

ENGLISH VERSUS ROMANIAN COLLECTIVES

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0.1. The present paper develops and applies the main points regarding collective nouns seen in semantic-grammatical terms in the sub-classification of English nouns detailed by A. Bantaș in 1978. That sub-classification was in its turn a development and amplification in functional as well as contrastive terms of the classification of English nouns advanced by Prof. Leon Levitchi of Bucharest University in 1970 and then in a revised concentrated version in 1971.

0.2. The major practical gain obtained by the above-mentioned sub-classification was the possibility to offer a more specific description of the grammatical regimen of each class, sub-class or sub-sub-class of nouns, that is to illustrate their behaviour in different contexts in point of pluralization, singularization, use of genitives, agreement, determiners, modifiers, substitutes, etc.¹ The sub-classification established more groups of identical, unitary or similar behaviour (in a word homogeneous) while substantially reducing the cases labelled "exceptions". Moreover, by rendering more precise the relations between *types of nouns and types of determiners accepted or required by the former*, it pointed out concrete means of eliminating mistakes made in English by speakers of languages in which *nouns are indifferent to the types of determiners accompanying them*.

0.3. As regards collective nouns, their better description was aimed at, providing a more thorough-going motivation of their plural concord and substitutes.

0.4. From the theoretical point of view, the subclassification offers a new foundation for analysing various aspects of English nouns. It is currently used for the Monograph of English Nouns which are we preparing.

¹ See Bantaș (1971, 1976, 1978a).

1.0. Pattern VI in the above-mentioned sub-classification of English nouns corresponds to L. Levitchi's sixth class — COLLECTIVE NOUNS PROPER. It summarizes the grammatical behaviour of only one meaning of these nouns: *the collective sense proper*, i.e. singular form and (preferably) plural concord. As it is our contention that the other two or three meanings of collective nouns fall into other classes (in conformity with the principle dwelt upon in other papers² and detailed as regards collective nouns in this very study under 2.4) the other meanings should be looked up in other patterns, according to their grammatical behaviour: for the sense of *building*, it is but natural to refer to concrete individual nouns (sub-pattern I-3 in our sub-classification); for the *definition* of the abstract notions we certainly have to consider *sub-pattern* I-5; for the *description* of the concrete notions (with nominal predicates mostly) it is but normal to consider concrete individual nouns (sub-pattern I-1); as regards *semantically collective nouns*, those of the type *leafage*, *plumage* are included in the same sub-pattern I-1 for concrete individual nouns, *the abstract ones*, in the nature of *communications*, like *advice*, *information*, *news* have been included in variant C of sub-pattern V-1, while the alleged "collective" nature of such nouns as *forest*, etc. has been ignored — in our opinion fitting sub-pattern I-3 for objects.

1.0.1. Therefore, taking collective nouns proper — or rather the *properly collective sense* of nouns usually termed collective — we find that their principal characteristics are first of all the defining ones — singular form but plural meaning and agreement especially with plural verb in contemporary British English (though less frequently in American journalese and colloquial speech.) They are the elements which set the specific mark on this class, while also giving rise to difficulties, particularly for people who are not accustomed to thinking in terms of *agreement in accordance with meaning* ("acordul după înțeles" in Romanian).³ Other characteristics are shared in common with individual nouns proper — countability and normal numericalization, the utilization of the definite and indefinite articles, the use of all types of genitive (with marked preference for the synthetic one) — justified by the feature [+human]. As regards gender, in that majority of cases when people employ collective nouns as plurals, they also conceive the latter as standing for the common gender (since both men and women are viewed as part of this conception), the substitutes being *they*, *theirs*, *who*, *whose*, *to whom*, *whom* (as well as *that*); with people who conceive them as singulars — therefore within the limits of individual nouns proper, the gender ascribed to them is neuter (with *it*, etc. as substitutes).

² See Bantaș (1978b).

³ See Bantaș (1977).

1.0.2. In our classification, sub-pattern VI-1 includes only humans while sub-pattern VI-2 includes groups of both human and non-human animates. The growing category of collectives is more or less half-way between individual nouns and nouns of multitude. All the other points in our description are subordinated to the basic nature of a plurality of beings taken as a whole, therefore forming a unit which can be multiplied, counted, etc.

1.0.3. Ambivalent collective nouns, that is groups of either animals or humans (e.g. *crowd*, *flock*, *herd*, etc.) have been placed by us in sub-pattern VI-2 which differs from the main sub-pattern only through these semantic features and their grammatical consequences. In this particular case, certainly, the utilization of the neuter gender reflected in substitutes is more frequent than with sub-pattern VI-1.

Taken all in all, pattern VI offers similarities with pattern VII of nouns of multitude as regards the presence of the singular form with plural meaning, of the concrete, human nature, of the common gender and substitutes as well as of the use of genitives. On the other hand, there are partial differences as regards the fluctuations of agreement in the pattern of collective nouns and the use of determiners; the most substantial differences from class VII lie in the uncountability of the latter, which require special means or forms for their numericalization.

1.0.4. As collective nouns have undergone an obvious evolution which continues under our very eyes, (as regards quantity, spreading and even in point of logical motivation), we believe they involve a very ample analysis with a multitude of aspects. Most probably they also shed light on some contemporary tendencies in English.

1.1. EVOLUTION

From the historical point of view, as against the two *collective nouns proper* (*parliament* and *government* — therefore in the legal or political vocabulary) found by us with a plural predicate, in 18th century texts, in 19th century texts their number increased to several dozens: *family*, *crew*, *team*, *nation*, etc.

In texts written in our century — irrespective of the register, i.e., in scientific and official texts as well as in literature and newspapers recording colloquial English — we notice that this category of nouns has been assuming an increasing scope, through both the growth in the number of nouns included in this category and the permanent extension of the cases when they are used with plural verbs and substitutes.

1.1.1. Therefore, on the one hand there is a substantial and, in our opinion, *incessant increase in the number of singular nouns which can be used with a singular or plural verb* according to whether the individual concept, or on the

contrary, the group concept is prevalent. Examples have increased and spread so much that nowadays we are hardly aware of the situation except when they provide really surprising or striking novelties.

Such is now the position that it is possible to say, at least theoretically or hypothetically, that *any noun referring to a group of people (orchestra, school, etc.)* can be used with a plural verb, without anybody being surprised — provided the predominance of the group concept is made clear enough.

We are basing this assertion on the observation that such instances of usage which seem to us striking because they were rare decades ago, have now come to be used thus as a matter of course and we foreigners have to learn to take them in our stride, as English speaking people seem to do. About a decade ago, when we found a headline reading *Australia have won their first cricket match against Great Britain* we somehow felt that — however surprising the example might have been for us — there were two elements to be taken into consideration: (a) *It was not a mistake* or at least it was probably not perceived as a mistake by English speaking people, since it appeared in a newspaper; and (b) *It was no accident* either because it was a part of a *developing pattern*. It was just an *illustration of a trend*, which had all the chances of gaining ground because on the one hand it had proved its vigour for a long time already and on the other hand it fitted a more or less general way of thinking or grammatical logic of English speech.

Recent publications seem to confirm this approach with a vengeance: the sports columns now refer to many national teams by the name of the country alone, *while using agreement and substitutes in the plural*.

1.1.1.1. Of course, there are a few facts hardly to be overlooked:

- (A) — First of all, examples are still contradictory, there is much fluctuation from one author to another, from one publication to another, (especially American vs. British), and sometimes we have found inconsistencies of usage within the same (British) text — a short article perhaps.
- (B) — The conclusions we can infer from this are: a) that we merely have to do with a trend which is not yet firmly established or perfectly rounded off theoretically — or practically either, for that matter; b) that the inconsistencies can perhaps be explained by several more or less subconscious factors connected with the prevalence of the group concept (or respectively the individual concept) upon the speaker's or writer's mind and with the other elements of motivation discussed above; c) that insofar as we have become convinced of the presence and direction of this trend we ought to promote it in our own usage and teaching too, in order to keep pace with this development in the English language.

- (C) — We cannot refrain from admitting that in many cases it is easy to perceive the logical process underlying these instances of plural concord and substitutes — namely the omission or clipping of such a word as *team* (in *France have scored heavily against Wales*) or *crew* (in *The Victory have unloaded new goods in our harbour*).
- (D) — Even these inconsistencies may be illustrative of certain points — which are in fact aspects of the trend we are discussing. For instance, in our opinion, a close analysis of contradictory examples reveals — besides the component of the group concept — another component of the trend, namely the propensity towards using the *singular for description* or related situations and *the plural when some kind of action* — psychical, intellectual or perhaps emotional — is *involved*. Such is the only explanation that we could provide for instance for the presence of the following two divergent examples within a few lines of each other in one and the same newspaper article: *The union leadership have decided to call a strike* but *The working class has to have its representatives in Parliament*. In principle, if it is logical to use the plural for a small group of people such as union's leaders it is even more logical to use it for a larger group such as the working-class. Probably, however — and this is our assumption — in the first case the writer sub-consciously thought of the union leadership assembling, discussing and finally adopting a decision — all these being *actions*. In the second case it was a theoretical point connected with the description or definition of a feature asserted as inherent in the working class — or anyhow there was no action involved because the verb 'to have' did not imply any action, being just a modal.
- (E) — There are also inconsistencies more difficult to explain: the use of a plural verb, yet of a singular substitute for the same noun, or vice-versa. A further analysis of this problem will probably reveal many other points which may prove valuable theoretically and especially in the pedagogical practice, etc. Explanations will provide a better basis for teaching and translations.

1.1.2. The second aspect of the tendency exhibited by collective nouns from the historical point of view is a fairly rapid *increase in the number of cases when collective nouns* (or perhaps, conceivably collective nouns) *are actually used with a plural verb*. The effervescence — or probably even explosion — of this peculiarity in English speech and writing of our times seems to indicate that the tendency is now at its height, that it may be coming to a head, that it therefore stands a fair chance of becoming fully established within the foreseeable future. That is why, *it is likely to become normative* and so we ought to comply with it in usage and teaching.

So, in spite of misleading fluctuations — as we have seen, sometimes justifiable and more rarely unaccountable — the tendency seems to be both obvious and motivated, being reflected on a diachronical as well as on a synchronical plane.

2.0. GENERAL AND TAXONOMIC ASPECTS

As a matter of fact, in the light of the above evidence and considerations, the very notion of collective nouns requires some discussion for various reasons:

2.1. First of all there are many grammars in which the nouns which we call collective do not appear as such, but under various other headings. The most usual confusion is that with nouns of multitude, especially with and because of the noun *people*. While we retain the distinction between collective nouns proper and nouns of multitude as made by Professor Levițchi, we cannot refrain from pointing out that such a confusion originates also (or perhaps especially) in the twofold or multifold nature of the noun *people*. In fact, perhaps it is wrong to speak of its non-unitary nature, but rather of the lack of unity or similitude between the patterns of grammatical behaviour of the various meanings of such a polysemous noun.⁴ It is one of the factors which have led us to the conclusion that we need a smaller lexical grammatical unit, also to be used as a dictionary entry: *the sem-grammeme*.⁵

Besides, there are more or less clearly stated opinions contesting the very existence of the category of collective nouns — to say nothing of so many books which implicitly ignore them. As a matter of fact, the position is that, taken all in all, we have the whole range of possible attitudes towards collective nouns — from complete ignorance of them, confusion with other categories, a clear definition of the category, going up to a rather comprehensive approach like that of Zandvoort (1965), who includes even such words as *foliage*, *leafage*, *forest* and *oak* among collective nouns.

2.2. The positive points as well as some aspects of neglect in the bibliography, have led us to the following observations:

Zandvoort subdivides collective nouns into several categories, and his demonstration and exemplification of the matter (1965: §§259—264) are not only convincing, but also seminal enough. The only objection would be that he brings *inanimate* nouns into this category which is normally regarded as referring to *beings and particularly to human beings*. Such is the traditional — *stricto sensu* — conception of it, but of course Zandvoort's infringement of the limits of this conception can easily be redressed by adopting a broader con-

⁴ Bantaș (1974).

⁵ Bantaș (1975).

ception — *lato sensu* — by extending the notion so as to include a *collectivity of beings, both human and otherwise*. Moreover the introduction of inanimate elements within the same category is no offence because there is a great merit in his calling attention to the collective or multitudinal meaning of such words as *foliage* which from this standpoint (of the assumption of numbers within a whole) can logically be compared to nouns like *army*, *group*, *poultry*, *heap*, *flock*, etc.

It seems to us logical to accept the idea that these may be called collective nouns, but on the other hand we have to underline that the matter has no grammatical implications (like those of *nation*, *government*, *crew*, etc.) and that is therefore a *semantic* problem rather than a *grammatical* one.

In fact, this semantic aspect of collectiveness or multitude may be just a point of speculation which, if pushed too far, may lead to unnecessary remarks, because there are numberless nouns which include a plurality of elements, and yet we would think it is absurd to consider the word *book* collective because it includes many pages, or the word *page* collective because it includes words, or *novel* because it includes chapters, episodes, etc.

2.3.0. PROPOSED SUBDIVISION

Proceeding from Zandvoort's valuable suggestions — or at least references to certain special categories and subcategories in the Levițchi classification of nouns, we can reach the following new sub-classification, which also synthesizes the behaviour of the various sub-classes of nouns with a collective meaning:

2.3.1. (A) *Nouns of multitude* (in their turn apt to be subdivided into human — e.g. *police* — and animal — e.g. *poultry*). They share the following characteristics: they have a singular form but agreement in the plural, they can only be individualized through the use of other nouns in phrases (*a member of*, etc.) or by special means. Some of them are preceded by the definite article as an indispensable determinative. Yet there are differences among them, especially as concerns countability and numericalization.

2.3.2. (B) *Collective nouns proper* (e.g. *crew*) under which heading we consider only groups of human beings. The nouns have a singular form with agreement either in the singular or the plural according to the rules generally known for collective nouns and accepted by us in the form in which they are more frequently applied nowadays, they are countable and pluralizable in the normal way. The main difficulties connected with them are those of gender and number entailing the problem of substitutes (all of which — as shown below — can only be solved through the dissection of meanings which, incidentally, provides the smallest analysable unit — cf. section 1). Probably

the most reasonable approach to such difficulties would be to distinguish three basic meanings for most collective nouns: abstract, concrete as a unit, concrete as a group.

2.3.3. (C) *Ambivalent collective nouns* — including the human and the animal kingdoms — that is nouns like *host* or *group* which can be used for both people and animals, with the addition of the words *herd*, *flock*, *bevy* which, though originally referring to the animal kingdom, can be applied to human beings especially in a figurative sense.

These nouns share the characteristics of collective nouns proper but usually reflect only the characteristics of subdivisions/meanings (b) and (c) — cf. 2.4.2 and 2.4.3. Of course, the category is much more limited in importance than subcategories (A) and (B) and less numerous than some of the subcategories following below.

2.3.4. (D) *Individual nouns of multitude* normally include epicene representatives of the animal kingdom whose name can stand for both singular and plural — the latter being used without the proper mark of the plural by everybody for a certain number of them and by some people professionally connected with them for the rest, e.g. *deer*, *sheep*, *fish*, *trout*, *grouse*, etc. (cf. Zandvoort (1965) for *giraffe*, etc.) On the other hand, the phonetic peculiarities of some names of peoples ending in a sybilant (*English*, *Swiss*, *French*) cause them to fall rather inadvertently under the same heading, they sharing some characteristics of this group but differing through the feature [+human] and the means of numericalization which are not homogeneous. Obviously they also differ through the means of specifying their sex, for such nouns as *the English*, *the French*, etc. Therefore we should suggest a subdivision into D (a) and D (b).

2.3.5. (E) *Nouns denoting a quantity or multitude of things or objects* with a possible -s plural — e.g. *fruit(s)*, *hair(s)*, *coal(s)*, *coin(s)*. If we consider them attentively — and possibly if we add the nouns *craft* and *aircraft* — we realize that some differences are perceptible even inside this small group: the -s plural would mark different species in the case of *fruit* (very much as in the case of *fishes*) while it would specify just several elements in the case of *hairs* or *coals*. Nevertheless these nouns share most of the other grammatical characteristics, including the neuter gender.

2.3.6. (F) *Semantically collective notions* (with no grammatical implications in most cases) such as *heap*, *lot*, *leafage*, *foliage*, *money*, *stock*, *advice*, *furniture*. This category is not perfectly unitary either, and such previously mentioned nouns as *craft* and *aircraft* as well as the delusive noun *news* may

claim a place within in the same category, increasing the diversity of its grammatical regimens (behaviours). Nevertheless, they do share many characteristics, with the exception of the not very important concrete-abstract distinction and of the different means applied for numericalization when the latter is possible. A special note is required for the aspect of equivalence in other languages, for instance Romanian, where on the one hand such words as *leafage* are rendered by similar semantically collective notions like *frunziș* which do not seem to arouse the attention of grammarians as they pose no grammatical problems, while on the other hand the collective meaning of some of these nouns — *money*, etc. — is rendered by a normal plural. They reject the feature [+animate] — and with a vengeance [+human] — being neuter and singular. The fact that in discussing such nouns one Romanian grammarian⁶ mentions also the noun *studentime* ("students") looks like a mere inadvertence.

2.3.7. (C) *Generic notions* — for species of plants, trees, etc. which could be taken as instances of metonymy but for the fact that the examples quoted by Zandvoort (1965: §263) — *cactus*, *oak*, *marigold*, etc. — do not point to a literary or poetic context (perhaps rather to a scientific one).

2.4.0. SEMANTIC-GRAMMATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

As we see it, the semantic anatomy of a typical collective noun reveals meanings of the following basic kinds:

2.4.1. (a) *abstract* meaning taken in a general sense (as a unit) used more specifically in descriptions or definitions, in the singular alone, particularly with linking verbs of being, as part of nominal predicates. Typical examples would be *The family is the basis of society* therefore generalized, like a definition, or as an historical notion, e.g. *The English Parliament was founded in 1217*. In this case these nouns are neuter and singular, therefore naturally replaced by *it*;

2.4.2. (b) *concrete* meaning (or abstract — the distinction is difficult but not very relevant) taken as a unit, used especially in a description of the notion, the members of the group being perceived as a unit, not differentiated, not important as individuals but serving rather as a sort of background for the notion; (they are linked together by blood, juridical or social relations — joint occupation, location, appurtenance or some other form of common involvement). The group concept does not take precedence over the unit-concept. In this case, particularly in descriptions of such nouns — e.g. *My family is of*

⁶ See Constantinescu Dobridor (1974).

old Transylvanian descent or *The crew is made up of seventeen people* — these nouns are still taken to be neuter singular, the pronoun *it* being their natural substitute. Again the singular is used, of verbs denoting state or appearance or location — therefore as part of both nominal and verbal predicates. The verb *to have* can also appear in many cases, with its (static) meaning of possession;

2.4.3. (c) the *truly collective* meaning, (concrete, as a group) denoting the plurality of beings viewed at the same time as a multitude (as numbers) and as members of the same body. Although such a classical example as *My family are at the sea-side* is often proposed, it seems to us unconvincing, or even misleading (as proved by our teaching practice) because it turns the learner's attention from the real issue; moreover the bulk of the examples indicate that predominant are verbs of *action* (physical intellectual and perhaps emotional), verbs denoting *location* (usually accompanied by adverbial elements) and verbs of *movement*. On the whole we could say that these plural predicates are used in order to indicate the *activity* of the subject rather than the *state, appearance, or description* of the subject. The situation therefore occurs mainly when we refer to the position in space and time of *the members of the collectivity, when the awareness of their severalty is fairly prominent in our mind*.

2.4.4. (d) To these meanings may be added the irrelevant concrete sense: the building of the *Parliament, Congress, school, University, Department, Council*, etc. It is an additional meaning with many collective nouns, but it does not properly fall under the incidence of our discussion. (We believe this matter was already elucidated when we showed how different meanings entailed different behaviours — in this case the sense of "building" therefore irrelevant because it is just an ordinary individual noun). *In terms of both evolution and current situation* we are particularly interested in type (c) meanings and that is why we are devoting an extensive discussion to them.

2.5.0. POLYSEMY

In fact we should like to take advantage of the amplitude and diversity of problems raised by collective nouns in order to point out further aspects of the interdependence between the various chapters of linguistics: for instance collective nouns very well demonstrate the relations between semantics and grammar because most of the difficulties involved by them proceed from *polysemy*.

We daresay it is rather difficult to keep grammatical criteria free from semantic ones — and vice versa. If we accepted the idea that dissimilarities

in the grammatical behaviour of different meanings are essential enough to warrant a diversified treatment in didactic works and dictionaries — both guiding learning — we could eliminate some of the difficulties which in our opinion are artificial, being generated merely by the indiscriminacy or oversimplifications of wholesale treatment.

2.5.1. A graphic example pointing out the multiplicity of aspects involved by collective nouns is provided by *royalty*.

In a sentence like: *royalty are above suspicion* we are inclined to take it for a collective noun, employed with a plural verb. Yet, by comparing it with other sentences such as *royalty is similar to monarchy* and *royalty and monarchy are similar notions, the abolition of royalty was a first objective, his royalties are due next month, reproduction is subject to royalty, royalties are/royalty is to be paid in advance, he is royalty*, we obtain a rather heterogeneous if not puzzling image of this word.

That is precisely why we suggest the separate treatment of each meaning of such nouns as *independent semantic-grammatical units*.

royalty 1 — figurative, uncountable=monarchy.

royalty 2 — noun of multitude, uncountable, non pluralizable=royal family, monarchs, people of royal blood

royalty 3 — (especially pl. royalties) an entirely different meaning apparently uncountable, yet apt to be used either in the plural or singular= fees due for authorship, etc.

3.1.0. GENDER

The notion of collective in its usual sense has implications mainly in the field of agreement. Yet, when we consider it in the broader perspective of the multitude or multiplicity of component elements (animate or inanimate) we easily realize that it has implications in other respects too — particularly gender and substitutes.

3.1.1. There is a sort of consensus among those grammarians who do discuss collective nouns and nouns of multitude (perhaps under different labels) that they belong to the common gender. This assertion (implicit or explicit) is safe enough as a rule. Unfortunately, however, we have to split hairs in this matter as well, because through the nature of the elements which they summate, certain nouns in these categories are destined to represent (permanently or at least temporarily) one of the two sexes: *the clergy, the foot, the horse, infantry, cavalry, the military, the constabulary, the gendarmerie*, would naturally be masculine, *womanhood* and *womankind* are naturally feminine (while for instance, *yeomanry* would be doubtful, though probably if English people gave it a thought, the masculine would take precedence of the feminine).

This would apply also to other nouns which, at least in the past, represented exclusively a group of males, though in our century, and particularly in the last decades, have ceased to do so (we are thinking of *the police, the army, the crew* — the last still holding good for *the navy*, in its turn normally construed as masculine).

In fact, this discussion must aim at a solution similar to that for individual nouns representing professions. Normally they are of the common gender, with some exclusive forms for the two sexes but sometimes denoting pre-eminently the masculine or, on the contrary, the feminine (e.g. *cook, nurse*, etc.).

3.2.0. SUBSTITUTES

Having noticed that the tendency goes towards the utilization of collective nouns in three different ways according to the meanings which we ascribe to them, we have to establish also what pronouns are used to substitute for collective nouns. It is easy to see that the pronoun *it* is typically indicated for meanings one and two, while the pronoun *they* is logically required by the third meaning.

3.2.1. Though we notice inconsistencies in this respect even among English speaking people, we probably have to adopt a unitary approach in this respect too, following the same line of thought as for the predicate. Yet, when it comes to discussing substitutes and prescribing norms for their usage, we cannot overlook inconsistencies among English speaking people as well as foreigners regarding the use or the choice of the relative pronoun, *which* or *who*. Examples point to the fact that sometimes the pronoun *which* is used with collective nouns even when they are conceived as groups (with a plural verb). Yet we believe that there is no reason to do so and it seems to be absolutely logical to adopt Zandvoort's prescription that collective nouns should be replaced by the relative pronoun *which* when they are followed by a singular verb because the group as such (as a unit) is meant, and by the relative pronoun *who* when they are used by a plural verb because the individuals forming the group are thought of (Zandvoort (1965:§461)).

Besides the psychological motivation for using a plural verb and plural substitutes with collective nouns (provided the previously mentioned circumstances, qualifications and conditions are present) we can also find a logical motivation for it. One of the aspects is that from the point of view of gender this offers the advantage of no longer having to choose out of neuter, masculine or feminine and using the pronoun *they* — common gender — as a substitute, therefore giving rise to fewer problems.

3.2.2. This peculiarity is noticeable also in connection with indefinite pronouns having a collective meaning — *everybody* and occasionally *anybody*

for which in many embarrassing situations English people have been using the substitutes *they, their, theirs* — which have now become generalized in this situation, formerly subject to certain fluctuations. Of course, this does involve a certain amount of surprising inconsistency since the indefinite pronouns normally agree with a singular predicate, and so a sentence like *Everybody is to take their seats in the coach at seven o'clock* appears rather incongruous (which in fact also happens in Romanian with the equivalent *toată lumea* though perhaps not in other languages).

4.0. ROMANIAN

Collective nouns remain a rather marginal problem in Romanian grammar, often being discussed but indirectly, as part of broader grammatical categories, such as gender or number.⁷ Of course, the reason must be sought in the absence of any grammatical implications in the behaviour of collective nouns in Romanian. Therefore, they can only form a lexical-semantic category, (characterized by the features [+collective] [+animate] [+animal] [+human]).

The competition between the "semantic" plural and the "morphological" singular is not manifest in the case of the Romanian collectives, agreement/concord with the verb perfectly harmonizing the formal indication of the number of the noun, with the number and person of the verb.

4.1. EVOLUTION

The process of development of collectives in Romanian need not be ascribed to any non-Romance influence — as Maria Manoliu-Manea (1970) convincingly demonstrates. Latin included the category of collectives — fairly well represented — particularly that of collective "vegetal" nouns (neuter and feminine). In our opinion, the fact that collective nouns are still numerous in Romanian with reference to the vegetal kingdom, confirms a specific Romance tendency, which attracts also non-Romance elements — for instance the highly productive Slavonic suffix *-iș*. While collective neuters are often to be identified as etyma in the source language — Latin — collective feminines are for the most part of Slavonic origin: e.g. *cireadă* (herd), *grămadă* (heap), also such Latin words *multitudo, turma, copiae* are not to be overlooked.

Anyhow, Maria Manoliu-Manea concludes, the distribution of Romanian collectives among neuters and feminines, justified by the history of our language, are a specific, innovating feature of Oriental Romance languages.

In order to complete the diachronical picture of our discussion one should

⁷ See Manoliu-Manea (1968, 1970).

also add that out of the 25 suffixes registered by Florența Sădeanu (1962) as discharging a collective function, only 4 are of exclusive Slavonic origin.

Collective nouns of a plural form (the so-called varied plural of nouns of material and abstract nouns) originally appeared — to quote Paula Diaconescu (1970:115) — in the 16th century, when abstract nouns or nouns of material acquired a plural differentiated from the semantic point of view, — e.g. *hrane* (victuals), *cărni* (literally: flesh, as in the idiom *curg cărnile de pe el* = *his flesh hangs loose on him), *trebi* (businesses, affairs).

The varied plural in *-uri* also appeared with feminines in the 17th century, after the model of plural neuters of the type *finuri* (hays), designating various species or varieties as part of the collectivity: e.g. *cărnuri* (kinds of meat), *arămuri* (varieties of copper), *frumusețuri* (beauties).

The varied plural sees extensive spreading in contemporary Romanian, reaching semantic differentiation — e.g. *fantezie* (imagination) *fanteziuri* (silk, materials with a fancy pattern) — or even morphological distinctions from the singular form — e.g. *brânză/brânzeturi* (cheese/varieties of cheese). Not a few linguists suggest the consideration of the two flexional forms as belonging to two different nouns.

In colloquial Romanian one meets collective nouns with the singular form agreeing with a plural verb (this kind of concord being repudiated by the Academy Grammar⁸ as incorrect):

e.g. “Îl jeliră ai săi, îl jeliră boierii, îl jeliră și poporul” (Petre Ispirescu).

The case is interesting for the way in which the speaker made a semantic “analysis” of the noun harmonizing it with the plural of the verb, probably also under the morphological pressure of the cases of agreement already enounced, (his folk, the boyars).

The Romanian Academy Grammar also considers as deviating such an example as: “Două sute de lei este o sumă” (=two hundred lei is a sum) instead of „Două sute de lei sînt o sumă” (=are).

In our opinion the deviation in the first case should be explained not so much through “wrong” concord with the predicative but rather through the semic “analysis” made by the speaker who takes the object to be a unit (while in the second case the object is seen as a multiplicity/multitude of elements).

A kind of deviating/anomalous semantic agreement is also registered with a number of indefinite pronouns which take over the group value (unlike the situation in English):

e.g. “Au sărutat fiecare mîna taichii” (Each of them kissed their father’s hand... — I. L. Caragiale).

“Nici unul nu dormeau”, (=neither of them were asleep — Zaharia Stancu).

⁸ See *Gramatica limbii române*, Vol. II, chapter “Excepții și abateri de la regulile acordului”, 110-114

Constructions like “Ce-s cu astea aici?” (=What are the matter with these? instead of “Ce-i cu astea aici?” =What’s the matter with these?) which have acquired a certain amount of currency in contemporary Romanian point to some tendencies which have become increasingly obvious.

4.2. GENERAL ASPECTS

Almost all Romanian grammars define collective nouns as denoting in the singular a multitude of identical objects, seen in their totality, without specifying any interdiction of a semantic nature, of the type [—animate]:⁹ *aluniș* (hazel-tree grove), *făget* (beech-tree forest), *studentime* (all students, the student world).

The book *The morphological structure of contemporary Romanian*¹⁰ offers a supplementary specification, apt to clarify the way in which speakers of Romanian conceive their “collective nature”: “Common collective nouns describe/define a determined multitude of identical objects, considered in its totality, irrespective of the individuals that make it up (Jordan et al. (1967: 72)).

Therefore, Romanian “collectives” form a lexical category in accordance with exclusively semantic criteria. The perception of the feature [unity in multiplicity] as predominant — and not of the feature [multiplicity in unity] — largely determines the grammatical behaviour of collective nouns in Romanian, their agreement with a singular verb.

On the whole, collective nouns do not betray their morphological singular, except when the speaker intends to evidence the *plurality of elements* within the unit by some supplementary means, thus setting the formal singular with the semantic plural (Cîmpeanu (1975:181)).

The specific tendency of Romanian to resort to analytic means of expression holds good in this case too. A number of nouns denoting “number, multitude, quantity”, together with their concrete plural determinations can realize agreement in either the singular or the plural, according to the speaker’s intention of emphasizing either the totality or its component elements: *o grămadă de* (heaps of), *o mulțime de* (a lot of), *o seamă de* (a number of), *o sumedenie de* (a multitude of) etc.

e.g. “Si unde nu s-au adunat o mulțime de fete și băieți la școală” (And a multitude of girls and boys were gathered in the schoolyard — Ion Creangă; after *Gramatica limbii române*).

It is interesting to point out that the “rule of semantic/non-grammaticalized agreement” operates also when the determinations of those nouns are merely inferred:

⁹ Constantinescu Dobridor (1974:34).

¹⁰ See Jordan et al. (1967:72).

e.g. "o seamă se cățărăseră și pe zidul..." (a number were perched also on the wall — Mihail Sadoveanu; after *Gramatica limbii române*).

Agreement in the plural can therefore be applied only to a limited number of nouns which do not indicate the group-meaning by their theme and which have to resort to supplementary concrete determinations. But, very much as in English the multiplicity of elements is more clearly evidenced when the subject is associated with verbs of movement, of action, which enable one to notice the dissociation, the discontinuity of the group:

e.g. "Din spre Copou se văd venind o grămadă de oameni..." (From the park are seen coming a crowd of people,... — I. L. Caragiale; after *Gramatica limbii române*).

4.3.0. CLASSIFICATION

4.3.1. According to Finuța Asan (1958), a first criterion for classifying collective nouns can be the morphological index of collectiveness. Consequently, there are two types of collectives:

(A) *Morphologically marked collective nouns*, formed by derivation with suffixes pointing to the whole, seem to evoke the part:

e.g. *brădet* (fir-tree forest) from *brad* (fir-tree); *cărpiniș* (hornbeam forest) from *carpen* (hornbeam).

The inventory of these suffixes indicating the collective (25 in all) was drawn up by Florența Sădeanu, in the above-mentioned study. Nevertheless, we take the liberty of adding to her list the suffix *-lic* (of Turkish origin) whose meaning is (not exclusively) collective, attached both to nouns designating groups of humans and to groups of inanimate elements:

e.g. *musafirlîc* (a crowd of different guests); *calabalîc* (goods and chattels).

The fact that *-lic* functions as an independent suffix is verified in the case of nouns not borrowed from Turkish, such as *murdalîc* (offals). Of course, we have to do with a suffix which is not very productive nowadays, but is still employed because of its expressive (derogatory) value.¹¹

In the first table accompanying this paper, we indicate separately the morphologically marked collectives, associating the semantic features [+human]; [+animal]; [-animal]; [-animate]. Their agreement is exclusively in the singular, with the exception of the nouns *o multime de* (a lot of), *sumedenie de* (a multitude of), *spuzenie de* (a host of), *puzderie de* (a crowd of) — cf. also the obsolete *întunecime de* (a cloud of) — all of them apt to receive a plural determination and apt to agree with a singular or a plural verb, in accordance with their meaning.

¹¹ Pascu (1916:409); *musafirlîc* and *calabalîc* are also attested by *Dictionarul explicativ al limbii române*.

(B) *Lexically collective nouns*, denoting a plurality of objects, considered as a whole, without indicating elements that make up the respective collectivity:

e.g. *ceată* (band, gang), *grup* (group), *pădure* (forest), *popor* (people, nation), *detașament* (detachment), *comitet* (committee), *federație* (federation), *buchet* (bouquet; fig. bevy) *maldăr* (heap).

The criterion for delimiting this type of nouns remains strictly semantic, which may be aleatory in the absence of formal marks. When rendered absolute, this criterion may lead to the mistake of including within the sphere of collectives, such nouns as *nisip* (sand), *grâu* (wheat), *ciorchine* (cluster), *barbă* (beard), *mătreață* (dandruff).¹²

In our tables we separate lexical collectives not only according to the way they associate the semantic features [+human] [+animal]; [-animal]; [-animate], but also according to the way agreement is realized in the singular alone — *partid* (party), *popor* (people, nation), *pădure* (forest) — or in variation singular/plural with nouns which acquire plural determinations: *stol de* (flock/bevy of), *liotă de* (litter of), *maldăr de* (heap of).

It must be noted that morphologically marked collectives (numerically) designate groups of things and plants (387 and, 271 derivatives, respectively)¹³ for which Romanian does not generally have lexical collectives. The smaller number of derivatives designating groups of persons (210) or animals (90) is explained by the numerical substitution of lexical collectives which are extremely abundant: *bandă* (gang, band), *gașcă* (gang), *trupă* (troop, troupe), *brigadă*, *uniune*, *turmă* (herd), *cireadă* (herd, flock), *herghelie* (stud), *cîrd* (flock; bevy), *roi* (swarm), etc.

4.3.2. We have considered it necessary to distinguish between collectives singular in form (designating a plurality of objects taken as a whole (and collectives with a plural form) (the so-called varied plural) indicating various species, varieties as part of the collectivity.

(A) *Collectives singular in form* account for most collective nouns in Romanian. They agree with singular verbs, with the exception of those which can receive plural determinations and therefore agree with either a singular or a plural verb, according to meaning.

They include human, animal, vegetal or inanimate groups. In the case of collectives which are not morphologically marked, the individualization of the part is achieved in various ways — *un membru al grupului*, *un element al colectivului*, *un detașament de militari*, *un maldăr de lemne* (a heap of fire wood)

¹² In her above-quoted article, Finuța Asan (1958) criticizes the inclusion of such nouns among collectives.

¹³ F. Sădeanu (1962).

TABLE I

| Category/ Class | Morphologically marked | Examples | Semantic features | Agreement | Gender | Individualization | Numerical- ization | Remarks |
|---|--|---|------------------------|-----------|--------|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 COLLECTIVE NOUNS WITH SINGULAR FORM | - | partid, popor, organizație | [+human] | Sg | N/F | Un membru al... Un element al... (a member/element of...) | pl. | |
| | - | turnă, stol herghelie | [+animal] | Sg/Pl.* | N/F | un stol de păsări (a flock/bevy of birds) | pl. | *[+pl. determina- tion] |
| | - | cîrd, grămadă, liotă, grup, seamnă, coată | [+animate] [+human] | Sg/Pl.* | N/F | grămadă: de oa- meni, de lemne, de animale. (a lot of people, firewood, animals) | pl. (some) | *[pl.det.] |
| | - | pădure | [-animal] | Sg. | F | | pl. | |
| | - | îmbrăcămintे, încălțăminte | [-animate] | Sg | F | | - | |
| | - | malădar, stog stivă | [-animate] | Sg/Pl.* | N/F | un malădar: de căr- ți, de haine (a heap of books, clothes) | pl. | *[+pl. det.] |
| | -ET -IME -URĂ -IE -ĂTATE -LÎC | tinereț tinerime securură solio păgînătate musafirie | [+human] | Sg | N/F | thematic | pl. (some) | |
| | -INĂ -IE -IME | stupină gîscănie broștime | [+animal] | Sg. | N/F | thematic | generally without a plural | |

tab. 1 ontd.

| Category/ Class | Morpholo- gically marked | Examples | Semantic features | Agreement | Gender | Individualization | Numerical- ization | Remarks |
|--|--|--|------------------------|-----------|--------|--|-----------------------|-----------------|
| 2 COLLECTIVE DOUBLET SINGULAR/ PLURAL | -ARIME -IȘTE -AR -IȘ | muscărimе roieliște viespar păienjenіș | | | | | | |
| | -IME -ENIE -IE | multime spuzenie sumedenie puzderie | [+animate] [+human] | Sg/Pl.* | F | sumedenie: de oameni, de obiecte (a multitude of people, objects) | pl. | *[+pl. det.] |
| | -EALĂ -IȘTINĂ -TURĂ -EAȚĂ -IȘTE -AR -IȘ -ET | acreală cînepiștină albitură verdeață alunișto arinar stojăriș brădet | [-animal] | Sg. | N/F | thematic | albituri verdețuri | |
| | -EALĂ -ĂRIE -ĂRAIE -IȘ -EȚ -LÎC | urzeală rufărie apăraie mărunțiș bănet calabalic | [-animate] | Sg. | N/F | thematic | pl. (some) | |
| | -ET | cuconet-cuco- neturi cîrpet-cîrpeturi | [+human] [-animate] | Sg/Pl | N/F | thematic | pl. | |

tab. 1 contd.

| Category/ Class | Morpho- gically marked | Examples | Semantic features | Agreement | Gender | Individualization | Numerica- lization | Remarks |
|--|------------------------------|------------------------|--|-----------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|
| 3 COLLEC- TIVE NOUNS WITH PLURAL FORM | -IE | sticlărie-sticlării | [-animate] pl = p2 pl ≠ p2 C C actual C pl ≠ p2 | Pl | N/F | | | |
| | -URA | albitură-albituri | | | | | | |
| | -EATA | verdeață- verdețuri | | | | | | |
| | - | cărnii | | | | | | |
| | - | cărnuri | | | | | | |
| | - | bunătăți | | | | | | |
| | - | fiare | | | | | | |
| | - | atenții | | | | | | |
| | - | fanteziuri | | | | | | |
| | - | brânzeturi | | | | | | |
| | - | pînzeturi | | | | | | |
| | -ET | fireturi | | | | | | Sg. without collective value |

— and by means of the theme in the derived collectives — *brădet* (fir-tree forest) from *brad* (fir-tree), *cărpiniș* (hornbeam forest), from *carpen* (hornbeam) *tinerime* (youth, young people), from *tînăr* (young one).

Collectives singular in form can generally be counted, some of them having a collective doublet in the plural, though with a changed meaning:

e.g. *albitură* (vegetables for soup) — *albituri* (bed clothes); *mărunțiș* (small change) — *mărunțișuri* (small objects/small ware trifles, knick-knacks).

The plural of nouns singular in form must be seen as a sign of weakening of the semantic mark of collectiveness (Sădeanu 1962). In a first stage, certain ("collectives" decline in expressiveness and require accentuation by some analytic means:

e.g. *bănet* (quantity of money) may receive a quantitative determination: *mult bănet* (a large quantity of money); *vorbărie* (empty talk) — *multă vorbărie* (lengthy empty talk).

(B) Similarly, one reaches the strengthening, emphasis of collectiveness through the synonymic utilization of singular and plural doublets of the same collective noun (Sădeanu 1962):

e.g. *cuconet* (the fair sex) — *cuconeturi* (members of the fair sex); *cîrpet* (rags), *cîrpeturi* (various rags).

(C) Probably undergoing the intermediate stage of doublets, a number of collective nouns have established their presence in the language in their plural form alone. This type includes nouns of material and abstract nouns. This collective plural — also called varied — indicates different species within the collectivity ($p_1 \neq p_2$ — that is the non-identity of the respective parts, as Maria Manoliu-Manea says).

e.g. *cărnuri* (meats), *brânzeturi* (sorts of cheese), *bunătăți* (dainties, delicatessen).

Abstract nouns acquire a concrete or "referential" meaning in the plural (Manoliu-Manea 1970).

e.g. *atenții* (presents, gratifications); *fiare* (scrap iron).

This category of nouns is defined only through the presence of the feature [+inanimate].

4.3.3. In table 2 we try to offer a contrastive picture of English and Romanian as regards possible equivalences in the sphere of collective nouns.

(A) Nouns of Multitude and Individual Nouns of Multitude have no equivalent in Romanian.

(B) English collectives proper, of the type *crew*, *family*, seem to have as Romanian correspondents nouns that designate organized groups of people,

Table 2

| ENGLISH | | | | | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|--------|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Classification | Examples | Semantics | Agreement | Gender | Individualization | Numericalization |
| A. NOUNS OF MULTITUDE | police poultry | [+ animal] [+ human] | Pl. | | a member of | - |
| B. COLLECTIVE NOUNS PROPER | crew family | [+ human] | Sg/Pl | | „ | + |
| C. AMBIVALENT COLLECTIVE NOUNS | flock group | [+ human] [+ animal] | Sg/Pl | | | + |
| D. INDIVIDUAL NOUNS OF MULTITUDE | sheep the English | [+ animal] [+ human] | Sg=Pl | | | |
| E. NOUNS DENOTING MULTITUDE OF OBJECTS | fruit(s) coin(s) craft | [+ inanimate] | Pl. | N | | (+) |
| F. SEMANTICALLY COLLECTIVE NOTIONS | heap leafage money advice | [+ inanimate] | Sg. | N | a piece of... an item of... | ± |
| G. GENERIC NOTIONS | cactus oak | [+ inanimate] | Sg. | N | | |

* The condition for the realization of the Pl. is [+ pl. determination]

apt to receive plural determinations, so as to achieve semantically variable agreement in the singular or plural.

e.g. *bandă* (gang, band) *de*; *colectiv de*; *detasament de* etc.

(C) Ambivalent collectives in English (*flock*, *group*) have as Romanian equivalents nouns denoting number, measure, quantity, which may acquire a plural determination. We note that the semantic limits of realizing collectives differ in the two languages, Romanian accepting in this category not only the features [+human], [+animal] but also the feature [+animate].

(D) Varied collectives in Romanian (plural form) seem to be the equivalent

| ROMANIAN | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|-----------|--------|-------------------|------------------|
| Category/Class | Examples | Semantics | Agreement | Gender | Individualization | Numericalization |
| COLLECTIVES DENOTING HUMAN | <i>bandă</i> , <i>echipaj</i> , <i>detasament</i> | [+ human] | Sg/Pl* | N/F | un membru al... | + |
| COLLECTIVES DENOTING NUMBER, QUANTITY | <i>turmă</i> , <i>grup</i> , <i>multime</i> , <i>maldăr</i> | [+ human] [+ animal] [+ animate] [+ inanimate] | Sg/Pl* | N/F | | + |
| VARIED COLLECTIVES | <i>brânzeturî</i> <i>pinzeturi</i> | [+ inanimate] | Pl. | N | | |
| COLLECTIVES DENOTING MULTITUDE OF ELEMENTS | <i>frunziș</i> <i>bănet</i> <i>brădet</i> <i>rufărie</i> | [+ inanimate] | Sg. | N/F | | ± |
| GENERIC NOTIONS | <i>popor</i> <i>tineret</i> <i>broștime</i> <i>floare</i> <i>poamnă</i> | [+ animal] [+ human] [+ inanimate] | Sg. | F | | |

of the English nouns *fruit(s)*, *coin(s)*, with the only difference that Romanian formally rejects the singular, which has no collective meaning.

(E) Semantically collective nouns have an identical regimen in the two languages (concord with the verb being in the singular), but with the very important qualification that Romanian accepts in this category also nouns defined by the semantic features [+human], [+animate] which English rejects: *popor* (people, nation), *partid* (party), *broștime* (frogs).

(F) Nouns whose singular denotes generic notions (collective in meaning) behave similarly in both languages, therefore not warranting supplementary comments.

4.4.0. SEMANTIC-GRAMMATICAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.4.1. From the semantic point of view, Romanian collectives raise other problems than do English collectives.

First, it must be mentioned that the limits of realization of their "collective nature" are much broader in Romanian. While in English most collective nouns are characterized by the semantic features [+human], [+animal], in Romanian, vegetal and inanimate collectives hold a much more prominent place. *The fact that in Romanian the category of "collectiveness" is open to all elements that may be associated as parts within a whole is indisputably due to the poor grammatical implications of this matter and to the semantic emphasis laid on the idea of wholeness, of totality.*

The English grammaticized concord in the plural actually translates or interprets the semantic content of this category: in order to perceive the elements/members of a group, it is first of all necessary that they should manifest themselves, that they should display some activity, in a word to prove they are indeed animate.

4.4.2. Besides their collective meaning, Romanian collective nouns cumulate additional semantic values:

- 1) — locative — a) "a ground and the plants growing on it": *cînepiște* (hemp-field), *ariniște* (place overgrown with alder-tress)
- b) "a place and the people inhabiting it": *mahalaia vorbește că...* (the suburb/neighbourhood say that...)
- 2) — a large quantity of some material:¹⁴ *grohotiș* (scree), *fumăraie* (abundant smoke)
- 3) — the value of a superlative though with negative emotional connotations:¹⁵ *cifrăraie* (overabundance of figures), *muscărime* (hosts of flies).

It must be remembered that in Romanian collective nouns offer a treasure-store of potential expresiveness with highly interesting stylistic effects.

4.5.0. POLYSEMY

Very much as in English, though not to the same extent, polysemy appears in the case of collective nouns:

- e.g. *colegiu* 1. concrete, non-collective meaning = school building, college.
2. concrete, collective meaning = gathering (of experts, etc.), collegium.

¹⁴ F. Sădeanu (1962) includes among collectives also those denoting a large quantity of some material. Some of these interpretations as collectives seem to us a bit exaggerated: *plînsoare* (tearfulness, weeping), *nînsoare* (snowfall), *flăcărăie* (flames, conflagration), etc.

¹⁵ Cîmpeanu (1975:221).

- mahala* 1. locative, non-collective meaning = suburb, neighbourhood; slum.
2. concrete, collective meaning = inhabitants of a neighbourhood, suburban people.

4.6.0. GENDER

As mentioned under 4.1.0., the gender of collectives in Romanian is subject to a dispute between neuters and feminines, a feature specific to the Oriental Romance languages. The fact is recorded in table 1.

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