

Wondering about OARE: Is it a Q-particle for Romanian?

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The aim of this paper is to analyze the contribution of the Romanian interrogative particle *oare* to the semantic interpretation of interrogative sentences. It will first look at the distribution of this particle, show its lack of preference for a pinpointed location within the sentence and then compare it to a related German discourse particle, *wohl*. The comparison will lead to the semantic discussion of how this lexeme modifies the interpretation of its context and its relationship to focused elements. The study will also contrast the findings related to *oare* with the behavior of Q-particles, attempting to determine whether a connection could be established between the two.

Keywords: *interrogative particle, Focus, Q-particles, Romanian*

1 Introduction

This paper is an attempt to analyze the behavior of the interrogative particle *oare* in Romanian and offer a possible account regarding its contribution to the semantics of the sentence. While the main focus is describing *oare* as such, a point of interest will be whether it can be argued that *oare* bears similarity to Q-particles.

What actually prompted the interest in researching this fragment of language was that most languages do not seem to show a direct counterpart of *oare*. This particle is optional in Romanian, it may only appear in [+Q] contexts and it affects discourse. In the end, what is the difference between the sentences in the example below and why is *oare* so hard to translate into other languages?

- (1) a. *Care este diferența?*
Which is difference.the
'What is the difference?'
- b. ***Oare*** *care este diferența?*

A number of the Romanian-English dictionaries which we have consulted offer the translation of 'really' for this particle, but any native speaker of Romanian will find this specific translation to be odd. German does have a discourse particle, *wohl*, which appears to behave like *oare* in interrogative sentences; however, this particle may also appear in declarative contexts as well, changing its meaning depending on the force of the sentence. A comparison between the two particles will be available in section 4 of this paper.

The main theoretical concepts which are important in terms of our analysis of *oare* are Hagstrom's (1998) and Cable's (2007) descriptions of overt Q-particles and Zimmerman's (2004) analysis of *wohl*. This paper will also refer to Motapanyane's (2000) brief analysis of *oare* and Sava's (2012) account of focus particles in Romanian.

In terms of the organization of this paper, section 2 will deal with the theoretical background and it will provide a brief summary of some accounts of what Q-particles are and which of their features are relevant to this paper.

In section 3 we will look at the distribution of *oare* in Romanian and at its different possible locations within the sentence. The fourth section begins with a brief description of Zimmerman’s (2004) take on the interrogative function of the German particle *wohl*, information which will be relevant to the semantics of *oare* discussed in 4.2.

The fourth section will also analyze the relationship between *oare* and the focused elements within the sentence and will try to offer an account of how this particle affects the focused elements. Sava’s (2012) study on restrictive focus particles in Romanian will be of aid in deciding whether *oare* can be a focus particle or not.

Before summing up the article and reaching a conclusion, the fifth section will compare the behavior of *oare* to Q-particles and it will offer some lexical evidence which might help determine whether there is reason to believe that *oare* bears similarity to Q-particles.

2 What are Q-particles?

Ever since the beginnings of generative grammar there has been talk about the existence of a Q-morpheme that would appear in interrogative sentences. After some debate, Cheng (1991) offers an extensive analysis, concluding that all that is needed to license questions is the existence of a [+Q] feature on the complementizer. This hypothesis mainly relies on a Q-morpheme that should be responsible for typing the clause. In other words, if the Q-morpheme is present, the sentence is interrogative. In some languages, it is phonologically void, like in English, but in others, such as Japanese, it is overt.

- (2) *dare-ga* *hon-o* *kaimasita* *ka?* (Japanese)
 who-NOM book-ACC bought Q
 ‘Who bought books?’

The example above, taken from Hagstrom (1998), shows that the Q-morpheme is overt in Japanese and that it is expressed through the particle *-ka*. Other languages such as Tlingit, Sinhala and Okinawan present an overt Q-morpheme as well, whose behavior is comparable to that of the Japanese *-ka*.

Hagstrom suggests that *-ka* initially merges with the *wh*-word and then moves from a clause internal position to an external one – in Japanese, to the right periphery¹. This movement can be either covert or overt, depending on the characteristics of the language.

Cable (2007) looks at Tlingit where the Q-particle remains in the vicinity of the *wh*-word. He suggests that the Q-particle overtly moves to SpecFocP /SpecCP alongside the *wh*-expression. Cable also argues that Q-particles are focus-sensitive operators, which means that they put the constituent they are attached to (the *wh*-word) in focus position. This could explain why *wh*-expressions are always focused within *wh*-questions.

¹ Please note that Japanese is a head final language and that the complementizer would be placed at the end, in the right periphery. Should *oare* be a Q-particle for Romanian, the intuition is that it should move to the left periphery since Romanian is a head-initial language.

Furthermore, Cable agrees that irrespective of which *wh*-expression it will attach to, the Q-particle will not change its meaning.

Before moving on to the description of the Romanian particle *oare*, let us restate the most salient aspects of Q-particles as far as this paper is concerned.

- (3) A. Q-particles assign the [+Q] feature to sentences, marking them as interrogative;
 B. If the Q particle is attached to some constituent, then it must be focused;²
 C. they may overtly move to the periphery of the sentence;
 D. their meaning is invariant.

Having these characteristics of Q-particles in mind, the following sections will look at the distribution and the semantics of *oare*. After having described the behavior of *oare* in Romanian, we will return to the main ideas in (3) to see if they hold for the Romanian interrogative particle as well.

3 Sentences: Where does *oare* fit in?

Before analyzing the meaning of *oare*, it would be best to first have a look at its distribution. This section will focus on the types of sentences which license *oare* in Romanian and then take a look at the flexibility of this particle in terms of where it may appear within the sentence.

3.1 Sentence Type Sensitivity

The purpose of this section is to show that *oare* may only appear in [+Q] sentences. This indicates that *oare* should not be grammatical within declarative or imperative sentences.

- (4) a. *Elena a plâns două ore aseară.* (declarative)
 Elena has cried two hours yesterday evening
 ‘Elena cried for two hours yesterday evening.’
 b. **(oare) Elena a plâns oare două ore (oare) aseară (oare).*
- (5) a. *Fă-ți temele (odată)!* (imperative)
 Do-your.clitic homework.pl (already)!
 b. *Fă-ți oare temele (odată)! / *Oare fă-ți temele (odată)!*

As it can be seen from the examples in (4b) and (5b), *oare* may not appear in [-Q] sentences. The distribution of *oare* in interrogative sentences is illustrated below³. The

² *Wh*-expressions are *inherently focused*, therefore (3B) still holds for *wh*-questions (the Q particle attaches to the *wh*-element). While initially the criterion in (3B) was related to the behavior of Q-particles in *wh*-questions, an anonymous reviewer suggested the present version of the criterion, which is better suited for the purposes of this study.

³ Examples (7) and (9) are taken from the Romanian Language Dictionary of the Romanian Academy. The examples appear under the lexical entry for *oare* as prototypical uses, dating from 1644 and 1880.

particle in itself will not be translated in order to focus only on the type of question that it attaches to. The meaning that the particle adds to the sentences will be discussed in the following section.

- (6) **Oare** *Ion a încuiat ușa ieri?* (Yes/No questions)
 Ion has locked door-the yesterday
 ‘Did Ion lock the door yesterday?’
- (7) *Nu știu oare fi-m-vor mie aceste au ba?* (Alternative questions)
 not (I) know be – my.cl.-will (they) my these or not
 ‘I do not know, will these be mine or not?’
- (8) a. *?A făcut asta, oare nu-i așa?* (Tag questions)
 (he) has done that, not-is so
 ‘He did that, didn’t he?’
 b. A: *A plecat.* B: **Oare?** (Discourse related tag questions)
 A: (he) has left.
 A: ‘He left’ B: ‘Did he?’ / ‘I wonder...’
- (9) *(Dar) ce făcuse oare în vremea aceea Ileana împărăteasa?* (Wh-questions)
 (but) what did in time.the that Ileana empress-the
 ‘(But) what had the empress Ileana done at the time?’
- (10) *Cine ce a gătit azi oare?* (Multiple wh-questions)
 Who what has cooked today
 ‘Who cooked what today?’
- (11) *Se întreba cine oare plecase mai devreme.* (Embedded questions)
 Refl.pron asked who left more early
 ‘He was wondering who had left earlier.’
- (12) *Maria are [**(*oare)** cu cine **(*oare)** vota **(*oare)**].* (Free Relatives)
 Maria has with who vote.INF
 ‘Maria has somebody she can vote for.’

As the examples illustrate, *oare* is perfectly acceptable in any matrix questions (yes/no questions, wh-movement and multiple wh-movement questions) and even in embedded questions⁴. It should be noted, however, that the example in (11) still retains a sense of doubt. This particle is not very often used in genuine tag questions, as it can be seen in example (8a), but it may often appear in rhetorical questions or as a genuine expression of doubt such as in (8b), where it seems to be more discourse-related. The fact that *oare* is ungrammatical when used in the context of free relatives, as in (12) for instance, can be viewed as further evidence that the particle only pertains to interrogative sentences.

⁴ With respect to the embedded questions, this paper does not discuss the classes of predicates which license *oare* in their subordinate clauses. From the information I have gathered so far, only non-assertive matrix predicates may license *oare* in their subordinate clauses. This requires further research.

The examples discussed show that *oare* may only appear in [+Q] contexts but they also show that it can appear in different locations within the sentence. This characteristic will be discussed in more detail below.

3.2 Place within the sentence

Knowing that *oare* is restricted to interrogatives, we can now look at how this particle behaves in terms of word order within the sentence proper. This section will simply show the preference of this particle (or lack thereof) for a certain position in the derivation, based on the examples provided in 3.1. For reasons of space and clarity, we will review only some of the contexts which allow *oare*, namely (6), (9), (10) and (11) reanalyzed in the examples below in terms of the location of the particle with respect to the constituents of the sentence. Please note that in the examples (13) and (14) *oare* is in a pre-verbal position and it is post-verbal in the rest.

- (13) Left periphery / before subject DP or *wh*-word
- a. **Oare** [_{DP} Ion] a încuiat [_{DP} ușa] [_{AvP} ieri]?
Ion has locked door.the yesterday
'Did Ion lock the door yesterday?'
 - b. **Oare** [_{SpecCP} ce] făcuse [_{PP} în vremea aceea] [_{DP} Ileana împărăteasa]?
What had done in time.the that Ileana empress.the
'What did the empress Ileana do at the time?'
 - c. **Oare** [_{SpecCP} cine ce] a gătit [_{AvP} azi]?
who what has cooked today
'Who cooked what today?'
 - d. *Se întreba* [_{WH-INT} **oare** [_{SpecCP} cine] plecase [_{AvP} mai devreme]].
(he) refl. asked who left more early
'He was wondering who had left earlier.'
- (14) After Subject DP / *wh*-word, pre-verbal
- a. [_{DP} Ion] **oare** a încuiat [_{DP} ușa] [_{AvP} ieri]?
[_{SpecCP} Ce] **oare** făcuse [_{PP} în vremea aceea] [_{DP} Ileana împărăteasa]?
[_{SpecCP} Cine ce] **oare** a gătit [_{AvP} azi]?
[_{WH-INT} *Se întreba* [_{SpecCP} cine] **oare** plecase [_{AvP} mai devreme]].
- (15) Before DP argument in situ, post-verbal
- a. [_{DP} Ion] a încuiat **oare** [_{DP} ușa] [_{AvP} ieri]?
[_{SpecCP} Ce] făcuse [_{PP} în vremea aceea] **oare** [_{DP} Ileana împărăteasa]?
[_{SpecCP} Cine ce] a gătit **oare** [_{AvP} azi]?
[_{WH-INT} *Se întreba* [_{SpecCP} cine] plecase **oare** [_{AvP} mai devreme]].
- (16) Before adjunct PP/AvP, post-verbal
- a. [_{DP} Ion] a încuiat [_{DP} ușa] **oare** [_{AvP} ieri]?
[_{SpecCP} Ce] făcuse **oare** [_{PP} în vremea aceea] [_{DP} Ileana împărăteasa]?
[_{SpecCP} Cine ce] a gătit **oare** [_{AvP} azi]?
[_{WH-INT} *Se întreba* [_{SpecCP} cine] plecase **oare** [_{AvP} mai devreme]].

(17) Right periphery / sentence-final position

- a. [DP *Ion*] *a încuiat* [DP *ușa*] [AVP *ier*] *oare?*
- b. [SpecCP *Ce*] *făcuse* [PP *în vremea aceea*] [DP *Ileana împărăteasa*] *oare?*
- c. [SpecCP *Cine ce*] *a gătit* [AVP *astă*] *oare?*
- d. *Se întreba* [WH-INT [SpecCP *cine*] *plecase* [AVP *mai devreme*] *oare*].

What is interesting is that the number of options available to *oare* in terms of its position within the derivation seems to grow alongside the number of constituents the sentence has.

In order to clear the air a bit, please note that *oare* may not intervene between the auxiliary verb and the past participle in the Romanian “perfect compus”/ “passé composé” (**a oare plecat*). One explanation provided by the literature is that in Romanian the auxiliary verb is a clitic and ‘perfect compus’ will be regarded as one constituent and full-fledged adverbs may not intervene. Only short/clitic adverbs can be placed between the auxiliary and the lexical verb and as Motapanyane (2000) shows, *oare* is not a clitic adverb since it is not obligatorily adjacent to the inflected verb either.

Similarly, it should be noted that *oare* cannot appear within constituents such as “*în (*oare) vremea (*oare) aceea*” or “*Ileana (*oare) împărăteasa*”, which are a separate PP and DP respectively, hence separate constituents. *Oare* will need to be placed either before or after the entire construction.

To sum up the information that the examples provide, *oare* may appear in sentence initial position, in front of a SpecFocP as in (13) or possibly after it as in (14) – in other words, before or after the *wh*-expression, though Romanian native speakers do show a preference for the latter. It may also appear in sentence final position as in (17) or actually next to an internal constituent, argument or adjunct, as in (15) and (16). The examples show that *oare* is not licensed only in one single designated location and that it may appear next to different types of phrases.⁵ In any case, the occurrence of *oare* is optional and flexible.

4 The semantics of *oare*

Since the context of appearance for *oare* and its variability in terms of location has been more or less exemplified, let us have a look at a possible counterpart of *oare* in German, that of *wohl*. Based on the comparison between the two particles, we may begin to predict the semantic behavior of *oare* and look into the relationship of this particle with the focused elements within the sentence.

4.1 *Oare* vs. *wohl*

This section shall briefly introduce Zimmerman’s (2004) analysis of *wohl* and compare it to *oare*. Unlike *oare*, the German particle *wohl* may appear in both declarative and interrogative sentences, its meaning being slightly different in declarative sentences. This

⁵ Please have in mind that this paper does not discuss the possibility of *oare* being placed between the two *wh*-phrases in a multiple question, such as **Cine oare ce a gătit?* (who *oare* what has cooked) since it appears to be ungrammatical. Based on the fact that *oare* seems to attach only to constituents and that Romanian is a multiple *wh*-fronting language, one might be inclined to believe that “*cine ce*” acts as a unique constituent in Romanian multiple questions.

dual characteristic of *wohl* leads Zimmerman to believe and argue that *wohl* is a modifier on Force, since its meaning depends on whether the sentence is declarative or interrogative. If it is true that *wohl* is a modifier on Force, Zimmerman argues that it is located in the left periphery at LF – in SpecForceP. This particle indicates a form of uncertainty in both declarative and interrogative sentences. Since *oare* appears only in interrogative sentences, the present paper shall focus solely on this aspect of *wohl* from now on.

Zimmerman shows that *wohl* seems to be infelicitous in an interrogative clause whenever the addressee can be assumed to know the answer for sure (such as when asking for information at an information kiosk) and he distinguishes the following two uses of *wohl* in interrogatives:

- (18) a. BOTH ADDRESSEE (B) AND SPEAKER (A) UNCERTAIN:
 A to B: *Ist dies wohl der richtige Weg?*
 Is this the right way
 ‘Would /could this be the right way?’
- b. ONLY ADDRESSEE UNCERTAIN:
 Teacher to student: *Was ist wohl die Hauptstadt von Tansania?*
 what is the capital of Tansania
 ‘What would be the capital of Tansania?’

The main point of his analysis is that when the speaker uses the particle *wohl* in interrogatives, he or she ASSUMES that the hearer does not know the answer for sure. Zimmerman goes on to say that semantically speaking, *wohl* indicates a particular kind of propositional commitment (mainly uncertainty) and that syntactically, *wohl* moves from its VP internal position (*wohl* being an adverb) to SpecForceP at LF. He adopts Rizzi’s (1997) left periphery hypothesis which can be subsumed below.

- (19) $[_{\text{ForceP}} \text{Force}^0 \dots [_{\text{TopP}} \text{Top}^0 [_{\text{FocP}} \text{Foc}^0 [_{\text{FinP}} \text{Fin}^0 [\dots$

Zimmerman’s own example of what yes/no questions containing *wohl* look like at LF is given in (20c). Please note that in German yes/no questions any constituent may be focused by means of prosodic focus. This means that if *wohl* should be placed in SpecForceP, it would c-command the focused element. Please note that in the examples below *hat* is the auxiliary verb and ‘+int’ stands for the fact that the sentence is interrogative.

- (20) a. *Hat Hania wohl auch ihren Chef eingeladen?*
 Has Hania also her boss invited
- b. $[_{\text{ForceP}} \text{hat} + \text{int} \text{ Hania} [_{\text{VP}} \text{wohl} [_{\text{VP}} \text{auch ihren Chef eingeladen}]]]]?$
- c. $[_{\text{ForceP}} \text{wohl}_i \text{ hat} + \text{int} \text{ Hania} [_{\text{VP}} \text{t}_i [_{\text{VP}} \text{auch ihren Chef eingeladen}]]]]?$

As for *wh*-questions, since *wh*-expressions are inherently focused, Zimmerman argues that they will move to SpecFocP in Rizzi’s expanded left periphery as shown in (19) while *wohl*, being placed in SpecForceP, can c-command the focused constituent. The tentative LF-structure he provided for this type of questions is shown below.

- (21) *Wen hat Peter wohl eingeladen?*
 Who has Peter invited
 [_{ForceP} wohl_i int [_{ForceP} wen_i Foc [_{FinP} hat Peter t_i t_i eingeladen]]]

Comparing Zimmerman's analysis to what we know about *oare* so far, the only aspect we can be certain of is that they both appear in interrogative sentences. It should be noted that the Romanian Language Dictionary (Dicționarul Limbii Române 2010) classifies *oare* as an interrogative adverb and *wohl* is an adverb as well. However, for reasons which shall be discussed in the following section, it is perhaps best not to adopt this view. The fact that *oare* can attach to almost any phrase within the sentence and that *wohl* seems to appear more or less in the same position may be of no consequence since Romanian has lax word order and German does not.

Zimmerman's paper sheds some light on the contexts in which *oare* may appear. The uses Zimmerman distinguished in (18) hold for the Romanian interrogative particle as well. Probably the best translation of interrogative *wohl* and *oare* is that of 'I wonder', since both particles suggest a sense of uncertainty concerning at least one of the participants in discourse. The reason why this paper refrained from translating the meaning of *oare* up to this point is that the particle seems to bring no contribution to the descriptive aspect of interpretation; it is of importance only in terms of how the speaker evaluates that which has been said – namely, with a degree of uncertainty.

If *oare* and *wohl* are similar, this might mean that *oare* could also move to SpecForceP at LF. By doing so, *oare* will be in a position from which it could choose the type of clause it should attach to. This could be an explanation for the fact that *oare* may only appear in [+Q] / interrogative contexts.

However, the fact that *oare* displays the ability of adjoining to any phrase within the sentence should have an impact on interpretation. This issue shall be discussed in section 4.3, where we will try to see how the different places *oare* occupies may affect the meaning of the sentence.

4.2 The meaning of *oare*

As previously mentioned, *oare* is a unique functional category which is only licensed in interrogative sentences. When used, it implies a sense of doubt, of uncertainty.

- (22) a. *A plecat trenul?*
 has left train-the
 'Has the train left?'
 b. ***Oare*** *a plecat trenul?*

The basic difference between (22a) and (22b) is that while the first one mainly asks for the truth value of the sentence, without implying anything related to the knowledge that the speaker has of the answer, the latter suggests that things are less certain in the speaker's mind, more tentative. (22b) is a question that one would expect to hear in a dialogue between two friends/acquaintances, the speaker thinking that the hearer does not know the answer for sure. Of course, since it is more of an indirect question, it could also be used as a manner of politeness, not to impose on the hearer – presumably someone you have just met at the train station. However, as Zimmerman puts it, one

would find it odd to hear sentence (22b) at the information booth, since the clerk should have accurate information regarding train departures.

Oare-sentences are also very often used in what would be defined as the thought process, stream-of-consciousness, diaries and the like where one tends to be more introspective and generally more unsure about truth value, like in (23). Naturally, they may also be used rhetorically and/or sarcastically, like in (24), but this is not the most salient issue at this point. Please note that although speaker B only says *Oare?*, the full sentence would actually be *Oare cerul e albastru?* and the rest has presumably been deleted for reasons of language economy.

(23) **Oare** e bine ce fac?
 is good what do.1SG
 ‘Am I doing the right thing?’

(24) A: *Cerul e albastru.*
 A: sky.the is blue
 A: ‘The sky is blue.’
 B: **Oare?**
 B: ‘Is it?’ / ‘You think?’

So far, the purpose of *oare* within the sentence seems to be that of expressing a form of doubt, behaving similarly to *wobl*. Now that there is some idea of how *oare* contributes to the meaning of the sentence, the paper will look into how the position of *oare* within the sentence may affect its interpretation.

4.3 *Oare* and Focus

It has been established in 4.2 that *oare* denotes a degree of uncertainty when used in interrogative sentences. Furthermore, *oare* may appear within sentences where a particular element is focused.⁶ This section will try to explore the relationship between *oare* and those elements and see how and if *oare* affects the sentences in this sense.

While the research regarding the behavior of focused elements and focus particles in Romanian is not as explored as it is in other languages, one of the works that shed light on the matter is Sava’s (2012) study on restrictive focus particles. Her study is based on the equivalents of ‘only’ in Romanian, *numai* and *doar*, and it offers some general guidelines for Romanian focus particles. These features, taken from Sava (2012, 182) are subsumed below.

- (25) Properties of focus particles in Romanian:
- i. their associate must be focused (or in case of phrases containing more than one lexical item, one of their constituents must be focused);

⁶ It has been argued (see Motapanyane 1998) that the focus position in Romanian is between C⁰ and T⁰. [focus] and [wh] are seen as two separate features. Since *wh*-elements raise to SpecCP, but they are also inherently focused, the prediction is that *wh*-phrases target the focus position to check the [focus] feature, after which they will move to SpecCP to check the [wh] feature of C⁰. Motapanyane (1998) suggests that the focus position is actually in SpecTP, but it could also be possible for there to exist a separate FocP which selects the TP. The exact location of the focused elements within the derivational tree is beyond the purpose of this study.

- ii. they attach to maximal projections (they only attach at XP level);
- iii. the particle must c-command its associate;
- iv. the associate cannot be a sub-constituent of a syntactic island.

According to Sava (2012), focus particles in Romanian should associate with a constituent or phrase that is marked prosodically by pitch stress, they cannot appear inside a prepositional phrase or a determiner phrase and since focus particles are quantifiers over properties, they would have to move at LF to a position from where they could take the entire clause as their argument. In order to see if *oare* can be considered a focus particle, we will analyze how *oare* affects the focused elements from the perspective of the guidelines given by Sava.

The previous subsection discussed the fact that *oare* expresses a degree of uncertainty. This would mean that whenever one uses *oare* in an interrogative sentence, the array of possible answers or at least the likelihood of having unexpected answers should increase. Since it is a discourse particle affecting the entire sentence and not only one constituent, in this case, it could be argued that *oare* should move at LF to a position from where it can c-command the rest of the derivational tree. Motapanyane (2000) concludes that the morpheme *oare* is a discourse marker, licensed in syntax by the [+wh] feature of the complementizer C^0 . While, for this paper, it may still seem uncertain where exactly *oare* would move at LF, it is at least clear that it should move above the TP/IP layer, behaving similarly, in this respect, to focus particles as analyzed by Sava (2010). Another similarity between the two concepts is the fact that neither *oare* nor focus particles can occur within a PP or a DP, as discussed in section 3, both attaching only to maximal projections.

Oare does appear to behave like Romanian focus particles in two respects: it can attach to any XP and it should raise above the TP level at LF. But does *oare* associate with focused elements? And if it does, how does this particle affect them?

- (26) a. *Fata a spart o farfurie ieri ?* A: Yes/ No.
 girl.the has broken a plate yesterday
 ‘Did the girl break a plate yesterday?’
- b. *FATA a spart o farfurie ieri?* A: Yes/No, the boy did.
- c. *Fata A SPART o farfurie ieri?* A: Yes/No, she washed it.
- d. *Fata a spart O FARFURIE ieri?* A: Yes/No, a bowl.
- e. *Fata a spart o farfurie IERI?* A: Yes/No, today.

The example above shows how prosodic focus may modify the type of answer the question is looking for. If no particular constituent is stressed, like in (26a), the question would expect a simple yes or no answer. Should the stress fall on a certain word within the question, then the expected answer would be more in reference to that particular word than to the sentence as such.⁷ Let us now look at the possibilities of interpretation for a question like the one in (26) when *oare* becomes part of the equation.

⁷ Focus in Romanian may also be achieved by means of moving the focused constituent to the left periphery. To continue with the example given in (26), should one choose to ask whether it was *yesterday* that the girl broke a plate, one would have two alternative structures.

- (i) *IERI a spart fata o farfurie?*
- (ii) *Fata IERI a spart o farfurie?*

- (27) a. **Oare** fata a spart o farfurie ieri?
 b. Fata **oare** a spart o farfurie ieri?
 c. Fata a spart **oare** o farfurie ieri?
 d. Fata a spart o farfurie **oare** ieri?
 e. Fata a spart o farfurie ieri **oare**?

When looking at the word order in the sentences in (27), one notices that *oare* has 5 possible places of occurrence. While it is possible to place *oare* in either of these positions, would all of them have the same meaning? The native speaker intuition is that (27c) and (27d) are incompatible with the (26a) reading. When a native speaker comes across (27d), for instance, the sole possible reading is that of (26e), placing contrastive prosodic focus on the adverb meaning ‘yesterday’. Similarly, it would be more natural to assume that a question like (27c) would expect the answer of (26d) than that of the neutral reading.

Furthermore, (27a) can have any of the readings in (26). This means that when *oare* is placed in the left periphery, it can still be connected to the focused element irrespective of the distance between them. This could also be true of (27e), when *oare* is in the right periphery, but when it comes to longer questions, Romanian native speakers show preference for placing *oare* in the beginning and not at the end of the sentence.

The proposition that this paper puts forth is that *oare* is initially generated next to the focused element, should there be one, and it would then move to sentence initial position. There is a possibility that *oare* is actually the marker for prosodic focus and that intonation dictates the initial position of this particle. If *oare* is placed within a considerably long question and not at the periphery, this would act as a prompt for native speakers to put stress on the constituent immediately following *oare* – which is why in (27d) prosodic focus would be placed on *ieri*.

Should the proposition hold, when *oare* does not overtly raise to the CP layer, it could also indicate the trace of moved constituents. For instance, (27c) could easily be read as (28.c.i.), where *fata* ‘the girl’ is focused because *oare* c-commands the trace of the DP within SpecVP, the base-generated position of the subject. In other words, *oare* may initially merge with *fata* in the SpecVP position, after which the DP *fata* raises to SpecFocP and *oare* may either stay in situ, within the VP, or it may raise above the TP layer like in (28.a.ii).

The examples below offer the possible interpretations for the questions in (27). The examples which are preceded by a question mark are not ungrammatical, although they are less common and harder to process. The readings that would sound highly unlikely have been omitted.

- (28) a. **Oare** fata a spart o farfurie ieri?
 i. **Oare** fata a spart o farfurie ieri ? A: Yes/ No.
 ii. **Oare** FATA a spart o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/No, the boy did.

The first example illustrates *ieri* ‘yesterday’ moving to SpecFocP while the subject DP, *fata*, remains in its situ position. In the second example, the subject DP would raise to SpecTopP and *ieri* would again move to the SpecFocP position beneath it. This is possible because Romanian has lax word order and generally any constituent could be fronted. However interesting this matter is, it is not relevant for this paper in terms of how *oare* can affect the sentence. Focus by means of *oare* should be analyzed only in cases where *oare* changes position so as to avoid any possible confusion.

- iii. **Oare** fata A SPART o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/No, she washed it.
 - iv. **Oare** fata a spart O FARFURIE ieri? A: Yes/No, a bowl.
 - v. **Oare** fata a spart o farfurie IERI? A: Yes/No, today.
- b. Fata **oare** a spart o farfurie ieri?
 - i. ? Fata **oare** a spart o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/ No.
 - ii. FATA **oare** a spart o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/No, the boy did.
 - iii. Fata **oare** A SPART o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/No, she washed it.
- c. Fata a spart **oare** o farfurie ieri?
 - i. FATA a spart **oare** o farfurie ieri? A: Yes/No, the boy did.
 - ii. Fata a spart **oare** O FARFURIE ieri? A: Yes/No, a bowl.
- d. Fata a spart o farfurie **oare** ieri?
 - i. Fata a spart o farfurie **oare** IERI? A: Yes/No, today.
- e. Fata a spart o farfurie ieri **oare**?
 - i. Fata a spart o farfurie ieri **oare** ? A: Yes/ No.
 - ii. ? FATA a spart o farfurie ieri **oare**? A: Yes/No, the boy did.
 - iii. ? Fata A SPART o farfurie ieri **oare**? A: Yes/No, she washed it.
 - iv. ? Fata a spart O FARFURIE ieri **oare**? A: Yes/No, a bowl.
 - v. ? Fata a spart o farfurie IERI **oare**? A: Yes/No, today.

The examples illustrate that the most natural reading for a sentence in which *oare* is not placed at the periphery is to put focus on the constituent immediately following it. As mentioned previously, the only position of *oare* which easily allows any reading, either with or without a focused element, is the sentence initial position (28a). While (28e) could behave similarly, (28.e.ii) is harder to process and more difficult to utter than (28.a.ii), for instance. Romanian native speakers show a strong preference for the left periphery as opposed to the right one, at least when it comes to longer sentences.

One possibility is that since native speakers are used to using *oare* next to any XP phrase, with a bit of effort, one could achieve the (28.b.i) interpretation. After spending some time pondering on how *oare* affects the utterance, it may become problematic for the native speaker to distinguish between what is perfectly natural and what is slightly forced which is why the examples above provide only the most common readings. Since *oare* displays so much flexibility within the sentence, it is not difficult to assume that it may become confusing even for native speakers.

In any case, the assumption would be that *oare*, irrespective of its location in the utterance, could associate itself with the element in focus position. In order to c-command the focused element, *oare* would have to raise, either covertly or overtly, in a position above SpecFocP. An argument in favor of the connection between *oare* and focused elements is that no matter where one places *oare* in wh-questions, no other item except for the *wh*-expression will be focused.

- (29) a. Cine *i* - a cumpărat Mariei inelul ieri?
 Who clitic.3RDPERS has bought Mary.DAT ring.the yesterday
 ‘Who bought the ring for Mary yesterday?’
- b. **Oare** CINE *i*-a cumpărat Mariei inelul ieri?
- c. CINE **oare** *i*-a cumpărat Mariei inelul ieri?

- d. CINE *i-a cumpărat* **oare** *Mariei inelul ieri?*
- e. ?? CINE *i-a cumpărat* *Mariei* **oare** *inelul ieri?*
- f. ?? CINE *i-a cumpărat* *Mariei inelul* **oare** *ieri?*
- g. ? CINE *i-a cumpărat* *Mariei inelul ieri* **oare?**

The only element which can be focused in the sentences in (29) is the *wh*-expression. As it is explained in the literature, *wh*-expressions are inherently focused because they are initially merged with a Q-particle which will move to the periphery of the derivation at LF. Example (29g) is harder to process because the sentence is too long, requiring a heavier computational load, and it would be easier to just place *oare* in the left-periphery. When hearing sentences such as the ones in (29e) and (29f), a competent speaker would assume that the constituent immediately following *oare*, namely *inelul* ‘the ring’ for (29e) and *ieri* ‘yesterday’ for (29f) should be placed in the Focus Position. However, since *wh*-elements are inherently focused, the Focus Position is already occupied (either by the *wh*-element per-se or by its trace), and constituents other than *wh*-elements cannot be focused.

Taking into consideration the aspects discussed so far and the fact that both (29b) and (29c) are acceptable readings, one would wonder where the exact position of *oare* is since it can appear both before and after the *wh*-expression. Motapanyane (2000), discussing examples with a similar structure to (29c), proposes that *oare* should be placed in C^0 . However, if this is the case, what would happen in (29b) where *oare* is pronounced before the *wh*-expression? Furthermore, there are examples in which *oare* can co-occur with complementizers, which is why it seems unlikely that *oare* should share the same position.

If *oare* can be uttered before the *wh*-expression and since *wh*-expressions are inherently focused, it should mean that *oare* can be placed above SpecFocP/SpecCP. Should that be the case, if Rizzi’s (1997) left periphery hypothesis applies for Romanian as well, it would not be unreasonable to assume that *oare* behaves similarly to *wh* and that it may be placed in SpecForceP. This position would also account for the fact that *oare* only occurs within [+Q] contexts.

The matter of what happens in examples like (29c) would have to remain an open question as far as this paper is concerned. However, one should take into consideration the fact that Romanian has determiners which are formed by compounding *oare* with a pronoun as it can be seen in the examples below.

- (30) *oarecine*, *oarecare*, *oarecum*, etc.
 Q+who, Q+which, Q+how
 ‘someone’, ‘somewhat/someone’, ‘somehow’

In this case, a sentence like (29b) would be harder to process since the pronunciation of *oarecine* ‘someone’ and *oare cine* ‘(I wonder)...Who...(ever)?’ is the same. Perhaps, the speaker would rather pronounce *oare* after the *wh*-expression in order to avoid confusion. If this is so, it could be possible for *oare* to simply raise to the SpecFocP position alongside the *wh*-phrase by means of pied-piping, while its phonologically void functional features would raise in a higher position.

This section has discussed the relationship between *oare* and focused elements, observing that the placement of *oare* may lead to a certain pattern of intonation. It is apparent that when *oare* is placed within the question, the most likely constituent to be stressed is the one immediately after the particle. Furthermore, when *oare* is placed in the

left periphery of the sentence, all possible readings are available, which could act as a hint that *oare* might raise above SpecFocP at LF.

When comparing the behavior of *oare* to Romanian focus particles as described by Sava (2012) there appears to be a match: both *oare* and focus particles have to attach to a maximal projection, not to an intermediate one, both associate with a constituent or phrase that is marked by means of pitch stress and both would have to raise at LF to a position from where they could c-command the entire sentence. While the issue regarding the exact position where *oare* would move to at LF is still an open one, it has been proposed that *oare* will initially merge with the focused constituent and then either move to the left periphery, stay in situ or it could even move to SpecFocP with the focused element by means of pied-piping.⁸ In any case, there is a considerable number of contexts in which *oare* seems to act as a focus particle in Romanian.

5 *Oare* vs. Q-particles

After having characterized the behavior of *oare* with respect to its meaning, its place within the sentence and how it affects the interpretation of the question in itself, we can now see if there is any reason to believe that *oare* could be a type of Q-particle. In order to do so, the features of Q-particles which were singled out in the first section will be repeated below.

- (31) A. Q-particles assign the [+Q] feature to sentences, marking them as interrogative;
B. If the Q particle is attached to some constituent, then it must be focused;
C. they may overtly move to the periphery of the sentence;
D. their meaning is invariant.

Since *oare* may only occur in [+Q] contexts and since *oare* is a question in itself, it could be argued that *oare* might actually be the particle to assign the [+Q] value to the sentence. As it has been pointed out in section 4, *oare* bears similarity to the German discourse particle *wohl* which, as Zimmerman argues, types the clause. If *wohl* and *oare* are so alike and since *oare* is a focus particle that should raise to a higher position, it could be possible that *oare* actually assigns the [+Q] value.

As for (31.B), the previous section has shown that *oare* may act as a focus particle for Romanian and that it might be base generated next to *any* focused phrase, including *wh*-expressions. The contexts of occurrence for *oare* also take into consideration the focused elements. Generally, when *oare* is located within the sentence and not at the periphery, this acts as a prompt for native speakers to put stress on the adjacent constituent. Consequently, *oare* may merge with the focused elements / *wh*-expressions.

Furthermore, the most common place of occurrence for *oare* is at the periphery of the sentence, showing a strong preference for the left periphery. It is not yet certain why *oare* may also appear in the right periphery, but speakers generally avoid using long questions which end with *oare*. While *oare* may overtly move to the periphery, it has been

⁸ If *oare* can move by means of pied-piping to SpecFocP with the focused element, this could explain examples such as (28.b.ii.) *FATA oare a spart farfurii ieri?* or even a case like *IERI oare a spart fata farfurii?* where the focused element can be pronounced before the particle *oare*.

argued that it will always covertly move to the left periphery at LF in order to take scope over the entire sentence.

With respect to (31.D), the meaning of *oare*, similarly to *wobl*, is that of uncertainty. *Oare* will not modify the meaning of the phrase it attaches to, it will only place it in focus position and change the meaning of the sentence with respect to discourse. In all situations where *oare* is used, its meaning is that of an „added question mark”, if you will, which is why it is so difficult to translate into other languages. Simply put, *oare* always expresses doubt, be it fake or genuine, depending on the pragmatical context.

Should we assume that Zimmerman’s analysis applies for *oare* as well, it could mean that the position of the Q-particle and that of *oare* coincide at LF. If *oare* were a Q-particle, it would have to merge with the *wh*-word. Since this paper has emphasized that *oare* may be a focus particle for Romanian, it would also merge with any focused phrase, not only *wh*-expressions.

We believe that the reason why *oare* (and possibly *wobl*) cannot qualify as a full overt Q-particle is exactly due to the propositional meaning that it implies – uncertainty. *Oare* does not modify the descriptive meaning of the sentence, but it does play a role in discourse. However, when the speaker feels a need to include *oare* within the utterance, this particle seems to behave very similarly to overt Q-particles as described by Hagstrom (1998) and Cable (2007). *Oare* could be a phonological remnant of a Q-particle which has retained or possibly added some discourse properties. When this added shred of doubt has no reason to be expressed, a phonologically void version of *oare* would merge with the focused constituent and then raise above the TP layer. When the speaker desires to use *oare*, the interrogative particle becomes phonologically salient in order to add extra meaning at the level of discourse.

Further evidence that *oare* and the Japanese Q-particle *-ka* are alike may lie in the lexical domain. It is worth mentioning that *-ka* in Japanese, when not being used as a Q-particle, also indicates choice or doubt, similarly to *oare*. Furthermore, compounding of relative/interrogative pronouns and *oare* or *ka*, yield indefinite pronouns in both languages. Hagstrom (1998) argues that in the examples taken from Kuroda (1965) which will be repeated below, the *-ka* within the indefinite pronouns and the Q-particle *-ka* are the same lexical item but with different uses.

- (32) a. **dare-ka-ga** *hon-o* *katta.*
 who-Q-NOM book-ACC bought
 ‘Someone bought books.’
- b. *John-ga* **nani-ka-o** *katta.*
 John-NOM **what-Q-ACC** bought
 ‘John bought something.’

(Kuroda 1965:97, Hagstrom 1998:17)

When comparing the Romanian examples in (30) with the Japanese ones in (32) we can see a similar behavior. Both particles, *ka* and *oare*, can be found within indefinite pronouns – pronouns which offer an array of possible universes. This array of possibilities could come from the fact that both *ka* and *oare* express multiple options.

It is worth mentioning that throughout time, the meaning of *oarecine* and *oarece* has shifted. The meaning of these lexical items is now closer to that of ‘somewhat’ or ‘in a way’, since there are also other Romanian lexical items which would have the meaning of *someone* and *something*, namely *cineva* and *ceva* (*cine + va* ‘who + va’, *ce + va* ‘what + va’). What is interesting is that the morpheme *va*, which is compounded with the

wh-elements in the examples above, comes from the Latin verb *volo* ‘want’, the same verb from which *vel* ‘or’ came from in Latin. Some sources indicate that *volo* and *vel* gave birth to two different short words in Romanian – *oare* and *ori*. It is believed that while *ori* ‘or’ refers to an either/or expression, *oare* was used to express and/or relationships, which could explain why *oare* now indicates a sense of doubt or the existence of more than one possible universe. Furthermore, the indefinites *oricine* and *orice* in Romanian mean ‘anyone’ and ‘anything’ as opposed to the indefinites containing *oare* whose meaning is closer to ‘something’. The entry for *oare* in the Romanian Language Dictionary (2010) states that it is an interrogative adverb, but *oare* does not behave like ‘why’ or ‘how’ and as Motapanyane (2000) proves, it does not behave like full-fledged Romanian adverbs either. A study on these indefinites and on the difference between *oare* and *ori* could also be of help in a better understanding of the concept of *oare*.

As a final remark, *oare* does seem to be a type of Q-particle. It may only appear in [+Q] contexts, it is also a focus particle, hence it merges with the focused element/*wh*-expression and it then may overtly move to the periphery of the sentence. Its meaning within the question is invariant and it also appears in different Romanian indefinite pronouns, similarly to the Japanese Q-particle *-ka*.

6 Conclusion

This paper has been written with the hope of proving that *oare* is a unique functional category. While it is true that *oare* is not an obligatory particle in Romanian questions and that its location within the sentence is variable, it may be the case that it behaves as an overt Q-particle when the context allows it or that it may at least be a phonological remnant of a Q-particle.

Oare may only appear in [+Q] contexts and it does not contribute to the descriptive meaning of sentences, however, the meaning it brings to discourse remains invariant – uncertainty. The fact that *oare* has a function in discourse inhibits it from occurring in all interrogative sentences, which is why it is not a full-fledged Q-particle.

Since *oare* is very similar to *wohl* it may raise to the left periphery, occupying the same place Q-particles do. *Oare* seems to be a focus particle which would also explain its close relationship to the *wh*-elements in *wh*-questions. Since *oare* is both a focus and a discourse particle affecting the entire sentence, it may be argued that *oare* moves from its base-generated position, after having merged with the focused element, to a position higher than SpecFocP.

It would be interesting for one to research the relationship between *ori* and *oare* and the difference between sentences like **Oare** *fata a spart o farfurie ieri?* and **Ori** *fata a spart o farfurie ieri?* since the latter is a possible but very rare occurrence. Another interesting topic would be deciphering the position to which *oare* actually raises at LF and what the difference is between the sentences where *oare* occurs before the *wh*-expression and those where *oare* occurs afterwards or even in the right periphery.

The main purpose of this article was to raise questions as to what *oare* is and how it functions. While the paper has attempted to satisfy some of these curiosities, most questions are still left unanswered. Hopefully further research will point in the same direction that *oare* is a type of a Q-particle, overt when it has a function in discourse and covert when it does not. Either way, one may never cease to wonder about *oare*.

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