluj* in (12)) are linked to the verb only indirectly. They are participants in the event described by the verb (i.e., the visitor and visited entity are the event participants). These relations are standardly expressed by theta-roles, as in (15) (see Parsons 1990).

- (15) *Visit (e) & Agent (e,ion) & Theme(e, cluj)*

The arguments of the verbs are thus separated from the verb, they are treated as forming their own conjuncts.

What is of interest for our current discussion is the treatment of adverbial modifiers in event-based semantics. On this view, adverbial

modifiers are analyzed as direct predicates of events, just like verbs. Adverbs are considered predicates that apply to an event introduced by the verb. The empirical arguments underlying this proposal is that it can straightforwardly account for the main characteristics displayed by adverbial modifiers, namely entailment patterns¹¹, iteration and optionality.

A sentence such as (16a) containing the PP *cu mașina* “with the car” translates as (16b):

- (16) a. Ion a vizitat Clujul cu mașina.
 Ion has visited Cluj.the with car
 ‘Ion visited Cluj by car.’
 b. be (Visit(e) & Past(e) & Agent(e,ion) & Theme(e,cluj) & With-car(e))
 ``There was a visiting event whose agent was Ion, whose theme was Cluj, which was a visit by car.”

Davidson (1967) proposes that action sentences involve quantification over events (tense being ignored) as in (17)(cf. structured event quantification). A more often than not silent existential event quantifier is added to the relational structure of the predicate:

¹¹ Herburger (2000: 4) shows that a sentence such as (ia) entails all of (ib), (ic), and (id), while (ib) and (ic) entail (id).

- (i)
 a. Brutus stabbed Caesar in the back with a knife.
 b. Brutus stabbed Caesar in the back.
 c. Brutus stabbed Caesar with a knife.
 d. Brutus stabbed Caesar.

where “the longer conjunctions entail the shorter ones. If there was a stabbing where Brutus was the agent, Caesar was the theme, it was a stabbing in the back, and it was done with a knife, then it follows that there was a stabbing where Brutus was the agent, Caesar was the theme, this stabbing was a stabbing in the back; and so on.

- (ii)
 a. be (Stab(e) & Past(e) & Agent(e,brutus) & Theme(e,caesar) & In-the-back(e) & With-a-knife(e))
 ``There was a stabbing whose agent was Brutus, whose theme was Caesar, which was a stabbing in the back, and which was a stabbing with a knife.”
 b. be (Stab(e) & Past(e) & Agent(e,brutus) & Theme(e,caesar) & In-the-back(e))
 ``There was a stabbing whose agent was Brutus, whose theme was Caesar, and which was a stabbing in the back.”
 c. be (Stab(e) & Past(e) & Agent(e,brutus) & Theme(e,caesar) & With-a-knife(e))
 ``There was a stabbing whose agent was Brutus, whose theme was Caesar, and which was a stabbing with a knife.”
 d. be (Stab(e) & Agent(e,brutus) & Theme(e,caesar))
 ``There was a stabbing whose agent was Brutus and whose theme was Caesar.””

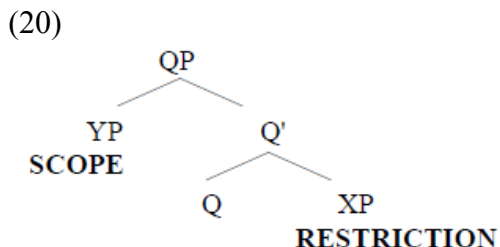
- (17) a. Ion a vizitat Clujul.
 b. $\exists e$ [visit (i, c, e)]
 (Davidsonian semantics)
 (“There is a visiting of Cluj by Mary.”)
 c. $\exists e$ [Visit (e) & Agent (e, ion) & Theme(e, cluj)]
 (Neo-davidsonian semantics)
 (“There is a visiting, and it is by Ion, and it is of Cluj”)

Returning to the interpretation of restrictive *pentru că*-clauses, we have to start from the observation that they express the focus in a complex sentence. Analyzing English *because* clauses, Larson (2004) proposes that the adverbial clause is to be interpreted in the scope of the event quantifier whose domain is restricted by the elements in the main clause. The logical representation of sentence in (18) is given in (19). The complex sentence in (18) containing the adverbial *pentru că*-clause expresses a causing event and the outcome event. In (19) some seeing event (e_1) and some visiting event (e_2) are related by a causal predicate *cause* expressed by *pentru că*.

- (18) Ion întâlnește-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a vizitat Clujul]
 (19) [$\exists e_1$: C(e_1) & see (e_1) & Agent (e_1 , Ion) & Theme (e_1 , Maria)] [$\exists e_2$: C(e_2) & **cause** (e_1 , e_2)] visit (e_2) & Agent (e_2 , Ion) & Theme (e_2 , Cluj)
For some seeing event of Mary of Ion, its reason was some visiting event of Cluj by Ion.

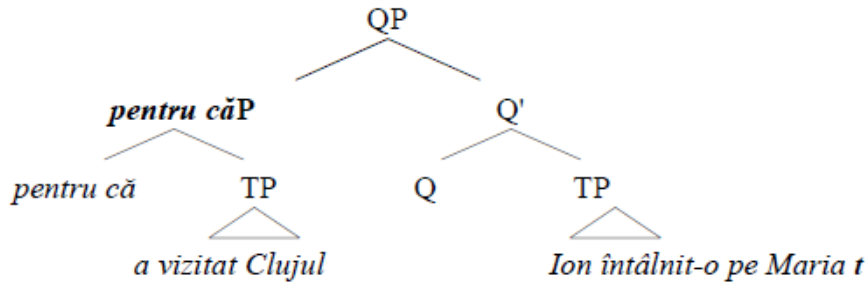
(18) shows that the elements in the main clause interpreted as presupposed are assigned to the restriction of the event quantifier, whereas the elements in the *pentru că*-clause, interpreted as the main assertion, occur in the scope of the event quantifier.

It is assumed that at LF the elements in Spec, QP are mapped to the scope and the elements in the complement of Q are mapped to the restriction of the event quantifier, as exemplified in (20).



Therefore, the syntactic representation in (21) shows that the restrictive *pentru-că* phrase appears in Spec, QP at LF and the elements in the main clause should appear as the complement of Q. For simplicity, we assume that the complement of *pentru-că* phrase selects a TP as its complement. The *pentru că*-phrase is base-generated TP-internally and moves to Spec, QP to satisfy the scope theta-role of the Q-head.

- (21) Ion a văzut-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a vizitat Clujul]

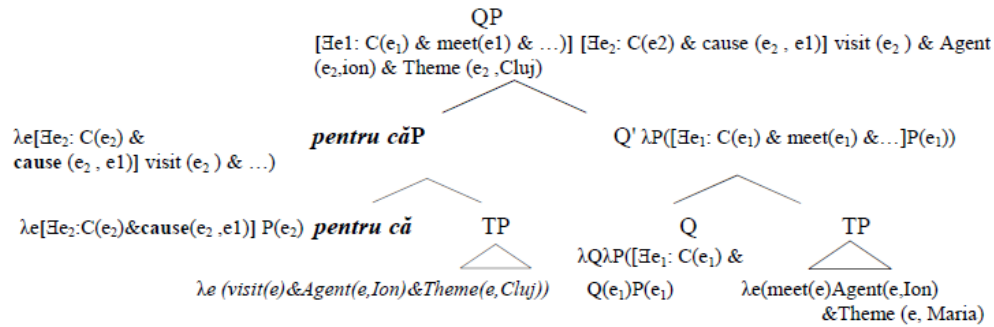


Just as the Foc-head introduces an additional event quantifier (see Herburger 2000), Kawamura (2007) proposes that the head introducing the clausal adverbial, in our case the *pentru că*-head introduces a new event quantifier having the semantic value in (22b). While the Foc-head also introduces the two place event predicate R, the *pentru că*-head introduces a two-place event predicate *cause*.

- (22) a. $[[\text{Foc}]] = \lambda P \lambda e ([\exists e_1 : C(e_1) \ \& \ \mathbf{R}(e_1, e)] P(e_1))$
b. $[[\text{pentru că}]] = \lambda P \lambda e ([\exists e_1 : C(e_1) \ \& \ \mathbf{cause}(e_1, e)] P(e_1))$

Therefore, an adverbial clause headed by *pentru că* has the syntactic structure and the logical representation in (23):

- (23) Ion întâlnit-o pe Maria [**pentru că** a vizitat Clujul]
 $[\exists e_1 : C(e_1) \ \& \ \text{see}(e_1) \ \& \ \text{Agent}(e_1, \text{Ion}) \ \& \ \text{Theme}(e_1, \text{Maria})] [\exists e_2 : C(e_2) \ \& \ \mathbf{cause}(e_2, e_1)] \text{visit}(e_2) \ \& \ \text{Agent}(e_2, \text{Ion}) \ \& \ \text{Theme}(e_2, \text{Cluj})$



In sum, on the current proposal *pentru că*-phrases are treated on a par with focalized constituents.

4. Conclusions

The data coming from Romanian that we have presented in this paper has shown the following:

- 1) When placed after the main clause, Romanian restrictive *pentru că*-clauses are focal structures because they inherently express new information in a complex sentence, and because they sometimes associate with focus sensitive items such as negation – a property also displayed by focalized constituents. More specifically, in a negative environment, they become ambiguous between two readings: a focus-associated reading and a non-associated one.
- 2) Romanian restrictive *pentru că*-clauses, like their English counterparts, can receive a treatment on a par with standard focalized constituents, unlike temporal adverbial clauses in both languages, which are shown to be inherently presuppositional. We leave the complete description of Romanian adverbial clauses in terms of informational structure as well as their syntax-semantics mapping for further research.

References

- Belletti, A. (ed.) 2004. *Structures and Beyond: The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*. Vol. 3. Oxford: OUP.
- Cinque, G. (ed.) 2002 *Functional Structure in DP and IP: The Cartography of Syntactic Structures*. Oxford: OUP.
- Davidson, D. 1966. "The Logical Form of Action Sentences." In *The Logic of Decision and Action*, edited by Nicholas Rescher. Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press. Pp 81-95.
- Davidson, D. 1967. "Causal Relations." *The Journal of Philosophy* 64.21: 691-703.

- Gramatica limbii române. 1963. vol. I, Sintaxa, București: Editura Academiei.
- Gramatica limbii române. 1963. vol. II, Sintaxa, București: Editura Academiei.
- Gramatica limbii române, I. 2005. Cuvântul, Editura Academiei Române, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", București.
- Gramatica limbii române, II. 2005. Enunțul, Editura Academiei Române, Institutul de Lingvistică "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti", București.
- Heinämäki, O. (1978) *Semantics of English Temporal Connectives*, Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- Herburger, E. 2000. *What Counts: Focus and Quantification*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Hooper, J. B. and S. A. Thompson. 1973. On the Applicability of Root Transformations. *Linguistic Inquiry* 4.4: 465-497.
- Kawamura, T. 2007. Some interactions of focus and focus sensitive elements. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Stony Brook University, Stony brook https://linguistics.stonybrook.edu/sites/default/files/.../kawamura_dissertation_0.pdf
- Larson, R. K. 2004. Sentence-final Adverbs and "Scope". *The Proceedings of NELS 34*.
- Linebarger, M. A. (1987) Negative Polarity and Grammatical Representation. *Linguistic and Philosophy* 10: 325-387.
- Pănă Dindelegan, G. (ed.). 2010. Gramatica de bază a limbii române (GBLR). București: Univers Enciclopedic Gold.
- Pănă Dindelegan, G. (ed.). 2013. *The Grammar of Romanian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Parsons, T. 1990. Events in the semantics of English: A study in subatomic semantics. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Rizzi, L. (ed.) 2003. *The Structure of IP and CP. The Cartography of Syntactic Structures, Vol.2*. Oxford: OUP.
- Rutherford, W. E. 1970. Some Observations Concerning Subordinate Clauses in English. *Language* 46: 97-115.