

Question particles with a disjunctive origin in Romanian

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Romanian has two question particles that developed from disjunctions: *au* (archaic and dialectal) and *oare*. I will present their history and distribution, concentrating on *oare*, which, being part of the standard Modern Romanian system, allows deeper insights into its semantic and distributional properties. I show that the semantic contribution of this particle is the presupposition that the speaker is not in a position to know the answer for sure. A similar type of marked questions has been discussed for other languages (see Danish *mon* and German *ob*-questions). Regarding syntax, I argue against the analysis of *oare* as a C head: using corpus data, I show that *oare* has a distribution typical of sentence adjuncts. The disjunctive use of *oare* is only encountered in Old Romanian. The data of this language are particularly interesting because they show a type of use of a multiple disjunction which may explain its origin in a form of the verb ‘want’ and also the way in which disjunctive elements can become free choice particles (a development encountered in Romanian for three items: *oare*, *ori* and *fie*).