

On the History of Words: some etymological and diachronic remarks on degree words

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Abstract

In this article, we bring into discussion some etymological and diachronic facts about the degree words *cât/atât* in Romanian (*cât/câți* 'how-much/how-many' and *atât/atâți* 'that/so-much/that/so-many'), about their origin and use. We analyse their distribution in correlative constructions and relative clauses with an amount interpretation, starting with Old Romanian texts. These facts are intended to shed light on the distribution of *cât* and *atât*, especially in constructions in which *cât* is used with its correlate *atât*. These correlations originate in Latin comparative/correlative constructions with *quantus ... tantus/tantus ... quantus*. Etimologically, *cât* was claimed to have derived from the Latin word *quantus*? ('*cât de mare?* "how of big"), a corelative of *tantus* (*atât* "that much; so much"), which replaced *quotus*? (*cât?* "how much?"). The other Romance languages kept the unique Latin etimology, so we have in Italian and in Portugese *quanto/tanto* and in Spanish *cuanto/(a)tanto*. As mentioned above, in Latin, the pronoun *quantus* was mainly used in correlative (comparative) constructions and the same distribution can be observed in older Romanian texts (16th-17th century) or in the 18th and 19th century writings, since *cât* was mainly used in correlative constructions that typically consist of a free relative introduced by *cât* and the main clause that contains the correlate, which varies from *iară*

(‘and’), *așa* (‘so much’, ‘that much’) and *cât* (‘how much’), to the more common *atât* (‘that much’).

Key words: linguistics, etymology, degree words, correlative constructions, relative clauses.

Introduction

In Romanian, the degree words *cât* (and its inflected forms for number/gender/case *câtă* ‘how much_{Fsg}’, *câți* ‘how much_{Mpl}’, *câte* ‘how much_{Fpl}’, *câtora* ‘how much_{Genpl}’) and *atât* (and *atâta* ‘that/so much_{Fsg}’, *atâția* ‘that/so many_{Mpl}’, *atâtea* ‘that/so many_{Fpl}’, *atâtora* ‘that/so many_{Genpl}’) are used in degree constructions, correlative constructions, in interrogative clauses and in relative clauses with an amount interpretation. For a better understanding of their distribution, we will briefly discuss some facts about their etymology and their use in Latin comparative constructions and subsequently in old and contemporary Romanian.

1. Brief etymological remarks

Etymologically, *cât* was claimed to have derived from the Latin word *quantus*? (meaning ‘cât de mare?’ ‘how of big’), a correlative of *tantus* (meaning *atât* ‘that much; so much’), which replaced *quotus*? ‘cât?/how much?’ (Ciorănescu, 2001: 204; Vinereanu, 2008: 207, Reinheimer-Rîpeanu, 2001: 176). Ciorănescu (2001: 204), as well as other Romanian linguists (Procopovici, Pușcariu a.o) claimed that the result of such an etymology would have been the word **cânt*, not *cât*. Therefore, in order to avoid such difficulty, it was proposed that *cât* was formed by the contamination of *quantus* with *quotus* (Pană-Dindelegan, 2013: 493).

In *Dicționarul limbii române* [Dictionary of Romanian] (DLR, 1940), *cât* is considered to be the result of the merger between three distinct words, not two, as previously mentioned: Lat. *quantus*, -a, -um; Lat. *quotus*, -a, -um and Lat. pop. *cata* (< Greek). The merger had been so strong that it was almost impossible to distinguish the three words, which also influenced the form. For instance, from *quantus* derives *cânt* (still kept in the

Aromanian word *nișcânt*, which lost the *n* under the influence of *cât* < *quotus* and **cătă* < *cata*). This word attracted the formative **tăt* derived from Lat. *tantus*, whose *n* is still kept in the Aromanian word *ahântu*, but it was dropped in Rom. *atât* ‘that much’.

As a generalisation, the word *cât* has an interesting distribution based on its complex meaning, derived from the merger of the three formatives. Hence:

- Quantity meaning → Lat. *quantus*, used in correlation with *atât*;
- Distributive meaning → Lat. pop. *cata*. Ex.: *câte unul, câte doi* etc.
- Enumerative meaning → Lat. *quotus*, used especially in correlation with *tot* ‘all’.

However, the other Romance languages kept the unique Latin etymology, so we have in Italian and in Portuguese *quanto* and in Spanish *cuanto*. We illustrate this with examples from Romanian, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese (apud. Reinheimer-Rîpeanu, 2001:176).

- (1) a. Rom. (Toți) *câți îl cunosc îl admiră*.
(Everybody) how-many himCL.know himCL. admire
'Everybody that knows him admires him'.
- b. It. (Tutti) *quanti lo conoscono lo ammirano*.
- c. Sp. (Todos) *cuantos lo conocen le admiran*.
- d. Port. (Todos) *quantos o conhecem admiram-no*.

The pronoun *quantus* was not kept in modern French, despite having many uses in Old French. Thus, there is no relative pronoun equivalent to *cât* derived from the Latin *quantus* in French, only the French interrogative pronoun *combien?* (‘how many/how much’) (Reinheimer-Rîpeanu, 2001: 177).

On the other hand, *atât* expresses an indefinite number, degree or quantity and it is derived from Lat. *ecum-tantum* (DLR, 1940/2010: 349). Meyer-Lübke (1890: 53) claims that the word

tantus replaced the Rom. *Tot* 'all' (apud. DLR, 1940/2010: 349). The other Romance languages kept the same Latin etymology, so we have in Italian *tanto*, in Spanish and Portuguese *tanto* and in French *tant*.

- (2) a. Quod capita, tot sententiae. (DLR, 1940/2010: 346)
b. Câte capete, atâtea minți.
How-many heads, that-many minds.

In *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii române* [Romanian Etymology Dictionary] (Candrea & Densușianu, 1907), the word *atânt* is also mentioned, but this form is similar to the Aromanian word, which was used in the literary language to make its etymology *tantus* more obvious.

The constructions in which these two degree words most commonly appear in correlation are the comparative constructions and the relative clauses with an amount interpretation. The origin of these constructions is the *tantus... quantus* correlation in Latin. In the next section of this paper, we will examine each construction, with their structures and variations.

2. Atât.... cât (that-much.... how-much) correlations

2.1 Correlative comparative constructions

There is a general cross-linguistic connection between relative clauses and comparative clauses in the sense that both are expressed in some languages as a correlative construction. In other languages the similarity between the comparative correlative and a prototypical correlative relative clause is even more striking, as is the case of *atât...cât* correlative constructions (comparatives and amount relatives) in Romanian. Their origin lies in the Latin structure with the pronouns *tantus....quantus* or with the adverbs *tanto... quanto*, which were mainly used in correlative (comparative) constructions.

In the following structures, we have examples of the correlative *tanto... quanto* used to show comparison between two things.

(3) Aer immineo hic, qui tantus sum oneros ignis, quantus pondus aqua sum levis pondus terra.

The air rest upon them, which is as much heavier [than] fire, as the weight of water is lighter than the weight of earth'.

(4) Tanti homo est sine amico, quanti corpus absque spiritu est.
(Latin proverbs)

'A person without a friend is worth as much as a body without breath.'

Moreover, there are also structures in which the pronoun *quantus* is also placed before its antecedent *tantus* or in which the relative adverb *quanto* is placed before *tanto*, as illustrated in the examples below:

(5) Quantus erat, tantus mons factus Atlas.

'Atlas was made as great a mountain.'

(6) Quanto es doctior, tanto sis submissior.

'By how much more learned you are, by so much more humble you should be.'

The more learned you are, the more humble you should be.

(7) Quantus animal cunctus cedo tu, tantus parvus sum tuus gloria noster.

'By how much all animals yield to you, by so much less is your glory than mine.'

(8) Ita quantus longius ab oppidum (discedebatur), tantus tardus ad insequendus sum Numidae.

‘So, by how much further they departed from the city, by so much slower were the Numidians in following.’

The purpose of this brief presentation of correlative (comparative) structures in Latin is that the same distribution can be observed in older Romanian texts (16th-17th century) or in 18th and 19th century writings, since *cât* was mainly used in correlative constructions that typically consist of a free relative introduced by *cât* and the main clause that contains the correlate. The correlate of *cât* in these constructions varies from *așa* (‘so much’, ‘that much’) and *cât* (‘how much’), to the more common *atât* (‘that much’). The examples below illustrate this variation: in (9a, b) in correlation with *așa*, with *atât* in (10) and with *cât* in (11).

(9) a. Doar cât nu plângea, așa era de tristă. (DLR, 1940: 192).

b.... unde să cuvântă ceva cu întrebare, așa să-și tocmească glasul întru cetire, cât ascultătorii să priceapă că iaste întrebare” (P. Maior, Scrieri [Writings], I).

(10) Atât sânt de multe învățăturile lor, cât intrec la număr nesipul mării (Antim Ivireanu, Psaltirea: 200).

That-much are of many teachings their, how-much surpass in number sand sea-the Gen

(11) Cazacii, cât le va da de stire, cât vor veni (Letopisețul, I: 92).

Kazakhs, how-much CL tell them, how-much will come.

Nonetheless, *cât* is more commonly used in structures in correlation with *tot/toți*_{pl} (‘all’). All these examples illustrate (restrictive) amount relative clauses:

(12) a. Acea înțeleaseră toti Iudeii si Elenii câți viia intru Efes (în Codul Vor.: Tuturor Jidovidlo și Grecilor celora ce lăcuia in Efes) (Noul Testament, 1648).

b. Dărui ție Dumnezeu toți câți noata cu tine (Noul Testament, 1648).

- c. Se ispiteasca de împrumutătorii toate câte-su al lui (Psaltirea Hurmuzaki).
- d. Cu toti drumetii pre câți îi întâlnea (Creangă, apud Cornilescu, 1978/2013).
- e. Toate trebile câte le facea, le facea pe dos (Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of the Romanian Language], 1940: 192).
- f. ... dulci-govitori den toate limbile câte-s pre supt ceri (Coresi, *Lucrul apostolesc*, Brașov, 1593).
- g. Noi cu totii câți ne era casele în Iași (Dicționarul limbii române [Dictionary of the Romanian Language], 1940: 192).

There are also cases when the correlative *tot* is not spelled out (especially in contexts with *mult* 'much', *alt* 'other', *acela* 'that one') or with possessives (13-15):

- (13) a. Să se ceae de păcate câte au făptu (16th century).
- b. Acestea câte am lucrat si câte am grai..., să le socotească (Antim Ivireanu, apud. DLR, 1940/2010: 349).
- (14) a. Câte vra el, acele facea. (Letopisetul, apud. DLR, 1940/2010: 350).
- c. vestiră cătr-înșii câte întâii preuților și bătrânii ziseră (Coresi, *Lucrul apostolesc*, Brașov, 1593).
- b. Ședea spânu la ospăt, împreună cu mosu-său, cu verele sale si cu altii câți se întâmplase (Creangă, *Harap Alb*, apud Cornilescu, 1978/2013).
- (15) Eu oiu da seama de ale mele câte scriu (Letopisețul, I. 5, apud. DLR, 1940/2010:350).

There are also correlative constructions in which the two correlates indicate a proportional comparison, as illustrated below:

- (16) a. Cu cât bea, cu atât i-e sete (Bourciez, 1930: 601).
- 'The more he drinks, the thirstier he becomes'.

b. Quanto plus bibit, tanto plus sitit (Lat., cf. Bourciez, 1930:128).

c. Quanto più beve, tanto più ha sete (ital.).

d. Quanto más bebe, tanto mas tiene sed (span.).

2.3 Relative clauses with an amount interpretation

All the structures presented above have shown that there is diachronic evidence for the distribution of *cât* in correlative constructions, and that these correlations are similar to the Latin correlative construction with *quantus.... tantus* in comparative contexts. Based on the claim that correlatives and relative clauses are structurally related (cf. Haudry, 1973 & Bianchi, 1999), in this section we present relative constructions with *cât...atât*. Due to the use of these degree words, the relative clauses have an amount interpretation (interpreted as set equivalence of the two correlative structures).

(17) a. După 24 de ani, adică atâția ani cât am purtat pe umeri un anume segment din cluca umanoido-comunistă, rămân întrebări care ne provoacă insomnii (Radio Iasi, 2013).

b. Credeți că ne strângem atâția cât să batem FC Botoșani în clasamentul ăsta? (Tara-n Bucate, 2015).

(18) a. Astfel Rebecca, pe timpul șederii la Queen's Crawley, își făcu prieteni printre cei bogați și păcătoși, atâția cât putu aduce sub oblăduirea ei (W. M. Thackeray, *Bâlciul deșertăciunilor* [Vanity Fair]).

b. Căutându-și salvarea de furia cetelor de țărănoi, atâția oameni educați cât mai reușiseră să supraviețuiască se refugiară în sanctuare (Walter M. Miller Jr., *Cantica pentru Leibowitz* [A Canticle for Leibowitz]).

3. Similar degree constructions cross-linguistically

Romanian is not unique in using degree words to introduce degree/amount relatives. Degree operators are also used in Polish

(cf. Tomaszewicz, 2013) that possesses a dedicated relativizer for modifying amounts, *ile* ('how-much'), in Bulgarian, which has *kolko* ('how much') (Pancheva, 2012) and *kolku* ('how much') in Macedonian (used, for example, in quantity questions, cf. Rett, 2006).

For example, the RCs in Polish, mostly those used in comparative constructions, contain a dedicated relativizer for modifying amounts, *ile*, by which we know that those are 'degree relative clauses'. This type of RCs can also participate in correlative structures. Correlativization shows that *ile*-relative clauses modify degrees - in the matrix clause the degree variable it abstracts over is picked up by a degree demonstrative *tyle* ('that much/many'), (19a), and not by a regular demonstrative referring to individuals, (19b) vs. (19c).

(19) a. Jan kupił *tyle* pomidorow (+ a pointing gesture).

Jan bought DEM tomatoes.

'Jan bought that many tomatoes.'

b. Jan kupił Marii *tyle* pomidorow, *ile*/**ktore* pro mógł kupić.

Jan bought for---Maria DEM tomatoes how---many/which could buy .

'Jan bought Maria as many tomatoes as he could buy.'

c. Jan kupił Marii *te* pomidory, *ktore* pro mógł kupić.

Jan bought for---Maria DEM tomatoes which could buy.

'Jan bought Maria those tomatoes that he could buy.'

For the amount reading in Polish, both the dedicated quantity demonstrative *tyle* and the relativizer *ile* have to be used, similar to *atât...cât* constructions in Romanian:

(20) Jan wypił *tyle* szampana, *ile* wylano na podłogę tego wieczoru.

Jan drank DEM champagne how-much spilled. Impr on floor that evening.

‘Jan drank as much champagne as they spilled on the floor that evening.’

The Romanian *cât* is also similar with the Bulgarian *kolko* (cf. DLR, 1940) or to the Macedonian *kolku* used in free relatives:

(21) *otide kolko otide* (Bulgarian).
 merse cât merse (Romanian).
 walked how much walked.
 ‘He walked and walked’.

b. *Mojot багаж тежи колку што тежи (и) твојој* (Macedonian; Grosu, 2009).

 my+the luggage weighs how-much that weighs (and)
 yours+the

 ‘My luggage weighs as much as yours does’.

The crosslinguistic data discussed above illustrate amount/degree clauses introduced by degree operators of the type *atât...cât*. However, an in-depth analysis of their distribution is left for further research.

Conclusions

In this paper, we have presented some remarks about the etymology of the degree words *cât* and *atât*, with a special view to their structures and use in degree constructions. Based on etymological data, *cât* is the result of a merger of three words (Lat. *quantus*, *quotus* and *cata*) and *atât* is derived from Lat. *tantum*. The etymology explains the uses in correlative constructions and, in the case of *cât*, its varied distribution. Thus, the comparative and relative constructions with *atât...cât* are diachronically related to the Latin correlative constructions (*quantus... tantus*) and are structurally similar. This similarity between correlative comparative clauses and amount relative clauses is particularly important from a syntactic point of view, since both structures

could be attributed a common configuration and a unitary analysis (especially from the perspective of natural language processing techniques).

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