FREE CHOICE-FREE RELATIVE CLAUSES OF THE TYPE "*INDIFERENT + WH-*" IN ROMANIAN

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ABSTRACT. *Free Choice-Free Relative Clauses of the Type ʺIndiferent + Wh-ʺ in Romanian*. The hypothesis of this paper is that the inventory of the free choice items in Romanian can be extended by including, along with the indefinites and the *wh-* compounds with *ori-*, a complex structure consisting of the adverb *indiferent* ('regardless') plus a *wh-*item. Based on syntactic tests, the paper suggests a line of interpretation according to which two patterns of relative clauses are possible with *indiferent* followed by a *wh-*item: (i) a headed relative clause licenced by a PP (*de*) which is syntactically required by the adverb *indiferent,* and (ii) a pattern in which the preposition *de* is covert, and the adverb functions as a quantifier that takes scope over the relative node; the clause is adjoined to the matrix together with the adverbial. We are dealing, therefore, with a free relative endowed with the free choice semantics of the adverb. In contexts of this type, the adverb *indiferent* seems to act like an additive particle to the *wh-*items, in a semantically similar way in which the prefix *ori-* contributes to the meaning of the complex free choice *wh-*words in Romanian. This hypothesis is also supported by the fact that the group formed by *indiferent + wh-*items is also occurrent in constructions with the ellipsis of the VP in the relative clause, a fact that strengthens the parallelism with the free choice items available in Romanian.

Keywords: *Romanian language, wh-items, free choice items (FCI), free relative clauses (FR), free choice - free relative clauses (FC-FR), complex free choice items.*

REZUMAT. *Relative libere de liberă alegere de tipul „indiferent + wh-" în limba română*. Lucrarea lansează o ipoteză privind extinderea inventarului de termeni de liberă alegere de care dispune limba română, prin includerea, alături de indefinitele şi relativele compuse cu *ori-*, a unei structuri complexe, formate din adverbul *indiferent* şi un grup relativ. Cu argumente sintactice ţinând de mecanismul de formare a construcţiilor relative, se delimitează două tipare de subordonate: (i) un tipar care respectă regimul prototipic prepoziţional al

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adverbului *indiferent* şi prin care se pot forma relative integrate dependente de acesta prin intermediul prepoziţiei *de* şi (ii) un tipar în care prepoziţia nu se mai lexicalizează, permiţând astfel adverbului să funcţioneze ca un cuantificator ce ia extensie asupra nodului relativ; relativa astfel formată se adjoncţionează în poziţia unui adjunct. Avem de-a face, aşadar, cu o relativă liberă, dar înzestrată, prin contribuţia semantică a adverbului, cu sens de liberă alegere (concesiv). În contexte aparţinând tipului (ii), adverbul *indiferent* pare să funcţioneze în raport cu termenul relativ ca un aditiv semantic similar într-o oarecare măsură cu *ori-* din compusele indefinite. Această ipoteză este susţinută şi de faptul că, în acelaşi tipar sintactic, ocurenţele independente ale grupului format din *indiferent* şi un relativ sunt destul de numeroase (în construcţii eliptice, fără un centru verbal în relativă), ceea ce pune şi mai mult în lumină paralelismul cu formele pronominale de liberă alegere de care dispune limba.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limba română, cuvinte relative, elemente lingvistice de liberă alegere (FCI), propoziţii relative libere (FR), propoziţii relative libere de liberă alegere (FC-FR), elemente complexe de liberă alegere.*

0. The study of free choice items and the related phenomena in linguistics started with Vendler (1967), with an investigation on the semantics of *any* in English. Since then, many authors have pointed out that the properties of FCIs in language are intriguing. Significant cross-linguistic research (Giannakidou 2001, Jayez, Tovena 2005, Tovena *et alii* 2005, Giannakidou and Cheng 2006, Vlachou 2007) has shown that languages have their own FCI paradigm, and not only that the particular items can belong to various classes (universal quantifiers, indefinites and definites), but also their distribution is restricted to certain contexts (Vlachou 2007: 2).

0.1. Deriving from this, the syntactic and semantic properties of free choice free relatives (FC-FRs), best known as "free relative clauses with -*ever*", are also a topic of interest in the literature of the past three decades. Research on FC-FRs focuses mainly on the variation between definite (Jacobson 1995, Grosu 1996, Grosu and Landman 1998) and universal readings of FRs (Larson 1987, Iatridou and Varlokosta 1998), in an attempt to find a correlation between the occurrence of -*ever* and the quantificational force of the construction (Jacobson 1995). For Dayal (1997), identity-type readings vs. free-choice of FR with -*ever* is determined contextually. FRs with -*ever* are definite descriptions that can acquire universal properties in a generic context. For von Fintel (2000), -*ever* is a presupposition operator, which induces different readings:

when the modal basis is epistemic, an ignorance-type reading results, while a counterfactual basis leads to an indifference-type reading. Tredinnick (2005) investigates the interaction of these modal flavours (ignorance or indifference) from the perspective of quantificational force (definite or universal) in FRs with -*ever*. For Sternefeld (2005), Hinterwimmer (2008), Lauer (2009), the effects of quantitative variation in FRs with -*ever* are associated with different semantic properties (singular indefinites or bare plurals).

0.2. In terms of the paradigm of FCIs and in terms of the features of the FC-FRs, Romanian data has been less investigated. To my knowledge, Caponigro and Fălăuş (2017) are the only researchers that provide a comprehensive syntactic and semantic description of Romanian FC-FRs based on the current theoretical framework. They argue that the Romanian FRs with *ori-* have the morpho-syntactic properties of the English FRs with -*ever*, but semantically they are on a par with the headed relative clauses with *any*. The investigation focuses on both Romanian and Italian. Beyond the importance of the descriptive results, their research show that there is a "compositional connection between the core semantic properties of FC-*wh*-words and the *wh*-words they are built on". They conclude that "the locus of this connection is the morphology, rather than syntax, based on the productivity of FC-*wh*-words within a language and across languages" (Caponigro and Fălăuş, 2017: 363).

0.3. In this vein, the aim of this paper is to describe syntactically and in terms of its contextual distribution a certain type of Romanian FR that appears to exhibit many of the features that were cross-linguistically identified to belong to FC-FRs, even in the absence of a morphologically marked item like -*ever* in English or *ori-/fie-* in Romanian. As Caponigro and Fălăuş (2017: 325) point out, languages usually exploit *wh-* morphology for the formation of their free choice paradigms. Thus, "*wh*-phrases, augmented by focus additive particles or modal markings may function as FCIs". The patterns that I will describe below are formally plain FRs, i.e. they do not contain a *wh*-item of the -*ever* type, but they acquire their quantificational force through the adverb *indiferent* ('regardless', 'no matter'), which makes them FC-FRs. To my knowledge, except for a brief mention of this particular pattern (Gheorghe 2004: 176-177), the Romanian data that I will present below has not been interpreted in this manner before.

0.4. The data has been extracted from two corpora of contemporary Romanian (*Romanian Web 2016* (roTenTen16), a component of the multilingual instrument *Sketch Engine*, and *CoRoLa*), and reflect the use of *indiferent + wh-*

items in a variety of contexts and registers, although, for the purposes of this paper, only examples form roTenTen16 have been used. The Romanian FRs with *indiferent* followed by a *wh*-item are very frequent in the two corpora[2] on which the search has been conducted. Frequency tests exceed the aims of this paper, but for further investigation on the topic, the fact that the configurations under focus are not rare is quite promising.

1. In contemporary Romanian[3], *indiferent* is employed either as an adjective (1a), or as an adverb (1b). The adverb licenses a prepositional complement (Pană Dindelegan 2013: 390) which is connected to the head by the preposition *de* (1c). As an adverb, *indiferent* may also host a relative clause, as in (1d,e):

(1) a. *Ea avea o privire **indiferentă**.*
   'She had an indifferent look'
   b. *Ea asistă **indiferent** la disputa lor.*
   'She watches their argue carelessly'
   c. ***Indiferent de** situație, te rog să mă suni.*
   'Please call me, regardless the circumstances'
   d. ***Indiferent de** [**cine** joacă mingea primul], pariurile rămân aceleași.*
   (netbet.ro)
   'Regardless of who plays the ball first, bets remain the same'
   e. ***Indiferent Ø** [**cine** vine], sper să rezolve problema.*
   'I hope that whoever comes will solve the problem'

Morphologically, the *wh*-word *cine* ('who') in (1e) is a plain *wh*-item, like the one in (1d). Syntactically, (1d) and (1e) seem to be equivalent, the only difference resides in the lexicalization of the preposition (*de/Ø*).

Consider examples (2a-c), where (2c) repeats (1e). Morphologically, the *wh*-word *cine* ('who') in (2c) is a plain *wh*-item, like the one in (2a), and obviously different from the *wh*-word in (2b). Semantically, the overall construction (2c) is different from (2a), but equivalent to the FC-FR in (2b):

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[2] *CoRoLa* rendered 87.000 matches for *indiferent*, but, unfortunately, with this instrument, the search is possible only for a certain lemma, and the further filtering of the collocations needs to be done manually, so counting the occurrences of *indiferent* as an adverb plus its collocates with a relative connector would be very time consuming*. Romanian Web 2016* (roTenTen16), on the other hand, has advanced searching and filtering options that allow the user to calculate the absolute frequency of a certain item in customized configurations. Thus, from a total of 347.932 occurrences of the adverb *indiferent* in the whole corpus, I selected more than 20.000 collocations in which the adverb and the *wh*-item are fused (among them, only the occurrences of the non-prepositional relative item are included, and PPs other than the ones headed by *de*).

[3] A research on the evolution of this construction in Romanian might prove interesting. A very brief search upon ten Romanian novels written at the beginning of the 20th century showed that the pattern *indiferent* + *wh*-item was almost absent.

(2) a. *[**Cine** vine] sper să rezolve problema.*
'I hope that the one who comes will solve the problem'
b. *[**Oricine** vine] sper să rezolve problema.*
'I hope that whoever comes will solve the problem'
c. *[**Indiferent cine** vine] sper să rezolve problema.*
'I hope that whoever comes will solve the problem'

The contrast shows that given the different morphology of the *wh*-items in (2b) vs (2c), the quantificational import of the relative clause in (2c) that makes it an equivalent of (2b) relies on an external component[4], and the only candidate available is *indiferent*, as, otherwise, the two constructions are completely identical. This fact suggests a syntactic interpretation of the relative clause in (1e)/(2c) that departs from the intuitive solution of a clausal prepositional complement licensed by an adverb (as in (1d)). Also it is not the missing preposition (*de*)[5] the one responsible for blocking an interpretation that should parallel (1d), but the fact that the adverb's contribution to the semantics of the relative clause is beyond the scope of a head. *Indiferent* seems to act merely as a quantifier that affects the relative connector.

Moreover, it may not be completely random that in modern Romanian *indiferent* is already fused with the subordinator of its complement CP, functioning together with *că* ('that') or *dacă* ('if') as a component of the complex concession subordinator, as in (3). In fact, this proves that there is a tendency towards the grammaticalization of *indiferent* as an additive particle that conveys free choice semantics:

(3) *[**Indiferent că/dacă** vrei] sau [nu _], eu tot vin.*
'Whether you want it or not, I will still come'

In the same way, in a construal like (1e)/(2c), the adverb might be interpreted as part of a complex connector. From a syntactical point of view, *indiferent* plays the part of a free choice quantifier that takes scope over the *wh*-phrase, and from a lexical-semantic point of view, it acts like an external element that transforms the plain *wh*-item into a free choice item. Consequently,

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[4] Previous research on Romanian data (Gheorghe 2014) showed that in the old language, plain free relative clauses achieved quantificational meaning mostly contextually. The *wh*-items that are equivalent to the English *-ever* paradigm: *oricine/oarecine* ('whoever')*, orice* ('whatever')*, oricum* ('however') occurred only accidentally, but other linguistic devices were available: the FR fronting, certain external pivots that marked or intensified the quantificational reading of the relative clause, the use of *irrealis* mood values of the VPs in the matrix etc. For the paradigm of Old Romanian indefinites (including *wh*-indefinites), see Dinică 2012.

[5] In fact, as the corpus analysis clearly showed, *de* may freely occur in most configurations (except in cases where the *wh*-item is inflected or it has another pied-piped preposition).

the relative clause is no longer a complement clause, because the CP is now adjoined to the matrix, together with the adverbial head. Therefore, it becomes a FR (a concessive clausal adjunct), which functions as a FC-FR, due to the semantic features of the adverbial quantifier.

To conclude the argumentation, the prepositional regime of *indiferent* prototypically requires a complement headed by *de.* When the preposition is overt (4a), the relative clause will be embedded in a prepositional phrase (PP) as an integrated relative clause (see Pană Dindelegan 2013: 424-6). It will function as a clausal complement (CP) of the adverb. When the preposition is missing (4b), the relative clause is adjoined to the matrix, in a peripheral position, and it will function as a FR:

(4) a. **Indiferent** *[PP de [CP* **ce** *spun unii şi alţii]], un pas important pe calea aşa-zisei unităţi a fost făcut.* (radiounison.ro)
'Regardless of what some say, an important step on the path of the so-called unity has been made'
b. *Acest acord ar fi fost încheiat [QP* **indiferent** *[CP* **cine** *ar fi fost la putere]].* (byte.ro)
'This agreement would have been concluded, whoever was in power'

From a semantical point of view, the examples above show that under the circumstances of the overt preposition *de*, the free choice reading of the relative clause is blocked. In this case, the concessive flavour relies on the adverb, which is a complex adjunct of the matrix clause. But when the preposition is covert, the entire relative clause is a concessive adjunct, and the *wh*-item is endowed with a free choice reading. Therefore, configurations in which *indiferent* is attached directly to the *wh*-item, without the preposition *de* which is normally required, will be considered FC-FRs.

2. In what follows, the brief description of the FRs headed by *indiferent* + *wh*-item will be organized according to (i) the nature of the connector, (ii) the position of extraction for the *wh*-word, and (iii) the type of the FR configuration.

2.1. The data analysis showed that the inventory of *wh*-items (relative pronouns and adverbs) associated to *indiferent* has fewer restrictions of occurrence than their counterparts[6] with *ori-.* The *wh*-words employed in such

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[6] In the case of *ori-* compounds, the paradigm is defective (*de ce* and *ceea ce* cannot be employed as free choice items). For the full inventory of the Romanian *wh*-items in FC-FRs, see Caponigro and Fălăuş (2017). With *indiferent*, the fixed adverbial phrase *de ce* ('why') was found in the corpus only in an elliptic construction (11f), but the full clause is not excluded, see (5k), which is perfectly acceptable in Romanian. As far as *ceea ce* is concerned, it occurs only in prepositional phrases with

constructions are: *care* ('which') (5a), *cine* ('who') (5b-d), *ce* ('what') (5e), *cât* ('how much'/'how many') (5f,g), *unde* ('where') (5h), *când* ('when') (5i), *cum* ('how') (5j), *de ce* ('why') (5k):

(5) a. *Omul trebuie să fie înrădăcinat în propria sa energie potențială, [**indiferent care** este aceasta].* (cristal-life.ro)
'Men must be rooted in their own potential energy, whatever that is'
b. *Acest acord ar fi fost încheiat [**indiferent cine** ar fi fost la putere].* (byte.ro)
'This agreement would have been concluded, whoever was in power'
c. *Minciuna e minciună [**indiferent cui** o spui].* (computergames.ro)
'A lie is a lie, no matter who you tell it to'
d. *Aleargă și te împacă, [**indiferent a cui** este vina]!* (bocancul-literar.ro)
'Go and reconcile, no matter whose fault is it'
e. *Se dădeau gratis pungi de plastic [**indiferent ce** cumpărai].* (dstancanet.ro)
'They were giving free plastic bags, no matter what you bought'
f. *[**Indiferent cât** câștigi], 10% să-i pui deoparte.* (singlescamp.ro)
'No matter how much you earn, put 10% aside'
g. *Am știut să ne folosim de tot (...), [**indiferent câte necunoscute** am întâmpinat].* (incomod-media.ro)
'We managed to make use of everything, no matter how many challenges we encountered'
h. *Companiile trebuie să fie mult mai prezente în viața consumatorilor, [**indiferent unde** s-ar afla ei].* (pr-romania.ro)
'Companies need to be more present in the lives of consumers, wherever they are'
i. *Clasicismul va fi punctul de reper pentru orice autor, [**indiferent când** va crea o nouă operă].* (radaseni.info.ro)
'Classicism will be the point of reference for any author, whenever he creates a new work'
j. *De aceea, vă cer din nou să îmi răspundeți la întrebări, [**indiferent cum** ați votat].* (abolog.ro)
'Therefore, I ask you again to answer my questions, no matter how you voted'
k. *Iartă-l, [**indiferent de ce** face ceea ce face]!*
'Forgive him, no matter why he does what he does'

As far as the position of extraction for the relative element is concerned, there are almost any restrictions. It can be extracted from subject position

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de, which is an indication that the definitude of the component *ceea* blocks the free choice reading of the FR: (i) *Nimeni nu poate contrazice aceste lucruri în această perioadă îngrijorătoare a schimbărilor climatice, **indiferent de** [**ceea ce** ar putea crede unii sau alții].* (EuropaRL7Romanian) ['No one can contradict these things in the worrying time of climate change, no matter what some might think'].

(5a,b), direct object (5e), indirect object (5c), predicative (even in a genitival phrase) (5d), or adjunct positions: quantitative (5f), place (5h), time (5i), manner (5j) or reason (5k). The *wh*-item may also have the form of a complex *wh*-phrase (a *wh*-word + DP), as in (5g).

2.2. So far, the examination of the data could have left the impression that the missing preposition is crucial for the fusion between the adverb *indiferent* and the *wh*-item into a complex head of the relative clause, and consequently, it is the proof that we are dealing with a FC-FR. Still, prepositions may occur in FC-FRs with *indiferent*, but when they are required by the extraction position of the *wh*-item.

2.2.1. A wide range of prepositions are allowed in FC-FRs with *indiferent*, depending on the position of extraction of the *wh*-phrase[7]: prepositional object (6a,b,e,h,i) or adjunct headed by a preposition (6c,d,f,g,j):

(6) a. ***indiferent cu cine*** *vorbește [$_{cu}$_]*
    'no matter who she talks to'
    b. ***indiferent despre ce*** *vorbește [$_{despre}$_]*
    'regardless of what he talks about'
    c. ***indiferent după ce*** *te ascunzi [$_{după}$_]*
    'whatever you may hide behind'
    d. ***indiferent fără ce*** *ce te-ai întors [$_{fără}$_]*
    'whatever you came back without'
    e. ***indiferent în cine*** *te încrezi [$_{în}$_]*
    'no matter who you trust'
    f. ***indiferent la care*** *școală merge [$_{la}$ [_]]*
    'no matter which school he goes to'
    g. ***indiferent până unde*** *merge [$_{până}$_]*
    'no matter how far he goes'
    h. ***indiferent pe ce*** *te bazezi [$_{pe}$_]*
    'no matter what you rely on'
    i. ***indiferent pentru cine*** *joacă [$_{pentru}$_]*
    'no matter who he plays for'
    j. ***indiferent spre ce*** *se îndreaptă [$_{spre}$_]*
    'whatever he is heading for'

2.2.2. Examples (7a-f) show that the *wh*-item in a FC-FR can also be associated to the preposition *de*. Except for some ambiguous cases (see (8a,b)

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[7] The bracketed underscore line [_] marks the gap (the position from which the *wh*-item is extracted). Though the examples under (6a-j) are created *ad-hoc* and they are not extracted from the corpus, they will undoubtedly seem valid for most native speakers of Romanian.

below), it is usually obvious that *de* is not the overt preposition required by the adverb *indiferent*, but a homonymous form with other functions: the head of the *by*-phrase (7a), or the head of a PP that indicates the source (7b), or the starting moment (7c); in (7d), the preposition belongs to a headless partitive construction. In (7e,f), *de* is actually a regime preposition, but it is not required by *indiferent,* but by the head that dominates the extraction position of the relative item:

(7) a. *Istoria ne oferă mai multe variante şi toate, [**indiferent** [**de cine** au fost prezentate [de_]]], conţin multe elemente comune.* (confluente.ro)
'History offers us several versions, and regardless by whom they were presented, they all have a common ground'

b. *Orice spasm, [**indiferent** [**de unde** provine [de_]]], induce tulburări ale irigaţiei sangvine* (alb.ro)
'Any spasm, no matter where it comes from, induces blood irrigation disorders'

c. *(...) un preşedinte PSD n-ar avea nicio grijă să prevină escaladarea problemelor, [**indiferent** [**de când** există ele [de_]]]* (danandronic.ro)
'A president of the PSD party would take no care of preventig problems from escalating, no matter since when they exist'

d. *(...) o salată de sezon, [**indiferent** [**de care** ar fi ea [de [_]]]]* (crudsisanatos.ro)
'a seasonal salad, of whatever kind'

e. *Cei ce au condus (...) Poliţia Română au reuşit s-o transforme într-o instituţie politizată (...), [**indiferent** [**de ce** zonă a ţării am discuta [de_]]].* (politisti.ro)
'Those who ruled (...) the Romanian Police have managed to turn it into a politicized institution, no matter what area of the country we discuss about'.

f. *De aceea probabil a fost denumit păzitorul pragului, căci [**indiferent** [**de ce** parte a uşii te situezi [de [_]]], ai de trecut un prag.* (mirabilismagazin.ro)
'That is why he was probably called the keeper of the threshold, because no matter which side of the door you are on, you have to cross a threshold'

Compared to (7a-f), examples (8a,b) are ambiguous. For (8a), the English translation disambiguates the value of the preposition: it is either the regime preposition of *indiferent,* or the head of a time adjunct. As far as (8b) is concerned, its ambiguity is only apparent, because the general knowledge on the world suggests that *de* is rather attached to *indiferent*, than to the *wh-*word. The place where a traveller leaves his car before flying is usually the departing place, not the destination.

(8) a. *Toți cei care vor călători cu Blue Air începând cu 28 octombrie,* **indiferent de când** *și-au achiziționat biletele, vor avea o piesă de bagaj gratuită.* (airlinestravel.ro)
'Starting October 28, anyone who travels with Blue Air, regardless of when/regardless since when they purchased their tickets, will have a free piece of luggage'
b. *Vă puteți lăsa mașina în siguranță, indiferent de* **unde** *zburați cu Blue Air.* (newsair.ro)
'You can leave your car safely, wherever you fly to/#wherever you fly from with Blue Air'

2.2.3. The FC-FRs with *indiferent* occur in coordinated series in which a full range of *wh*-items are allowed. The adverbial quantifier may be repeated (9a), or it may appear once, standing for the whole series (9b):

(9) a. *Întotdeauna se succedă moartea, pentru că ea nu iartă pe nimeni,* **[indiferent cât** *iubești]*, **[indiferent cum** *iubești]*, **[indiferent de când** *iubești]* (blogspot.cz)
'Death always comes, because it does not forgive anyone, no matter how much you love, no matter how you love, no matter since when you love'
b. *Vei descoperi că* **[indiferent cine** *ești]*, **[ce vârstă** *ai] sau [***cât de sănătoasă** *îți este inima], există o cale de a-ți îmbunătăți starea actuală* (humanmedia.ro)
'You will find out that no matter who you are, how old you are or how healthy your heart is, there is a way to improve your current condition'.

The corpus also revealed a variety of constructions with multiple fronted[8] *wh*-items (10a,b). Both types of configurations are relevant for the description of the FC-FRs with *indiferent*, because they show that the relativization mechanism is fully productive, and the presence of an (apparently) unlicensed adverbial item does not affect the grammaticality of the clause:

(10) a. *Să stea la muncă, să răspundă prezent la fiecare solicitare* **[indiferent când, cum, unde** *este]*. (printesaurbana.ro)
'He should stay at work, to respond to every request, no matter when, how, where it/he is'
b. *(...) spiritul creativ este apreciat,* **[indiferent când, unde** *sau* **cum** *sunt concepute ideile]* (citestealtfel.ro)

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[8] Multiple fronting is a typological feature of Romanian that brings it closer to the Slavic languages, placing it at the same time in a particular position towards the Romance languages. For evidence regarding the presence of multiple fronted constructions in old Romanian, see Stan 2012, Gheorghe 2013 and references therein).

'the creative spirit is appreciated, no matter when, where or how ideas
are conceived'
c. *Logoree - presiunea de a vorbi [**indiferent cu cine, când, ce** și **cât
timp**]*. (despresuflet.ro)
'Logorrhea - the pressure to talk no matter with who, when, what and
for how long'

2.2.4. Last, but not least, situations where *indiferent + wh*-items appear
as standing alone items are quite frequent. This is a sign that the complex phrase
is already employed as FCI, even in non-clausal contexts, which parallels the
behaviour of the morphologically marked Romanian FCIs, i.e. the paradigm
with *ori-* (see the equivalents between brackets)[9]. It is interesting that the
independent use of *indiferent + wh*-items allows stacking (11b) or coordination
(11d) of *wh*-words, without repeating the adverb, and the FC meaning is still
conserved with the subsequent terms:

(11) a. Rapid trebuie să câștige, **indiferent cu cine/**[cu oricine].
(monitorulcluj.ro)
'Rapid has to win, no matter against which team'
b. *Oricum unii ca aceștia nu vor conștientiza niciodată datoria de a merge la
vot,* **indiferent pentru cine, ce/**[pentru oricine, orice]. (debanat.ro)
'However, people like them will never understand the duty to go to the
polls, no matter for whom or for what'
c. *Nu văd ultimele postări,* **indiferent ale cui/**[ale oricui], *fără refresh*
(adplayer.ro)
'I don't see the latest posts, no matter to whom they belong, without refresh'
d. *Nu uit niciodată să spun mulțumesc,* **indiferent cui sau în ce
moment**/[oricui sau oricând] (cabral.ro)
'I never forget to say thank you, no matter whom or when'
e. *Bună, băieți, sunt nou în Forum, sper să ne cunoaștem pe 16.03. or
10.03.,* **indiferent când**!/[oricând] (offroadindobrogea.ro)
'Hi guys, I'm new to the forum, I hope to meet you on March 16 or 10,
no matter when'
f. (...) *când ție nu îți mai convine (**indiferent de ce**) ca ei să își asume
responsabilitatea* (...) [?] (attachmentparenting.ro)
'(...) when it no longer suits you (no matter why) for them to take
responsibility (...)'

3. Although Romanian has no equivalent of the English *any*, recent
research on Romanian data (Farkas 2013, Grosu 2013, Fălăuș 2015) showed

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[9] The only situation in which the complex FCI has no equivalent of the form *ori-* is (11f), because
Romanian does not have a form like **oridece* ('*whyever').

that there are other determiners or pronominal forms that are based on *wh*-words with or without morphological enrichment; still, as Caponigro and Fălăuş (2017: 362) point out, none of them are able to introduce FC-FRs. They conclude that only FC *wh*-words (i.e. the paradigm of *ori-wh*-items) are allowed to introduce free relative clauses, and the combination between the particle *ori-* with *wh*-words does not alter their morpho-syntactic properties.

The aim of this paper was to show that in present-day Romanian, the paradigm of *ori-wh*-items is competed by a compound element (*indiferent* + *wh*-item) which is able to introduce FC-FRs, without altering the morpho-syntactic properties of the relative pronoun. The fact that the paradigm of *wh*-items associated to the FC-FR is identical to the paradigm of the true FC *wh*-items is another indication that this line of reasoning is likely to be correct.

As far as *indiferent* is concerned, deeper analysis is needed, especially in order to understand the syntax-semantics-pragmatics mapping of the constructions in which it is involved. Another track of investigation can be the competition between the items that belong to the inventory of the Romanian FCIs.

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