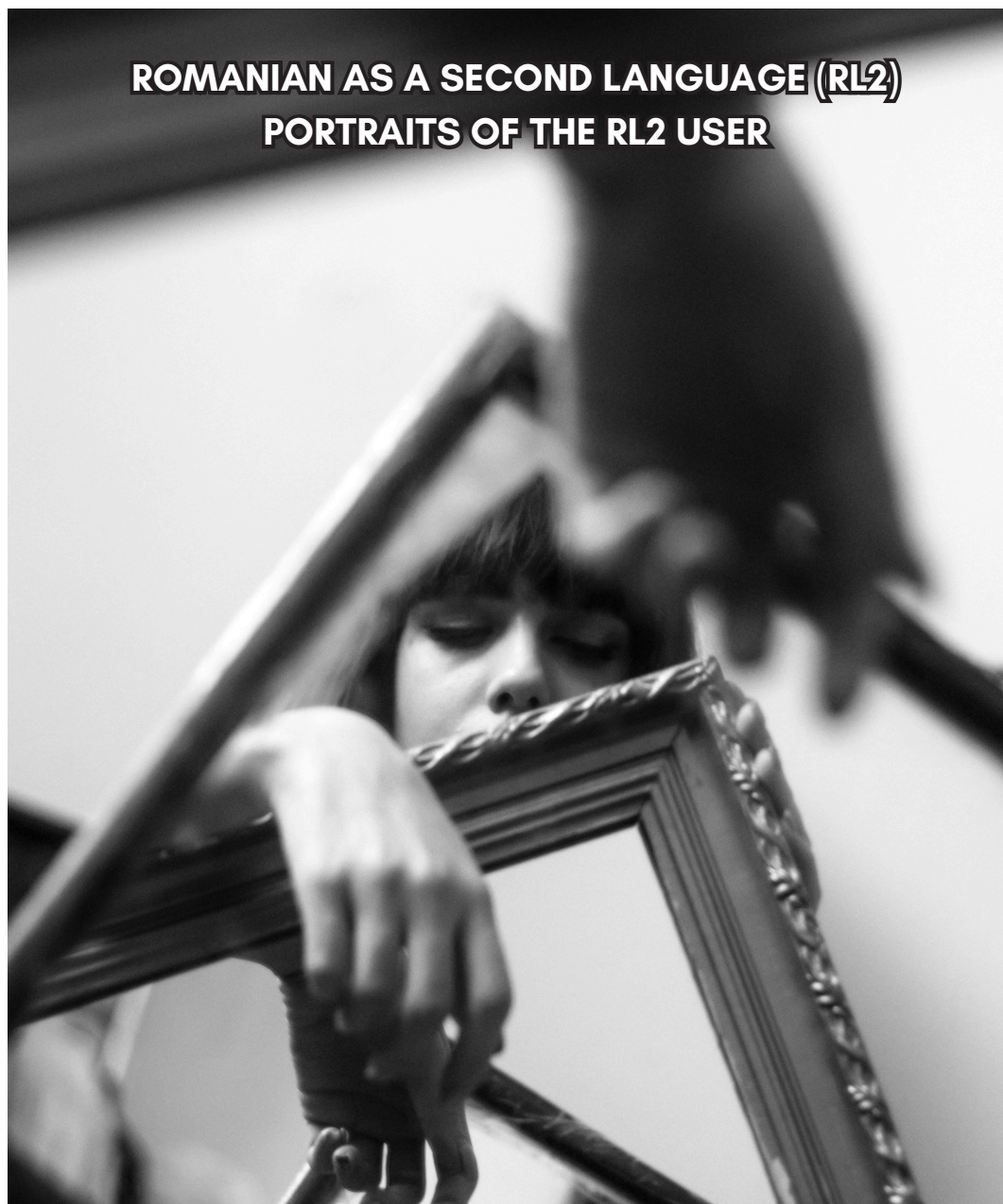


STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS

Babeş-Bolyai

ROMANIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (RL2)
PORTRAITS OF THE RL2 USER



PHILOLOGIA

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ROMANIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (RL2). PORTRAITS OF THE RL2 USER

Fortunately, in recent decades, there has been a growing interest in research papers focused on speakers of Romanian as a second/as a foreign language (RL2): individuals who reside in Romania for shorter or longer periods (foreign students, various professional categories employed for fixed terms, immigrants, etc.); pupils or students belonging to communities where Romanian is learned/spoken only at school, during Romanian language classes (as a second language); individuals who, for various reasons, learn Romanian as a second language outside Romania (for example, students in philology departments at universities abroad); or even, marginally included, people (generally young) who speak Romanian as a heritage language.

Such research explores speakers' mental representations of the languages they know or are learning, as well as the relationships between these languages (plurilingual competence, cross-linguistic influence); the place of Romanian in the learners' imaginary and the role of such representations in language acquisition and learning; the role of intercultural competence in the teaching and learning of RL2; inter- and intra-speaker variation among RL2 learners, along with the factors that drive these variations, and more. Each of these studies represents an important piece of a larger puzzle which, when combined with others in various configurations, helps to form a wide range of portraits of the RSL speaker – each equally valid.

This volume brings together 11 studies that contribute to the shaping and/or understanding of the complex and multifaceted portrait of the speaker of Romanian as a foreign/non-native language. Precisely because of the complexity of this portrait (composed of multiple elements across various dimensions) we did not aim to group the included studies according to a specific structure. Nevertheless, a certain order naturally emerged. The first studies highlight the key elements that should be taken into account when investigating



the profile of the RL2 speaker, the next focus more on cognitive aspects involved in processing and producing the target language; the following contributions discuss individual and social factors in RL2 learning; while the final articles prioritize didactic aspects (teaching and assessment of RL2).

Elena Platon opens this thematic issue with the study *La langue roumaine dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs non natifs*, which highlights a relatively unexplored yet crucial aspect for a more comprehensive understanding of how RL2 is acquired, namely, the learner's perception of the target language during the acquisition process. The author shifts the focus from an interlanguage analysis to an approach centered on investigating the linguistic imaginary, interpreting the responses of non-native speakers to a questionnaire about their representations of Romanian language and culture.

In a similar vein, in her study *Portraits in the Making: German Users of Romanian as a Foreign Language*, Diana Burlacu draws attention to the need for the portraits of non-native Romanian speakers to include the speakers' own perspectives. The author also emphasizes the multitude of factors influencing speakers' interlanguage and its variable nature.

With a perspective shaped by cognitive linguistics, Ioana-Silvia Sonea (in *Listening in L2 Romanian: Why Function Words Go Unnoticed*) analyzes the decoding and reception of words in the comprehension of oral messages at the B1 proficiency level. Building on empirical studies conducted in other languages, the author replicates this research for Romanian, confirming the findings that L2 speakers prioritize lexical content words over grammatical function words when listening to a message in the target language.

Using a corpus of oral productions by RL2-speaking students, Ștefania-Lucia Tăraș, Adelina Patricia Băilă, and Antonela-Carmen Arieșan-Simion (in *Story Grammar as a Strategy for Enhancing Narrative Skills in the Case of L2 Romanian Adult Learners*) investigate how narrative units specific to story grammar are processed and orally reproduced. They emphasize the importance of practicing narrative strategies in the process of learning Romanian as a foreign language to develop the ability to tell and retell stories.

In her study *The Portrait of the Romanian L2 User as a Young [Romanian!] Man*, Nicoleta Neșu examines the characteristics of a specific group with an ethnic profile, represented by speakers of Romanian as an ethnic/heritage language. The author highlights the complexity and heterogeneity of this category and stresses the need for an interdisciplinary approach that includes linguistic, sociolinguistic, and psycholinguistic perspectives.

Anamaria Radu and Alexandra Cotoc (in *Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Romanian through the Lens of RL2 Learners*) examine the social and cultural role of the Romanian language within communities of RL2 speakers. They analyze online discourse in RL2 and attempt to identify current trends regarding the construction of RL2 identities, within the context of plurilingualism.

In the study *Exploring Perceptions of Academic and Social Integration through Intercultural Competence Development among French-speaking Medical Students*, Nora Neamț focuses on the social and academic integration challenges faced by medical students who are RL2 speakers. She emphasizes the role of cultural and social integration in the process of learning Romanian as a foreign language and highlights the importance of developing intercultural competence.

Iulia Nica (in *Notas sobre la enseñanza del rumano en España*) presents several teaching strategies for Romanian as a foreign language, taking into account the complex profile of learners, cross-linguistic influences, linguistic awareness skills, and plurilingual competence.

In her study *Strategies for Developing Listening and Reading Skills in Romanian as a Second Language for Primary School Students*, Anca-Lorena Sacaliș emphasizes the importance of focusing on reception strategies among young learners of Romanian as a second language. She highlights the benefits of this approach in enhancing their listening and reading abilities.


Dina Vilcu also highlights the role of plurilingual competence among speakers of Romanian as a foreign and heritage language in her study *Plurilingualism and Assessment: Romanian as a Foreign and Heritage Language*. The author demonstrates how plurilingual competence was taken into account in the revision process of assessment grids evaluating general communicative competence in written production/interaction activities (A1 level) and oral production and interaction (B1 level).


Finally, Anca Ursa, Mihaela Mihai, and Narcisa Albert propose a study investigating the role of AI in designing teaching materials for RL2: *The Design of Teaching Materials for Online Interaction Activities with the Help of ChatGPT: The Case of Romanian as a Foreign Language*. The authors explore how the CEFR grids for online interaction can be utilized in creating teaching scenarios with the aid of ChatGPT, emphasizing the need for a critical and reflective use of this tool.

*
* *

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LA LANGUE ROUMAINE DANS L'IMAGINAIRE DES LOCUTEURS NON NATIFS

Elena PLATON¹ 

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ABSTRACT. *The Romanian Language in the Imaginary of Non-Native Speakers.*

Over the past five decades, since Romanian has been taught as a foreign language (RFL) in an institutional setting, the profile of non-native speakers has been shaped almost exclusively through the analysis of their oral and written productions in specialized studies. However, international research in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, particularly those focused on linguistic imaginary, highlights the importance of how the target language is perceived by the speaker in the acquisition process. This perception is never neutral and cannot be dissociated from the representations the speaker has of the target culture, nor from the other psychosocial variables that define their personality. For these reasons, in this study, we aim to interpret the responses provided by non-native speakers to a questionnaire regarding their representations of the Romanian language and culture, hoping to learn – within the field of RFL as well – how to listen to and interpret the voices of foreigners as they emerge from epilinguistic discourse. These discourses have been legitimized in the scientific field for half a century thanks to a series of concepts introduced by the theory of linguistic imaginary, such as fictive norms or identificatory norms.

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By shifting the focus from the interlanguage of non-native speakers to the study of linguistic imaginary, we will attempt to outline new facets of their profile in order to complete the already complex ideal profile and, at the same time, to enrich the image of the Romanian linguistic and cultural space with new nuances shaped through the distanced perspective of non-native speakers.

Keywords: *linguistic imaginary, representation, fictive norms, identificatory norms, metaphorical concepts*

REZUMAT. *Limba română în imaginarul vorbitorilor nonnativi.* În cele cinci decenii de când limba română se predă, în cadru instituționalizat, ca limbă străină (RLS), profilul vorbitorului nonnativ a fost conturat în studiile de specialitate, aproape exclusiv, prin analiza producțiilor sale orale și scrise. Cercetările de sociolingvistică și antropologie lingvistică din mediul academic extern, în special cele consacrate imaginarului lingvistic (IML), ne arată însă cât de importantă este percepția locutorului despre limba-țintă în procesul de achiziție. Această percepție nu este niciodată una neutră și nu poate fi separată de reprezentările acestuia asupra culturii-țintă, dar nici de celelalte variabile de ordin psihosocial care îi definesc personalitatea. Din aceste rațiuni, ne propunem ca, în studiul de față, să interpretăm răspunsurile la un chestionar privind reprezentările vorbitorilor nonnativi despre limba și cultura română, în speranța că vom învăța, și în domeniul RLS, să ascultăm și să interpretăm vocile străinilor prezente în discursurile epilingvistice, a căror intrare în câmpul științific a fost legitimată deja de o jumătate de veac printr-o serie de concepte lansate în teoria IML, precum cele de *normă fictivă* sau *normă identificatorie*. Mutând accentul de pe interlimba vorbitorului nonnativ pe investigarea IML, vom încerca să creionăm câteva noi ipostaze ale acestuia, pentru a-i întregi profilul ideal multifățetar și, totodată, pentru a îmbogăți imaginea spațiului lingvistic și cultural românesc cu noi nuanțe create de filtrul *privirii distanțate* a vorbitorilor nonnativi.

Cuvinte-cheie: *imaginar lingvistic, reprezentare, norme fictive, norme identificatorii, concepte metaforice*

1. Préambule. Un grand inconnu : le locuteur non natif du roumain

Peu de temps nous sépare de la célébration, en septembre 2024, d'un demi-siècle d'existence de recherches académiques consacrées à l'acquisition du roumain comme langue étrangère (ARLE) par des locuteurs non natifs. Favorisée par la fondation, dans les universités roumaines, des premiers départements de langue roumaine (dorénavant LR) pour les étudiants étrangers,

l'évolution constante de ces recherches nous oblige aujourd'hui non seulement à tracer un bilan, mais aussi à porter un regard sur la manière dont l'image du locuteur non natif du roumain s'est progressivement modifiée tant dans l'imaginaire des enseignants que dans celui de la communauté autochtone.

Il nous semble que, malgré les nombreuses avancées théoriques proposées par des disciplines proches de la didactique des langues (DL) comme, par exemple, la philosophie du langage, la psycholinguistique, la sociolinguistique, l'anthropologie ou l'ethnographie linguistique, le profil du locuteur non natif du roumain reste encore largement ignoré. Une raison majeure de la pauvreté (voire du flou) de ses traits est la façon dont on ne cesse de s'imaginer le locuteur étranger : plus d'une fois, une attitude constructive envers ce dernier est remplacée par une attitude destructive marquée par l'empreinte des trois premières décennies d'enseignement universitaire du *roumain comme langue étrangère* (RLE) dans le cadre du *Programme préparatoire de langue roumaine pour les étudiants étrangers* (PP).

Plus précisément, jusque dans les années 2000 correspondant à l'entrée sur la scène universitaire des étudiants internationaux² investis d'un « capital de mobilité » privilégié (Murphy-Lejeune 2000, 16), la tendance générale était de considérer les étudiants étrangers du PP de façon restrictive et même négative, en raison de leur LR « défectueuse ». En usant d'un concept avancé par Anquetil (2006, 63), on pourrait dire que le « capital culturel » de ces étudiants était difficilement comparable à celui dont les étudiants internationaux bénéficient de nos jours, ceux derniers étant pleinement reconnus comme des agents essentiels des échanges culturels entre les différentes universités du monde entier³.

Le contexte historique particulier dans lequel l'image de l'étudiant étranger s'est forgée dans l'espace mental roumain avant la Révolution de décembre 1989 constitue la raison principale pour laquelle cet étudiant reste un grand inconnu encore de nos jours. D'après les témoignages oraux de plusieurs collègues qui ont travaillé pendant le régime communiste au sein du Département de langue, culture et civilisation roumaines de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université Babeş-Bolyai, tout contact humain avec les étudiants étrangers du PP en dehors de la salle de cours de RLE était strictement interdit (Platon 2021, 42). Même si ceux-ci se promenaient à leur aise dans les rues des grandes villes de Roumanie, suivaient des cours dans les salles des universités roumaines et étaient logés dans les mêmes campus universitaires que les

² Dans le milieu roumain, on se réfère à eux par le biais d'un syntagme générique, celui d'« étudiants Erasmus ».

³ Pour plus de détails concernant cet aspect, voir Platon 2019a.

étudiants roumains, on les regardait avec une certaine réserve et même avec méfiance, tout en les tenant à distance pour ne pas éveiller les soupçons des autorités. Dans le contexte de telles relations déficitaires, la grille interprétative dominante que l'on projetait sur la figure exotique de l'étudiant étranger restait sa langue roumaine « défectueuse ». Plus d'une fois, le manque de correction de son interlangue (IL) orale ou écrite suscitait des grimaces de désapprobation de la part non seulement des gens ordinaires, mais même des enseignants de RLE qui étaient, dans leur grande majorité, des locuteurs natifs. C'est la même attitude méprisante à l'égard de l'IL du locuteur étranger de LR qui est responsable pour le manque d'intérêt général pour le profil psychologique et socioculturel de celui-ci.

Un tel phénomène n'est pas entièrement spécifique au contexte roumain. Bien au contraire, dans la DL, on nous montre que la valorisation négative du locuteur non natif n'est pas liée à un certain espace géoculturel, mais qu'elle découle de la nature spécifique de *l'interaction exolingue*, définie par une « asymétrie entre les répertoires ou les compétences des participants » (Porquier 2003, 51), issue de niveaux différents de maîtrise de la langue. Ainsi, l'irritation, l'intransigeance, l'impatience ou même un léger mépris à l'égard du locuteur étranger semblent définir des attitudes et des comportements typiques relativement communs dans la communication exolingue. Qui plus est, lorsque l'un des interlocuteurs est un locuteur natif, il se montre encore moins indulgent face aux erreurs de celui qui, à ses yeux, malmène sa langue maternelle (L1) à travers une prononciation approximative, des fautes d'accord ou des difficultés à communiquer, notamment un rythme de parole plus lent. Dans ce cas, l'attentat contre la langue maternelle prend des dimensions existentielles particulièrement dramatiques, car il vise le sentiment d'*appartenance* même, c'est-à-dire le paramètre essentiel de la L1 qui l'élève au statut de repère fondamental pour l'identité socioculturelle (Cuq, Gruca 2017, 84).

Le degré d'intolérance face aux fautes des apprenants reste plutôt élevé même dans le cas des enseignants de RLE. Dans leur cas, le choix d'épurer le plus tôt possible l'interlangue des apprenants de tout élément étranger est ressenti comme une responsabilité individuelle face à la nécessité d'accorder au mieux la LR parlée par les étrangers à celle véhiculée par les natifs. En raison de cette préoccupation majeure pour la pureté de la langue, la relation entre l'enseignant et l'apprenant étranger s'est longtemps dirigée dans une direction unique, tout en se limitant à un transfert d'informations mobilisant, d'un côté, celui censé disposer de compétences linguistiques supérieures en roumain et, de l'autre, celui censé être aligné à tout prix au comportement linguistique et culturel spécifique au locuteur autochtone.

Pour éviter les affirmations purement subjectives, il convient de mentionner que, pendant les quatre premières décennies de recherches sur le RLE, les chercheurs se sont principalement attachés à décrire le système de la LR du point de vue du locuteur non natif, dans le but d'identifier les meilleures stratégies pour développer sa compétence grammaticale. Un rapide examen de la bibliographie consacrée aux études roumaines parues pendant les années 1974-2012 et indexées dans la *Bibliografia limbii române ca limbă străină* [Bibliographie de la langue roumaine comme langue étrangère] (Moldovan 2012) le confirme amplement. Fidèle à une tradition structuraliste solidement ancrée – et ce, même à une époque où l'approche communicative en DL se trouvait en plein essor (1970-1990) –, la Bibliographie du RLE met en évidence l'accent mis sur la compétence linguistique, en particulier sur la grammaire et le vocabulaire, au détriment des activités de communication orale et écrite⁴. Cette distribution déséquilibrée des sujets de recherche nous semble symptomatique pour la mentalité des premières décennies de recherche scientifique dans le domaine du RLE. Parmi les raisons de cet état de fait il faut souligner le peu d'expérience initiale des enseignants commençant à enseigner la LR comme langue étrangère en 1974, en Roumanie, de même que l'isolement scientifique qui touchait les enseignants censés être à la fois des théoriciens et des praticiens. De manière naturelle, ils ont compris l'importance de s'écarter des modèles linguistiques anciens ciblant de manière exclusive les locuteurs natifs pour chercher de nouvelles approches et de nouveaux principes d'enseignement des structures de la LR qui soient adaptés aux besoins et aux difficultés propres des locuteurs non natifs.

Dans les recherches consacrées au RLE, il est plutôt rare de tomber sur une étude plus ancienne exposant un intérêt manifeste pour des thèmes de recherche qui mettent en évidence des facettes différentes du profil du locuteur non natif (comme son comportement interculturel⁵, sa dimension psycho- ou

⁴ Pendant la période mentionnée, la compétence la moins abordée par les études théoriques est celle de la compréhension orale. Les auteurs des supports didactiques ne commencent à la prendre réellement en considération que vers 2006 (Vasilescu *et alii* 2006 ; Medrea *et alii* 2008 ; Platon *et alii* 2009). Par conséquent, son cadre théorique s'est élaboré même plus tard, dans le contexte de la publication d'une série d'ouvrages consacrés au processus d'enseignement-apprentissage du roumain comme langue non maternelle (RLNM), dont nous souhaitons évoquer le premier volume à titre d'exemple (Platon *et alii* 2011). Pour appuyer ces affirmations, mentionnons aussi que seules quatre études sur environ 400 articles indexés dans le répertoire bibliographique susmentionné abordent la compétence d'expression orale, tandis que celle de l'expression écrite ne fait l'objet que d'un seul article.

⁵ Mentionnons, entre autres, Nora Mărcean, Anca Ursa, « Imersiune socioculturală și strategii didactice interculturale în învățarea limbii române de către studenții francezi », in *Predarea, receptarea și evaluarea limbii române ca limbă străină. Dimensiune a interculturalității*, Ploiești, Editura Universității Petrol și Gaze din Ploiești, p. 17-35 ; Anca Ursa, « Metode, strategii și reprezentări identitare în învățarea limbii române de către studenții francezi din România »,

sociolinguistique⁶ etc.), autres que celles visées par la dimension strictement linguistique de ses productions orales et écrites. Cet intérêt est de date plus récente. C'est une raison de plus pour tenter, comme nous souhaitons le faire dans la présente étude, de sensibiliser les jeunes chercheurs à la possibilité de mener des enquêtes dans des aires de recherche qui ne visent pas exclusivement la question du « comment enseigner la LR aux étrangers ? ». De notre point de vue, la problématique de la représentation de la LR comme langue cible, telle que le locuteur non natif la façonne pour soi-même, de même que son attitude envers celle-ci et, implicitement, envers les locuteurs natifs qui la mobilisent constituent des aspects tout aussi essentiels visant à construire un profil du locuteur non natif plus complexe et à multiples facettes. Or, envisagée à l'aune de ce profil, c'est notre propre identité qui reçoit de nouvelles dimensions.

2. Contexte et objectifs de la recherche. L'importance des représentations de la langue cible dans la didactique des langues

Dans notre préambule assez étendu, nous avons insisté sur le fait que dans le champ des recherches académiques roumaines sur le RLE se faisait entendre le plus souvent la voix de l'expert linguiste (généralement, un locuteur natif) particulièrement attaché à décrire le profil spécifique de la LR parlée par les étrangers et, de manière implicite, les « difficultés »⁷ concernant l'acquisition de tel ou tel phénomène grammatical. La voix de l'étudiant étranger impliqué dans le processus d'ALR était, quant à elle, plus ou moins inaudible, ce qui vient appuyer la théorie selon laquelle, tout au long du processus d'acquisition d'une langue étrangère, l'apprenant se trouve « dans une relation inégale de compétence avec l'expert », étant « privé de tout droit interprétatif, alors que l'expert, lui, se voit crédité d'une légitimité sans partage » (Zarate 1993, 42).

in *Qvaestiones Romanicae*, n°5, *Lucrările Colocviului Internațional Comunicare și Cultură în Romania Europeană*, « Jozsef Attila » Tudományi Egyetem, Kiado Szeged & Editura Universității de Vest din Timișoara, 2017, p. 335-345 ; Nora-Sabina Neamț, « Acompaniamentul intercultural, metoda NovaTris și RLS sau cum să navighezi pe marea dinamicilor interculturale ». In *Discurs polifonic în Româna ca limbă străină (RLS)*, (dir.) Elena Platon, Cristina Bocoș, Diana Roman, Lavinia Vasiu, Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, p. 249-282.

⁶ Il convient de mentionner ici l'ouvrage de Maria-Magdalena Simina-Suciu, *Biografia lingvistică. Abordare generică și culturală*, paru aux éditions Presa Universitară Clujeană en 2014. L'ouvrage porte à l'attention des spécialistes le premier corpus de biographies linguistiques dans lequel on analyse les expériences des apprenants étrangers du roumain.

⁷ Nous reprenons ici un concept-clé qui revient plus d'une fois dans de nombreuses études publiées pendant les trois premières décennies d'enseignement du RLE.

Malgré sa position faible dans l'espace hiérarchisé du cours de langue, l'apprenant doit être encouragé à verbaliser ses *représentations* de la langue-cible. Ce n'est qu'au niveau discursif que celles-ci peuvent être repérées et, implicitement, étudiées. Constituant « une micro-théorie, destinée à interpréter dans un délai rapide un ensemble indéfini de phénomènes perçus comme apparentés », les représentations n'ont d'existence que « dans et par un discours » (Moore, Py 2008, 276). C'est dans le cadre du discours qu'elles sont élaborées, qu'elles se modifient et se transmettent d'un sujet à un autre.

C'est dans un tel contexte que nous devons comprendre l'intérêt croissant porté par les chercheurs contemporains aux *représentations* que les locuteurs non natifs se font de la langue cible. Du point de vue théorique, la notion est redevable, d'une part, au concept de *représentations collectives* introduit en sociologie par É. Durkheim et, d'autre part, à la notion de *représentation sociale* théorisée par S. Moscovici dans le champ de la psychologie sociale. Quant à la didactique étrangère des langues-cultures, la notion de *représentation* (privilégiée par rapport à celle d'image, selon Plathner (2011, 33)) a connu un succès significatif. Dans sa qualité de « *notion transversale* que l'on retrouve aussi dans plusieurs domaines au sein des sciences de l'homme et de la société et qui a acquis, aussi bien en sociolinguistique qu'en didactique des langues-cultures, une position théorique de premier plan » (Cuq 2003, 214), elle s'est trouvée au centre des intérêts de nombreux chercheurs français (Joudelet 1989 ; Canut 2000 ; Moore 2001 ; Castelotti *et alii* 2001 ; Castelotti 2002, 2020, etc.). *Le Dictionnaire de didactique du français* recense, quant à lui, de nombreuses études consacrées aux représentations que les apprenants, les parents, les enseignants ou divers décideurs ont de la langue française, de même qu'à la manière dont de telles représentations arrivent à mettre leur empreinte sur l'enseignement du FLE, les politiques linguistiques et éducatives ou la démarche interculturelle promue par les approches communicatives (Cuq 2003, 215-216).

L'imaginaire linguistique dans le cas du FLE a fait l'objet de plusieurs travaux focalisant, entre autres, sur un contexte mexicain (Torres Castillo 2000), italien (Galazzi 2010), suédois (Plathner 2011) ou tunisien (Hmissi 2021), tandis que dans le domaine de l'acquisition des langues de spécialité, on pourrait mentionner l'étude de Lacourarie (2008) consacrée à l'IML. Dans les milieux anglo-saxon et américain, le concept qui s'est imposé est celui de *mythes sur la langue* ou de *mythes linguistiques*, comme nous pouvons le voir à partir des travaux de Horwitz (1985), Bauer et Trudgill (1998) ou Brown et Larson-Hall (2012). Le même concept apparaît aussi dans une étude très récente portant sur les mythes, tout comme les convictions et les croyances relatives à l'apprentissage du roumain (Mîrzea Vasile 2024).

Malgré une quantité énorme et une diversité frappante d'études étrangères consacrées à ce sujet, notre choix d'examiner les représentations de la LR dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs non natifs ne s'enracine pas dans la volonté d'inscrire à tout prix la didactique du RLE dans ce courant didactique. Au contraire, dans le contexte d'une langue de circulation restreinte telle que le roumain, une étude centrée sur les représentations d'un nombre relativement modeste de locuteurs étrangers nous a d'abord semblé moins pertinente.

Notre attention portée à ce sujet découle d'un intérêt personnel pour la façon dont les étrangers décodent la culture roumaine comme une culture étrangère au cours du processus d'acquisition du roumain. Dans un premier temps, nous avons conçu un questionnaire permettant d'identifier des connaissances d'ordre culturel concernant le territoire roumain, de même que des représentations de la Roumanie et de ses habitants.

Dans un deuxième temps, par pure curiosité professionnelle, nous avons étoffé le questionnaire initial par des questions visant la compétence culturelle de nos étudiants. Dans ce but, trois consignes visaient spécifiquement des représentations basiques de la LR. Nous avons demandé aux étudiants : 1. de mentionner les 5 premiers mots *roumains* qui leur venaient spontanément à l'esprit en roumain (en raison de leur niveau plutôt élémentaire en roumain, certains étudiants ont écrit 5 mots *sur* la langue roumaine, ce qui s'est avéré particulièrement fructueux pour notre expérience) ; 2. de formuler 5 énoncés dans lesquels ils devaient donner leur avis sur la LR ; 3. de raconter une expérience liée à l'apprentissage de la LR. En parcourant ensuite les réponses ainsi obtenues, nous avons constaté que l'exercice de distanciation par rapport à la LR auquel nous avons invité les locuteurs non natifs dans le but de porter des jugements sur celle-ci, les avaient amenés à produire un véritable discours méta-épilinguistique⁸ (réalisé presque entièrement en roumain) mettant au jour des représentations qu'il convenait d'examiner de plus près.

Même si, du point de vue formel, ces représentations laissent *des traces* significatives au niveau discursif y compris, en étant « des objets de discours qui se construisent dans l'interaction, grâce au langage et à la médiation d'autrui, observables au moyen de traces discursives » (Castelotti et alii 2001, 103), vu le cadre restreint de cette étude, nous nous proposons de nous focaliser dans ce qui suit sur une analyse quantitative du contenu de ces représentations qui peuvent être étudiées « tout aussi bien pour elles-mêmes » (Castelotti et alii 2001, 103).

⁸ Par *discours épilinguistique* nous entendons un type de discours sur la langue qui est spécifique aux locuteurs non spécialistes du domaine des descriptions ou des analyses linguistiques. Dans une étape ultérieure, en élargissant le cercle des répondants pour y inclure également quelques professeurs étrangers de RLE (des locuteurs non natifs eux aussi), nous avons pu parler dans leur cas d'un *discours métalinguistique*.

Dans le but d'identifier une méthode efficace pour organiser ces contenus, nous nous sommes d'abord arrêtés sur les cinq critères définis en 1997 par L. Dabène. Pour le chercheur, l'image d'une langue est déterminée par cinq critères majeurs d'appréciation. Selon le critère *économique*, la valorisation positive d'une langue donnée dépend de sa capacité d'offrir un emploi ou un pouvoir économique aux locuteurs. Le critère *social* vise le statut social des locuteurs de la langue concernée : ainsi, une certaine langue pourrait ou non offrir à ses locuteurs des possibilités d'ascension sociale ou un accès privilégié à certains groupes socioprofessionnels. Le critère *culturel* concerne le prestige du patrimoine culturel associé à un certain espace linguistique. Le quatrième critère est le critère *historique* et il découle de la valeur éducative attachée à l'apprentissage de la langue donnée ; cette valeur est fondée sur sa richesse morphosyntaxique, comme dans le cas du latin, par exemple. Enfin, le cinquième et dernier critère est celui *affectif* et il concerne les stéréotypes, les préjugés et les expériences favorables ou défavorables à l'égard de la langue en question.

Ces seuls cinq critères (auxquels nous aurions pu ajouter une perspective purement intuitive découlant de notre expérience de trois décennies en tant que professeure de RLE) nous auraient permis de dégager à partir du corpus ainsi obtenu une série de conclusions pertinentes, et ce, même dans l'absence d'une analyse des données empiriques. Ainsi, nous aurions pu formuler une observation générale concernant le cadre actuel de l'apprentissage du roumain : pour le moment, on apprend le roumain surtout dans des buts académiques (ou professionnels) – un critère qu'on peut aisément ranger du côté du critère économique susmentionné. Il n'en reste pas moins que, depuis quelques années, dans le contexte d'une migration étrangère toujours plus accrue, le critère économique et celui social commencent à s'imposer. En ce qui concerne le critère historique, il est de notoriété que le roumain a attiré l'attention de nombreux romanistes étrangers, surtout intéressés de comparer le profil de la LR à celui d'autres langues issues de la famille des langues romanes. Relativement au critère affectif, nous disposons de plusieurs témoignages d'anciens étudiants qui affirment avoir entamé l'apprentissage du roumain pour des raisons personnelles et émotionnelles : qu'il se soit agi d'un coup de foudre pour les montagnes de Roumanie, d'un émoi suscité par les poèmes de Mihai Eminescu ou les écrits de Mircea Eliade, d'une rencontre marquante avec une Roumaine charmante, ou encore d'un goût nouvellement acquis pour la cuisine roumaine. Mise à part la dimension anecdotique mais certainement authentique de ces expériences, nous nous sommes proposé de poursuivre la démarche expérimentale et de vérifier dans quelle mesure l'analyse systématique d'une base de données empiriques plus élargie pourrait appuyer et valider nos efforts réflexifs.

3. Le cadre théorique. L'imaginaire linguistique (IML)

Dans cette troisième partie, nous nous proposons d'examiner le cadre théorique qui sous-tend notre démarche, en centrant notre attention sur le concept d'imaginaire linguistique (IML). Élaboré au croisement de la linguistique, de la sociolinguistique et de l'anthropologie du langage, ce concept met en lumière les représentations subjectives qu'un locuteur construit à propos de la langue qu'il utilise ou aspire à maîtriser. Loin d'être de simples jugements personnels, ces représentations traduisent une relation complexe à la langue, façonnée par des expériences individuelles, des contextes sociaux et des héritages culturels. C'est à travers cette grille de lecture que nous analyserons les discours recueillis auprès des locuteurs non natifs du roumain, en espérant mettre au jour les normes, métaphores et structures imaginatives qui animent leur rapport à cette langue.

3.1. La perspective métalinguistique sur l'IML. Une analyse des représentations (*i. e.*, de leurs contenus) de la langue roumaine telles qu'elles sont façonnées par le locuteur non natif nous oblige dans un premier temps à revenir à la théorie de l'imaginaire linguistique (IML) lancée dans le débat académique français par Houdebine-Gravaud dans les années 1970. Dans une étude portant sur l'IML et publiée en 2019 (Platon 2019b), nous qualifions l'approche adoptée par la promotrice de la théorie de l'IML de *métalinguistique*, dans le contexte où celle-ci entendait par l'IML l'ensemble des évaluations portées par un locuteur donné sur sa langue ou sur celle de l'Autre. En s'appuyant sur des observations personnelles en marge des difficultés ou de l'embarras éprouvé par les locuteurs lorsqu'il s'agissait pour eux de définir leur rapport à la langue maternelle, des observations auxquelles venaient s'ajouter la théorie saussurienne du rapport langue-parole, les idées lacaniennes autour du discours, les études de Labov sur les variations de nature sociolinguistique ou, en particulier, les travaux de Martinet sur la dynamique synchronique de la langue, Houdebine-Gravaud définissait l'IML à travers les « représentations subjectives » des locuteurs *à l'égard de* la langue. Ce faisant, elle déplaçait l'accent de la description des faits de langue au sujet parlant, respectivement à la relation que celui-ci entretient avec sa langue maternelle ou la langue de la communauté à laquelle il aspire adhérer (Houdebine-Gravaud 2002, 10).

Ce déplacement de perspective, tel que le propose Houdebine-Gravaud, met en lumière la nécessité d'une « *mise à distance* » par rapport à la langue concernée, tout comme sur celle de la production d'un méta- ou épi-discours dans le but d'une mise au jour du rapport reliant chaque locuteur à une langue donnée. On a relégué cette capacité de distanciation de soi à une compétence

métalinguistique universelle d'analyser notre rapport à la langue ; peu importe si un sujet parlant avait ou non suivi une formation spécifique préalable, cette compétence viserait tout un chacun, en s'appuyant sur une sorte de dispositif cognitif généralement humain. Dans l'esprit de ces convictions, l'objet d'étude de l'IML est donc la façon dont le sujet parlant se positionne vis-à-vis de sa langue ou, dans notre cas, de la langue d'autrui, tout comme la manière dont ses opinions sur la langue influent sur ses productions linguistiques (par exemple, comment elles parviennent à modifier sa prononciation ou à le conduire à un surcontrôle de la qualité de ses productions verbales).

À la recherche de balises fiables pour cadrer le nouveau champ de la dynamique linguistique, Houdebine-Gravaud conçoit en 1982 un *tableau normatif* en s'appuyant sur le modèle plus ancien d'A. Rey. La linguiste reprend le modèle de Rey datant de 1972 mais n'en garde plus que deux types de *normes*. D'un côté, nous avons les *normes objectives*, établies sur une analyse des productions verbales des locuteurs et, ainsi, du comportement linguistique de ceux-ci. D'autre côté, nous avons les *normes subjectives*, qui mettent au jour des opinions, des attitudes et des jugements de valeur sur la langue, autrement dit des sentiments linguistiques, des représentations sociales ou même des idéologies diverses.

C'est sur ce dernier type que nous souhaitons désormais porter notre attention, étant donné que, dans une première étape, seules ces *normes subjectives* ont été reliées à l'IML proprement dit⁹. Elles correspondaient plutôt à un ensemble de normes, composé à partir des sous-ensembles suivants : les *normes prescriptives*, suivant les références à une langue idéale telle qu'elle serait institutionnalisée par les grammaires, les dictionnaires ou d'autres discours relevant d'une autorité académique, et visant ce qui est jugé correct ou incorrect du point de vue normatif ; les *normes fictives*, ciblant un modèle idéal de la langue qui ne s'appuie pas sur le discours académique mais relève des jugements subjectifs du locuteur portant sur la langue utilisée (ces jugements peuvent être d'ordre esthétique, affectif ou historique) ; des *normes évaluatives*, concernant l'appréciation de la qualité et de la fréquence d'un comportement linguistique sans qu'on formule des jugements de valeur¹⁰ et, enfin des *normes*

⁹ Dans un premier temps, Houdebine-Gravaud n'avait pas inclus les normes objectives dans son modèle de l'IML. Au cours du temps, sa taxonomie initiale a pourtant subi des ajustements et même des extensions, au point où à l'IML des locuteurs « naïfs », non spécialistes, l'auteure a ajouté aussi l'imaginaire des descriptions linguistiques, cernant également la manière dont les locuteurs assimilent le discours institutionnel. Ainsi, de nos jours, on ne définit plus l'IML de manière exclusive à travers des normes subjectives, mais aussi à travers de telles normes objectives.

¹⁰ En revenant plus tard sur la version initiale de sa typologie, l'auteure en a écarté les normes évaluatives, en considérant que tant les normes prescriptives que celles fictives ou communicationnelles sont en fait évaluatives (auto- ou allo-évaluatives), par leur nature même (cf. Houdebine-Gravaud 2013, 13).

communicationnelles (ajoutées plus tard à la typologie initiale) centrées sur la relation du locuteur à la norme et, en particulier, sur la manière dont l'interlocuteur et la situation de communication peuvent entraîner des écarts éventuels par rapport à la norme ou certaines modifications de celle-ci.

Cette typologie initiale a été jugée comme trop restrictive, ce qui a déterminé certains spécialistes d'y apporter des ajustements. C'est le cas, entre autres, de Brunet-Hunault (1996) qui propose d'ajouter deux sous-catégories : les *normes identificatoires*, concernant l'image que les autres se font de nous compte tenu de la langue que nous parlons, et les *normes identitaires*, se rapportant à l'image imposée par le groupe auquel le locuteur s'identifie. Malgré la grande rigueur méthodologique que cette typologie normative semble imposer, sa faiblesse consiste précisément dans le concept-clé privilégié, à savoir celui de *norme*. Ainsi, certains auteurs (comme Remysen, 2011) le rejettent sous prétexte qu'il s'agirait d'un terme « polysémique », « flou » et, par voie de conséquence, totalement inapproprié dans le contexte donné. De son côté, Remysen remplace le concept de norme par celui de *types d'arguments*, qui renvoient aux aspects invoqués par un locuteur donné lorsqu'il entend s'exprimer sur son rapport à la langue (Remysen 2011, 62). D'autres spécialistes (Jacquet 2015) préfèrent, quant à eux, recourir à des syntagmes tels « *types de commentaires* » en marge de la langue utilisée. En ce qui nous concerne, nous considérons que les dernières propositions terminologiques présentent l'avantage de souligner plus nettement qu'il s'agit d'un discours des locuteurs *sur* la langue, discours que nous plaçons du côté de l'IML.

Au-delà de toute option terminologique, il est essentiel de remarquer que tous les spécialistes que nous venons de mentionner ont insisté sur la nécessité d'une prise de distance *méta-épilinguistique* par le locuteur afin qu'il puisse porter des jugements sur sa langue. Dans le débat roumain consacré à cette problématique, la même idée est reprise par M. Ardeleanu pour qui l'IML est sans doute « une re-présentation, celle de la langue, car elle s'accorde à la langue en se centrant sur elle » (Ardeleanu 2017, 10). En s'appuyant sur les travaux de P. Charaudeau portant sur l'analyse du discours et sur le concept-pivot d'*imaginaires*¹¹, l'auteure distingue entre les *imaginaires discursifs*, repérables au niveau des énoncés linguistiques produits sous diverses formes, mais qu'on pourrait regrouper du point de vue sémantique, et les *imaginaires sociodiscursifs* qui, véhiculés dans un groupe social donné, s'érigent en normes référentielles pour les membres du groupe. Cette distinction permet à l'auteure non seulement de nuancer, mais aussi de minimiser la forte subjectivité qu'on

¹¹ On prête ici aux *imaginaires* un sens très large, celui de « représentations de la réalité » à travers lesquelles « on reconstruit le réel au niveau de l'univers de significations » (Ardeleanu 2017, 10).

a longtemps reprochée à la théorie de l'IML, résultant aussi d'une affirmation célèbre de la promotrice de l'IML : « Chaque locuteur parle sa propre langue ».

En effet, sous l'influence de ses lectures sur l'imaginaire social théorisé par Castoriadis, Houdebine-Gravaud, en centrant l'attention sur le sujet parlant, s'est rendu compte que l'imaginaire de la langue ne saurait se construire de manière isolée mais, par contre, qu'il réclame pour sa construction un ancrage du sujet dans une certaine communauté culturelle et la prise en considération de sa transmission historique et sociale. Les représentations subjectives de la langue prennent inévitablement une dimension sociale aussi (Houdebine-Gravaud 2002, 10), leur modélisation subissant des modifications au contact avec les descriptions sociolinguistiques, de plus en plus étendues et toujours plus présentes dans le débat académique. La chercheuse associe ainsi le versant subjectif aux *imaginaires*, tandis que *le versant social* est mis en rapport avec la construction des idéologies. Ce geste a mené à l'apparition d'un nouveau concept, celui d'*imaginaire culturel* (désormais IMC) permettant de creuser en profondeur les facteurs responsables pour la variété et la dynamique des représentations subjectives des locuteurs, dont les causes sont extrêmement diversifiées (historiques, socioculturelles, idéologiques etc.) (Houdebine-Gravaud 2013, 17). Ainsi, à réfléchir sur les origines des métaphores telles que *beauté*, *saveur* ou *douceur de la langue*, plutôt communes dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs roumains natifs, il convient de prendre en considération aussi l'IMC, les critères strictement linguistiques s'avérant insuffisants dans ce cas.

En visant « une somme d'aspects » essentiels « touchant à l'existence humaine (l'histoire, le film, les arts, l'environnement, la presse) » (Ardeleanu 2013, 8), l'IMC a suscité l'intérêt aussi des chercheurs roumains. Si l'on apprécie qu'il se laisse « attraper » par le biais de l'IML (Ardeleanu 2014, 74), on ne précise pourtant pas clairement si ces représentations sont de nature plus généralement culturelle ou si elles sont des représentations de la langue.

3.2. La perspective cognitiviste. En plus de l'acception métalinguistique de l'IML, nous prendrons également en compte une autre facette de l'IML, associée au déchiffrement des mécanismes cognitifs sous-jacents à la formation des représentations de la langue chez les locuteurs. Cette perspective est liée à la théorie des concepts métaphoriques, formulée en linguistique cognitive par Lakoff et Johnson, qui ont démontré que le phénomène de métaphorisation constitue un processus cognitif fondamental, qui ne se limite pas à la pensée poétique, mais qui est à la base de la pensée en général. Grâce à ce processus, l'homme parvient à définir des concepts plus abstraits ou plus confus à travers d'autres concepts directement liés à ses expériences concrètes (Lakoff, Johnson 1985, 31). Autrement dit, dans un sens très large, « l'essence d'une métaphore

est qu'elle permet de comprendre quelque chose (et d'en faire l'expérience) en termes de quelque chose d'autre. » (Lakoff, Johnson 1985, 15). Par exemple, nous pouvons parler d'un concept abstrait, comme celui d'*idée*, en termes de : nutrition (il y a des syntagmes comme : *idées mélangées, ruminer une idée*), personnes (*être le père d'une idée*), plantes (*les idées ont germé dans notre esprit*), mécanismes (*cette idée ne fonctionne pas*), etc.

En nous appuyant sur cette définition élémentaire des concepts métaphoriques dans la vie quotidienne¹², nous nous proposons d'identifier, dans notre corpus, les schémas imaginatifs qui sous-tendent certaines des métaphores par lesquelles la LR est représentée dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs non natifs.

4. La collecte des données empiriques

Comme mentionné au point deux de cet article, le projet initial visait à obtenir des informations sur la compétence culturelle des étudiants étrangers de *l'Année préparatoire* (AP), qui, au deuxième semestre, suivent un cours intitulé *Identité culturelle roumaine*. Considérant la langue comme un véritable dépositaire culturel et en nous appuyant sur l'observation de G. Zarate (1987, 28), selon laquelle nous ne pouvons parler que d'une culture à laquelle nous nous sommes rapprochés principalement par la langue, nous avons décidé d'inclure également la LR comme objet pertinent pour l'imaginaire linguistique des locuteurs non natifs.

Étant donné que le nombre de locuteurs étrangers de LR est relativement faible, nous avons imaginé que nous ne réussirions pas à collecter plus de 50 à 60 réponses à notre questionnaire, que nous avons initialement administré exclusivement dans nos salles de cours, sous la supervision des enseignants. Afin d'augmenter la taille du corpus et de diversifier le profil du public cible, nous avons ensuite diffusé le questionnaire en ligne. Avec le soutien d'autres universités en Roumanie (Université de Bucarest, Université Lucian Blaga de Sibiu, Université Ovidius de Constanța, etc.), ainsi que d'anciens étudiants de l'AP ou de collègues enseignant le RLS à l'étranger, nous avons réussi, entre avril et juin 2024, à mobiliser 235 personnes issues de plus de 18 pays pour répondre au questionnaire. La répartition des participants est la suivante : Ukraine, 8,1 % ; Espagne et Turkménistan, 6,4 % ; France, 4,3 % ; Chine, 5,1 % ; Grèce, 2,6 % ; Maroc, République tchèque, Syrie et Turquie, 2,1 % ; Bulgarie, Allemagne, Iran et Pologne, 1,7 % ; Vietnam et Myanmar, 1,3 % ; Azerbaïdjan,

¹² Pour une typologie des métaphores, voir Lakoff, Johnson 1985.

0,9 % ; Italie, 0,4 %. En plus de ces pays, des personnes isolées provenant de Serbie, Suisse, Royaume-Uni, Congo, Cuba, etc., ont également répondu, mais en raison de leur faible pourcentage, elles n'ont pas été incluses dans les graphiques générés automatiquement. L'âge des répondants varie entre 14 et 75 ans, avec 53 % déclarant être de sexe féminin, 44,2 % de sexe masculin, et 2,6 % ayant choisi de ne pas déclarer leur genre.

5. Analyse et interprétation des réponses

Face à des réponses libres (rappelons qu'il s'agissait d'énumérer 5 mots en LR, de formuler 5 énoncés sur la LR ou de raconter une expérience liée à l'apprentissage de la LR), il n'a pas été facile d'identifier des directions d'analyse pertinentes permettant une classification ferme et unifiée ou une distribution équilibrée des réponses, en fonction des catégories que nous avons établies. La grande diversité des réponses, ainsi que leur caractère subjectif et non contrôlé, ont fait que l'analyse a été, en premier lieu, de nature qualitative, les indications quantitatives venant plutôt confirmer ou infirmer les hypothèses formulées auparavant. D'un autre côté, nous considérons que c'est précisément la grande liberté accordée aux sujets qui a conféré un certain charme à leurs réponses et, par conséquent, un degré plus élevé d'authenticité et d'originalité. Nous présentons ci-dessous les schémas métaphoriques les plus fréquemment enregistrés, que nous tenterons d'interpréter également à la lumière du profil des locuteurs, tel qu'il ressort des données biographiques incluses dans le questionnaire.

5.1. La LR est musicale. Le choix de placer la métaphore de la LR comme musique au début de cette classification n'est pas fortuit. Bien qu'elle ne soit pas la plus récurrente, nous l'avons choisie de la mettre en tête de la liste, car la musique est un langage universel, non affecté par la malédiction de Babel, c'est-à-dire par l'ignorance de la sémantique des mots. Elle a ainsi une valeur éminente : « elle s'adresse en nous à ce qui est universel, et transcende par-là l'obstacle de Babel. Si la musique parle, elle parle la seule langue universelle qui soit – mis à part les mathématiques –, celle du sentiment, du vécu, en un mot de l'existence humaine. » (Philonenko 2007, 211). En DL, il est bien connu que les étrangers perçoivent différemment les sonorités d'une langue par rapport aux natifs, précisément parce que, quel que soit leur niveau de langue, ils gardent vivant le souvenir de la musique perçue aux premiers stades de l'acquisition, lorsqu'ils ne se concentraient pas sur la sémantique, un processus difficile à réaliser pour les natifs. Nous retenons, à cet égard, l'opinion d'autres spécialistes :

« Cette musique propre de la langue est souvent mieux perçue par les étrangers. Ainsi par exemple, dès l'époque de Lully les italiens parlaient de l'« urlo francese », c'est-à-dire la manière de hurler : il y avait dans le français de l'époque un manque d'esthétique » (Le Roux 2007, 53). Cette opinion se confirme également dans le cas de la LR, où, sur un total de 235 répondants, 18 font appel au registre sonore, plus précisément au registre musical, comme domaine-source pour esquisser l'image de la LR, invoquant des éléments tels que la ligne mélodique, l'harmonie ou le rythme. Comme dans la musique, la majorité des répondants font également appel, dans leur description, aux domaines affectif et esthétique, invoquant l'impression laissée sur eux par la sonorité agréable de la LR, qui, pour certains d'entre eux, a constitué la principale motivation dans l'apprentissage de la LR, comme on le verra plus loin.

La LR sonne bien. Nous retenons quelques réponses pertinentes concernant la sonorité agréable de la LR, signalée par des locuteurs de tous les niveaux de compétence : « La LR sonne bien. »¹³ (R3/France/F/23/B1)¹⁴ ; R152/Allemagne/M/24/A1+ ; R208/Ukraine/M/19/A2) ; « C'est une belle langue, agréable à entendre. » (R51/Suisse/M/25/A1+) ; « Elle sonne très bien. » (R8/Cuba/F/19/B1) / (R197/Azerbaïdjan/M/26/B1) ; « Langue musicale. » (R154/Brésil/44/M/C2) ; « La LR est musicale. » (R189/Sénégal/M/30/A2+) ; « La LR est mélodieuse. » (R124/Ukraine/F/19/B1) ; « La LR est plus mélodieuse que beaucoup de langues dans le monde. » (R125/Iran/M/25/B1) ; « J'aime beaucoup le son de la langue, elle est mélodique et belle. » (R37/Israël/F/41/ø). « J'aime le son de la langue. Elle est un peu similaire à l'italien. » (R44/Pays-Bas/M/29/B1) ; « Mélodique... » (un mot de la liste des 5 demandés) (R37/Israël/F/41/non précisé/ø). « Elle a une sonorité particulière, harmonieuse. » (R184/ Espagne/M/62/C2).

Les locuteurs de langues slaves font également appel au registre musical : « J'ai utilisé une application pour apprendre la LR avant de commencer mes études à l'université, j'ai beaucoup aimé la façon dont les mots sonnaient en roumain, ainsi que la grammaire. » (R210/Ukraine/M/19/B1). Ceux qui identifient la sonorité slave de la LR attribuent cependant la mélodicité de la LR à son caractère latin, et non aux influences slaves : « La LR est intéressante car elle a beaucoup de mots d'origines différentes ; beaucoup sont slaves et sonnent proches, mais elle est mélodieuse comme une langue romane. »

¹³ L'italique des mots-clés dans les réponses est de notre fait. Étant donné que les réponses sont traduites en français, nous n'avons pas reproduit les particularités linguistiques qui définissent l'IL des répondants. Celles-ci pourront faire l'objet d'une autre étude, car, dans notre base de données, elles sont enregistrées exactement sous la forme produite par les répondants.

¹⁴ Nous présentons les informations sur chaque répondant selon le modèle suivant, où : R3 = répondant ; 3 = numéro du répondant ; France = pays d'origine ; F = sexe ; 23 = âge ; B1 = niveau de compétence linguistique. Le signe ø indique l'absence de réponse dans le questionnaire.

(R231/Serbie/F/48/C2). À l'appui de ce qui précède, nous observons que même les locuteurs de niveau élémentaire, qui ont répondu en anglais (seulement 10 répondants sur les 235), perçoivent la LR à travers le prisme de sa valeur acoustique : *Sounds good orally*. (R/110/France/M/31/A2), certains d'entre eux comparant l'acoustique de la LR à celle de la langue russe : « Elle est acoustique comme la langue russe. » (R161/Grèce/M/19/B1).

La LR a été un « coup de foudre à la première écoute ». Pertinente pour ce schéma métaphorique est la réponse d'un locuteur arabe, qui déclare avoir écouté de la musique en LR avant de connaître la LR et même sans savoir qu'il s'agissait de roumain, simplement parce qu'il aimait beaucoup la musique avec des paroles roumaines : « J'ai écouté *de la musique que j'aimais* et après deux ans d'écoute, j'ai découvert que c'était du roumain. » (R166/Syrie/M/19/B1). Nous rapportons également le récit plus élaboré – nous tenons compte du niveau très avancé de maîtrise de la LR, mais aussi du fait que le locuteur a comme L1 une langue romane, souvent associée par les étrangers au roumain – d'une expérience liée à l'attraction de la ligne mélodique de la LR, déterminante également pour la décision de l'apprendre : « Un jour, tout à fait par hasard, j'ai allumé la radio au mauvais moment. Je croyais que c'était l'heure d'une émission en espagnol ou en portugais mais non, je suis tombé sur une émission en LR. Ce fut tout simplement *un coup de foudre à la première écoute*¹⁵. J'ai écouté l'émission entière, fasciné, toutes les phrases sonnaient comme une mélodie et j'ai même remarqué des similitudes entre le roumain et le portugais, beaucoup de mots étaient très similaires. Cela m'a semblé une langue très belle et harmonieuse et j'ai décidé de l'apprendre. » (R. 154/Brésil/M/44/C2).

La LR sonne comme une langue lente/ « parlée rapidement ». Outre la ligne mélodique, le rythme est également pris en compte, perçu comme plus lent que celui d'autres langues romanes (par exemple, l'italien) : « *Elle sonne comme une langue lente*. » (R49/Italie/F/28/B2) ; « *Elle sonne comme si un Russe ivre parlait italien (c'est une blague – j'adore le roumain)*. » (R52/République tchèque/M/31/B1). À l'inverse, suivant le même schéma imaginaire modelé par le rythme, d'autres locuteurs définissent la LR à l'opposé, comme étant : « *rapide*, à voix haute, mélodieuse. » (R67/République tchèque/F/64/C2) ; « Les Roumains parlent *très vite*. » (R81/Thaïlande/F/29/B1) ; « Difficile, belle, *rapide*, étrange, latine. » (R178/Cuba/M/21/B1+) ; « intéressante, difficile, belle,

¹⁵ Il est possible que l'expression utilisée par ce répondant soit une sorte de calque linguistique inspiré de la célèbre expression « coup de foudre », étant donné que ce dernier possède un niveau C2 en LR.

mélodique, *rapide*. » (R211/Ukraine/M/18/B1) ; « C'est une langue parlée rapidement. Tous les gens parlent trop vite. » (R180/Syrie/18/Non précisé/B2) ; « Je pense que les Roumains *parlent vite*. » (R18/France/F/21/B1) ; « Quand je me suis senti à l'aise pour parler en cours, j'ai compris que parler avec des natifs roumains était beaucoup plus difficile parce *qu'ils parlent extrêmement vite*. » (R17/Grèce/M/19/B2).

La LR est étrange. Outre le rythme perçu comme rare ou, au contraire, trop rapide, la bizarrerie de la sonorité de la LR est également invoquée, ces éléments étant également des sources d'attraction envers elle : « C'est *une langue étrange pour moi, elle sonne rarement*, mais elle est très intéressante. » (R5/Colombie/F/18/B1) ; « Le roumain *sonne spécial*. » (R142/Chine/M/21/B1) ; « Belle, compliquée, pas difficile, facile, *étrange*. » (R19/Syrie/M/26/B2). Parfois, il est fait référence uniquement à la bizarrerie de certains mots, comme le mot *dumneavoastră* [vous], qui « sonne étrange », posant des difficultés de mémorisation et, évidemment, d'utilisation. Ainsi, malgré le fait que le locuteur soit conscient de l'impact négatif sur la communication avec les locuteurs natifs, causé par l'évitement de l'utilisation de ce mot à la sonorité spécifique, il souligne la difficulté de remédier à cet aspect : « J'ai un problème avec le mot *dumneavoastră*, je ne sais pas pourquoi mais *il sonne étrange pour moi*. Pour cette raison, quand je parle, je n'utilise pas ce mot et parfois les personnes âgées pensent que je suis impoli parce que quand je leur parle, j'utilise *tu* au lieu de *vous*. Maintenant, j'essaie de normaliser le mot *vous*. » (R5/Colombie/F/18/B1).

La LR sonne comme la langue... Toujours au niveau sonore, la LR est définie par comparaison avec d'autres langues. Le plus souvent, un rapprochement est fait avec les langues slaves, mais aussi avec les langues romanes : « *La LR sonne comme une langue slave pour moi, mais c'est une langue romane*, et elle a des règles qui m'embrouillent. » (R213/Ukraine/F/22/B1+) ; « *Elle sonne comme le russe*, quand on ne connaît pas encore la langue. Mais avec le temps, elle commence à sonner comme l'italien. » (R214/Maroc/M/22/A2). D'autres répondants attribuent la mélodicité de la LR à son caractère latin : « La LR est intéressante car *elle a beaucoup de mots d'origines différentes ; beaucoup sont slaves et sonnent proches, mais elle est mélodieuse comme une langue romane*. » (R231/Serbie/F/48/C2) ; « Étant espagnol, pour moi, *elle sonne plus comme l'espagnol ancien, médiéval*. » (R205/Espagne/M/39/B2) ; « Je pense qu'il y a un peu l'accent portugais. Je pense qu'elle est proche du français et de l'italien. Je pense qu'elle a des influences différentes entre autres des langues latines et slaves. » (R18/France/F/21/B1).

5.2. La LR est difficile. Comme on peut s'y attendre de la part des locuteurs engagés dans le processus d'ALR, leur rapport à la LR se fait à travers le prisme des difficultés que son apprentissage suppose. Ainsi, 169 des répondants qualifient la LR comme une langue : *difficile* (78 réponses), *compliquée* (61 réponses), *complexe* (30 réponses). La principale source de difficulté réside, bien sûr, dans la grammaire : « D'un point de vue *grammatical*, je considère que c'est la langue la plus difficile de la famille des langues romanes. » (R119/Argentine/F/22/B1) ; « *Grammaire difficile.* » (R44/Pays-Bas/M/29/B1) ; « La LR a une *grammaire difficile.* » (R8/Cuba/F/19/B1) ; La LR est « *difficile et compliquée.* » (R227/Ukraine/F/27/A2). Ce qualificatif apparaît fréquemment dans la liste des « 5 mots » : « belle, *difficile*, nécessaire, utile, connue » (R227/Ukraine/F/27/A2) ou « romane, vocalique, déclinaisons, relatinisation, *difficile* » (R62/Japon/M/40/B2+).

En ce qui concerne l'augmentation ou la diminution du degré de difficulté de la LR en fonction de l'étape d'acquisition, il n'y a pas d'unanimité d'opinions, mais plutôt une incohérence, selon les expériences personnelles. Ainsi, pour certains, le début a été plus difficile, tandis que d'autres découvrent les difficultés seulement vers la fin : « Au début, elle semble très difficile à apprendre. » (R36/Espagne/F/36/non précisé) *versus* : « La LR semble facile au début, mais elle est plus compliquée à la fin. » (R37/Israël/F/41/non précisé) ; « Au début, c'était difficile, mais maintenant ça va. » (R125/Iran/M/25/B1).

Il n'est pas rare que les types de difficultés grammaticales soient précisés, confirmant l'opinion des spécialistes en RLS, selon laquelle l'indicatif présent des verbes et le pluriel des noms constituent de véritables défis pour les locuteurs étrangers : « Le roumain est très difficile et complexe. *Les verbes en roumain sont très difficiles et je n'aime pas les verbes en roumain.* » (R70, Corée/M/13/A1+) ; « *Les pluriels sont compliqués ; la grammaire est difficile.* » (R121/Italie/F/31/C1) ; « Il y a beaucoup de mots courts. Par exemple : *îi, era, am, ia, o.* Et il y a beaucoup d'abréviations, surtout pour les verbes. » (R180/Syrie/18/non précisé/B2).

« La LR est difficile et a beaucoup d'exceptions. » (R64/Liban/M/19/B1+) ; « *Tant d'exceptions. (...) Les formes de pluriel n'ont pas de règle.* » (R10/Iran/21/non précisé/B1) ; « C'est une belle langue, mais avec beaucoup d'exceptions en ce qui concerne sa grammaire. » (R13/Allemagne/F/21/B1) ; « *La grammaire est difficile, les pluriels sont compliqués.* » (R121/Italie/F/31/C1) ; « *La partie grammaticale est la plus difficile car elle contient trop de règles.* » (R176/Syrie/M/19/A2+). « La grammaire est difficile, car il y a beaucoup de règles. » (R44/Pays-Bas/M/29/B1). Une preuve indéniable de l'obsession pour la grammaire est également la liste des 5 mots se référant à la LR, qui, parfois, à côté des qualificatifs, énumère les genres en LR : « Compliquée,

difficile, *féminin, masculin, génitif*. » (R81/Thaïlande/F/29/). Pour adoucir les évaluations concernant la grande difficulté de la LR, les répondants recourent également à des expressions assertives, telles que : « *Ce n'est pas facile.* » (R23/Azerbaïdjan/M/21/B2) ou « Très intéressant et *un peu difficile.* » (R25/Inde/F/19/B2).

Les expériences personnelles sélectionnées par les répondants pour être relatées dans le questionnaire montrent également qu'ils sont profondément marqués par les « questions grammaticales » – au point où l'expression dans leur L1 est affectée –, mais aussi par le besoin de communiquer avec les natifs dans des situations authentiques : « Dans chaque cours de grammaire, *j'entends l'exception. Chaque grammaire a son exception.* Maintenant, j'y suis habituée. » (R6/Myanmar/F/19/B1) ; « Pour moi, la LR n'est pas très difficile, je pense que j'ai beaucoup progressé, mais *parfois je trouve les cours monotones ou trop axés sur des sujets grammaticaux en une journée, il y a des jours où je suis saturé d'informations ou des jours où je ne peux même pas bien parler ma langue maternelle et parfois c'est difficile de pratiquer parce que nous n'avons pas beaucoup de contacts avec les locaux ou les locuteurs natifs de roumain.* » (R12/Mexique/F/20/B1). Certains locuteurs se contentent même de nommer les difficultés grammaticales, à la rubrique « expériences personnelles », un fait révélateur de l'importance accordée à la grammaire : « *Les verbes avec accusatif et datif.* » (R18/France/F/21/B1) ; « J'apprends le roumain depuis déjà 3 ans, mais *j'ai trouvé que le roumain a beaucoup de temps, ce qui est différent de l'anglais et du chinois.* Par exemple, le verbe *a fi* [être] *a sunt* [suis / sont], *a fost* [a été] et *eram* [étais] » (R133/Chine/F/21/B2).

Du point de vue des répondants spécialistes en RLS (au nombre de 5), la grammaire n'est cependant pas si difficile. Néanmoins, ils signalent le manque d'outils scientifiques adaptés à leurs besoins spécifiques : « La grammaire *n'est pas difficile, bien qu'il y ait quelques points problématiques comme l'article, les alternances phonétiques dans la conjugaison des verbes et la formation du pluriel.* Ce qui est ennuyeux, c'est qu'il n'y a pas de source fiable et facile à déchiffrer où je pourrais vérifier le régime prépositionnel des verbes, et celui-ci ne coïncide pas avec le polonais. » (R112/Pologne/F/45/C1).

Il est à noter que de nombreuses réponses au questionnaire appliqué à grande échelle en 2024 sont similaires à celles obtenues par nous en 2020, lorsque nous avons appliqué, physiquement, un questionnaire similaire à trois groupes d'étudiants en PP de notre département. À l'époque les mêmes qualificatifs (*facile, simple, difficile, compliquée, complexe*) visant le niveau de difficulté linguistique prédominaient. Nous remarquons alors « l'obsession » des étudiants pour le métalangage grammatical, trahie par la grande récurrence des termes spécialisés, tels que : *règles, (beaucoup) d'exceptions, datif, accusatif,*

grammaire, préposition, réfléchis, imparfait, prononciation, genre, accent, parole, écoute (Platon 2021, 31-32), dans leurs énoncés. À cette occasion, nous observons que cela pouvait être le signe inquiétant d'un accent trop fort mis sur la compétence linguistique (grammaire et vocabulaire) en classe. Par exemple, les réponses à ce questionnaire nous montraient que, selon les étudiants, la LR est : « composée de masculin et féminin »¹⁶ ; « constituée de nombreuses grammaires » ; « très, très difficile, surtout les verbes » ; « difficile à mémoriser, facile à oublier » ; « Il n'y a pas de règle en grammaire. » ; « Cependant, c'est très difficile, car nous avons trop d'exceptions et de règles. » ; « Certains sujets grammaticaux sont des bêtises. » ; « La LR change beaucoup. » ; « La LR est une langue qui a beaucoup de grammaire. » ; « Chaque chose a un genre. » ; « Chaque verbe a beaucoup de formes différentes. » (cf. Platon 2021, 32).

Outre les difficultés d'ordre morphosyntaxique, les réponses au questionnaire actuel font également référence à celles d'ordre phonétique-phonologique, tant sur le plan de la réception que sur celui de la production orale, directement ou en utilisant un langage assertif : « *C'est difficile à prononcer.* » (R7/Thaïlande/F/34/B1) ; « *La prononciation un peu compliquée.* » (R22/Martinique/F/22/B1) ; « La prononciation est difficile (...). En revanche, l'écriture est facile. » (R161/Grèce/M/19/B1) ; « Prononciation difficile. » (R12/Mexique/F/20/B1). « Je pense qu'en LR, il est *difficile de prononcer et d'entendre la différence entre a, ă et â.* » (R15/France/F/28/B1) ; « *Je n'entends pas la différence entre a et ă.* » (R16/France/F/30/B1) ; « Une expérience particulière pour moi a été de prononcer les lettres *ș* et *ț*. » (R21/Myanmar/F/36/B2). « En Roumanie, "*ș*" est prononcé différemment, "*ș*" est "sh" en anglais. » (R70/Corée/M/13/A1+). Certains locuteurs remarquent les différences d'ordre phonétique dans le registre colloquial par rapport au registre formel : « La prononciation des gens » (difficile). » (R22/Martinique/F/22/B1).

En revanche, pour les locuteurs de langues slaves, la dimension phonético-phonologique ne semble pas poser de problèmes particuliers : « La LR a une prononciation facile. La LR est plus facile pour les Slaves. » (R146/Ukraine/F/18/A2+). « D'un point de vue phonétique, elle est facile à apprendre. Cependant, sa grammaire est difficile à maîtriser. » (R154/Brésil/44/M/C2) ; « Elle n'est pas si facile même si c'est une langue latine. *Difficile à prononcer au début (encore maintenant).* » (R121/Italie/F/31/C1). Certains répondants estiment que l'écriture phonétique spécifique à la LR constitue un grand avantage pour les étrangers : « L'orthographe est facile.

¹⁶ Nous précisons que les réponses au questionnaire administré en présentiel, en classe, en 2020, étaient anonymes, raison pour laquelle nous ne pouvons pas préciser les données des répondants.

Chaque lettre a un seul son. » (R44/Pays-Bas/M/29/B1) ; « La lecture est facile, car *on lit exactement comme on écrit.* » (R10/Iran/21/non précisé/B1).

Nous signalons une différenciation du degré de difficulté de la LR en fonction de l'activité de communication visée : écoute/lecture/parole/écriture, sans qu'il y ait cependant une unanimité d'opinions à ce sujet : « Je pense que *la partie écoute est la plus difficile de toutes les parties* en roumain. Je pense que nous pourrions parler cette langue après un an et demi de manière correcte. » (R125/Iran/M/25/B1) ; « Je pense *qu'il est plus facile de lire ou d'écrire que de parler ou de comprendre* les locuteurs natifs de roumain. » (R9/Grèce/F/19/B1) ; « *Il est plus difficile de parler que d'écrire.* » (R17/Grèce/M/19/B2) ; « La compréhension/écoute et la lecture sont faciles, mais *la parole est très difficile.* » (R16/France/F/30/B1) ; « *Il est plus facile de comprendre le roumain que de le parler. C'est difficile. Il faut beaucoup pratiquer. C'est difficile de lire en roumain. C'est une belle langue.* » (R35/France/F/21/ø).

Enfin, dans l'évaluation du niveau de difficulté, intervient la distance qui sépare le système linguistique de la langue maternelle de celui de la LR : « J'ai trouvé cela *très difficile quand je suis venu pour la première fois en Roumanie* au lycée pour une année d'échange, *car je n'avais jamais étudié les langues latines auparavant.* Mais après de nombreuses visites, j'ai fini par comprendre naturellement *en écoutant les gens.* » (R81/Thaïlande/F/29/B1).

5.3. La LR est riche. Étant donné que la richesse de la LR est elle-même imaginée à l'aide de plusieurs concepts métaphoriques, nous allons réaliser une sous-classification des schémas imaginatifs.

La LR est une langue folle. Au moins 28 répondants font appel à la métaphore de la *richesse* pour mettre en évidence le grand nombre de mots en LR, ainsi que la diversité du vocabulaire, assurée par la multitude des synonymes : « *Elle a une richesse incroyable en ce qui concerne les synonymes.* » (R154/Brésil/44/M/C2) ; « La LR a beaucoup de mots. » (R176/Syrie/M/19/A2+) ; « La LR a beaucoup de mots et un vocabulaire riche. » (R177/Bulgarie/F/20/A2+).

Certains locuteurs arabes attribuent la difficulté d'acquisition de la LR au nombre excessif de mots : « une langue compliquée ; une langue aventureuse, *une langue riche, avec beaucoup de mots.* », qui, dans leur vision, la transforme en une « *grande langue* » ou, en la jugeant dans le registre anthropomorphique du pathologique, même en une « *langue folle* » (R38/Pakistan/M/21/B1+) ; « La LR est *une langue fascinante*, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit de son histoire et de ses *diverses influences linguistiques.* En roumain, *il y a beaucoup de synonymes et d'expressions synonymiques, ce qui rend difficile de choisir le mot approprié.* » (R112/Pologne/F/45/C1/métadiscours).

Cependant, la richesse lexicale n'est pas uniquement perçue comme un obstacle sur le parcours de l'ALR, mais aussi comme un moyen permettant une expression complexe et nuancée des idées : « Le roumain est une belle langue et vous permet de vous exprimer richement grâce à son vocabulaire. La LR est impressionnante avec tous les mots qui varient et tous les dialectes. La LR a beaucoup de mots et un vocabulaire riche. » (R177/Bulgarie/F/20/A2+).

La LR est une langue-conteneur. Nous avons opté pour la métaphore du conteneur, utilisée en linguistique cognitive (Lakoff, Johnson¹⁷), car elle nous semble suggestive pour les réponses qui attribuent la richesse de la LR (en particulier au niveau lexical) aux influences d'autres langues avec lesquelles elle est entrée en contact au fil de l'histoire. Ainsi, ce qui était à l'extérieur a été adopté, adapté et transformé en tant qu'élément interne, définissant aujourd'hui la spécificité de la LR. L'explication d'un locuteur ukrainien est pertinente à cet égard : « La LR est une langue, comme il m'a semblé, qui inclut en elle-même encore beaucoup d'autres langues. Il y a des mots similaires à l'anglais, au français, au russe, à l'ukrainien... En même temps, c'est une langue très intéressante et belle. » (R20/Ukraine/F/18/B1) ; « Des mots intéressants. Combinaison de langues. » (R12/Mexique/F/20/B1) ; « Le roumain est une langue influencée par des sons slaves. C'est pourquoi c'est une langue très intéressante à étudier. Elle a un vocabulaire avec de nombreux emprunts à d'autres langues. » (R49/Italie/F/28/B2) ; « J'aime le mélange de grammaire avec des racines latines et un lexique assez complexe avec des influences slaves, hongroises, etc. (...) J'aimerais en savoir plus sur ses liens éventuels avec la langue dace. » (R42/États-Unis/M/43/B2).

Un germanophone différencie la LR des langues à caractère agglutinant, comme l'allemand : « Elle utilise beaucoup de mots et de termes spécifiques au lieu de les créer à partir de compositions de deux mots, ce qui oblige les étudiants à apprendre beaucoup par cœur (similaire à l'anglais). De plus, elle contient des mots de nombreuses langues européennes et orientales, ce qui crée un sentiment de reconnaissance interculturelle. » (R13/Allemagne/F/21/B1) ; « J'aime qu'elle soit influencée par différentes langues. C'est pourquoi elle est un peu plus difficile

¹⁷ Nous rappelons que, selon Lakoff et Johnson, les métaphores du contenant font partie de la catégorie des métaphores ontologiques. De leur point de vue, le corps humain lui-même est considéré comme un contenant, « possédant une surface-limite et une orientation dedans-dehors. Nous projetons cette orientation dedans-dehors sur d'autres objets physiques qui sont aussi limités par des surfaces, et nous les considérons comme des contenants dotés d'un dedans et d'un dehors » (Lakoff, Johnson 1985, 39). Expression de l'instinct de territorialité, ces métaphores démontrent que nous avons tendance à imposer des frontières abstraites (on pourrait dire imaginaires) qui distinguent l'intérieur de l'extérieur, même là où il n'existe aucune frontière physique.

à apprendre. » (R48/Allemagne/F/20/B1) ; « Elle est belle, *elle n'est pas si difficile à apprendre* comparée à d'autres langues, parfois *l'étymologie des mots est intéressante*. » (R53/République tchèque/M/41/B1).

La métaphore de la langue-conteneur permet de reconnaître le caractère universel de la LR, sans pour autant annuler la reconnaissance de sa spécificité : « Cette langue *donne l'impression d'être universelle*. Mais *elle a des caractéristiques originales*. C'est comme un latin brisé. Le mot roumain « frumos » [beau] est beau ! Mais, en général, ce n'est pas très *sexy*. » (R41/Serbie/F/21/A1). La majorité des répondants mentionnent cependant seulement une partie des influences subies par la LR, les plus fréquemment invoquées étant le latin, la langue dace et le russe, avec des références plus rares au turc, à l'allemand ou au hongrois, surtout si nous avons affaire à des locuteurs de langues slaves : « La LR provient de la langue dace, du latin et du slave. Comme toutes les langues d'Europe de l'Ouest, elle a traversé une période (XIXe-XXe siècles) de correction et de constitution d'une langue littéraire. » (R11/Bulgarie/F/25/B1). À hauteur de 14" %, les locuteurs comparent la LR aux langues slaves pour définir sa spécificité, tandis que le français et l'espagnol sont invoqués, chacun d'eux, dans 7 réponses (0,02 %) : « L'étymologie de la langue roumaine et les influences des langues étrangères (slave, turque et autres) me fascinent. » (R37/Israël/F/41/ø).

Certains locuteurs de langues slaves nuancent l'appartenance de la LR à cet ensemble linguistique, affirmant que « la LR *n'a pas de lien étroit avec les langues slaves* » (R17/Grèce/M/19/B2), tandis que ceux de langues romanes l'associent surtout au portugais, la caractérisant comme ayant un caractère latin, avec des influences slaves : « Je pense *qu'il y a un peu l'accent portugais*. Je pense *qu'elle est proche du français et de l'italien*. Je pense *qu'elle a différentes influences parmi d'autres langues latines et slaves*. » (R18/France/F/21/B1). La ressemblance avec l'italien conduit à un « mélange de codes » linguistiques, ce qui entraîne des modifications importantes au niveau comportemental : « Dans un restaurant en Italie, j'ai dit „apă" et „cu plăcere" au lieu de "acqua" ou "con piacere". » (R51/Suisse/M/25/A1+).

La diversité des influences lexicales est perçue comme un avantage pour le locuteur non natif, comme une voie d'accès à la compréhension des messages en LR : « Je pense que *c'est bien que la langue roumaine soit proche de l'anglais (et de toutes les langues latines bien sûr)*, car *je peux comprendre beaucoup de mots que je n'ai jamais vus*. » (R9/Grèce/F/19/B1), le même aspect créant, selon d'autres, « l'opportunité d'apprendre d'autres langues » (R23/Azerbaïdjan/M/21/B2) ; « Cette langue aide à comprendre le reste des langues latines dans une certaine mesure. » (R125/Iran/M/25/B1) ; « Je parle serbe, donc *certaines mots me rendent très heureuse – șuncă [jambon], ieftin [bon marché]* » (R41/Serbie/F/21/A1).

La LR est diverse. La richesse de la LR est également expliquée par les différences régionales, les dialectes étant souvent appelés « dialectes » : « Je pense qu'elle a beaucoup de dialectes. » (R18/France/F/21/B1) ; « Mais j'aime beaucoup voir qu'il existe aussi *des formes de dialecte.* » (R11/Bulgarie/F/25/B1) ; « *Le dialecte moldave est totalement différent.* » (R121/Italie/F/31/C1) ; « *En République de Moldavie, il a été très difficile pour moi de comprendre quoi que ce soit à cause de l'accent et des verbes locaux, si quelqu'un ne faisait pas l'effort de parler un roumain correct. Je pense que dans d'autres régions, ce serait similaire.* » (R53/République tchèque/M/41/B1).

La richesse est également perçue comme l'effet de la diversité des registres linguistiques, dont l'existence n'est conscientisée qu'après avoir dépassé le niveau élémentaire : « *Le langage de la rue est plus simple que le langage formel.* Au début, il semble très simple, mais après le niveau A2, les choses deviennent beaucoup plus difficiles. Il est intéressant de constater *qu'il existe des différences dans la façon de parler – cela dépend de l'endroit.* » (R17/Grèce/M/19/B2). De plus, les dissonances dans l'IML des natifs (spécialistes vs non-spécialistes) concernant la langue « correcte/incorrecte » sont également notées, confirmant le caractère subjectif des normes fictives dans le tableau de Houdebine-Gravaud, qui ignore les recommandations du discours académique : « Parce que j'ai travaillé à Oradea, j'étais entourée de Roumains qui parlaient roumain de manière très *informelle. J'entendais toujours les gens dire "Ceau!" comme une salutation, alors j'ai fait de même.* Donc, lors de l'année préparatoire, j'ai dû écrire une conversation et j'ai écrit "Ceau!". Le lendemain, la professeure m'a parlé et m'a dit que le mot était "Ciao" comme en italien. *Je suis allée voir mon petit ami et il m'a dit que ce n'était pas vrai et que les Roumains ne parlaient pas comme ça.* » (R74/Mexique/F/20/B2) ou « Quand j'ai commencé à interagir avec les Roumains, j'ai remarqué que *la langue que j'apprenais en classe était différente et plus soutenue que celle parlée par les Roumains dans la vie quotidienne.* » (R135/Haïti/F/23/A1+).

5.4. LR est « une langue oubliée » / « perdue dans un monde immense ».

Une autre série de métaphores fait appel au registre psycho-cognitif pour exprimer l'idée que, parmi les langues romanes, la LR est une langue peu connue/parlée, malgré le fait qu'elle constitue un accès vers la compréhension d'autres langues romanes¹⁸ : « *LR est une langue latine, et beaucoup de gens*

¹⁸ Ce fait est également confirmé par les témoignages de nos anciens étudiants du département de LR de l'Université Charles de Prague, où nous avons travaillé en tant que lecteur de LR entre 2000 et 2004. Ces étudiants suivaient les cours du Département des langues romanes et choisissaient la LR comme troisième langue romane d'étude. Un exemple encore plus célèbre est cependant celui du grand romaniste tchèque, Jan Urban Jarník, qui a appris la LR afin de mener des études de linguistique comparée.

l'oublie. Si quelqu'un peut parler une langue latine, il est plus facile d'apprendre la langue roumaine. Pour moi, c'est une langue oubliée, malheureusement. Je veux l'apprendre et trouver plus de personnes qui la parlent. Je trouve intéressante l'influence slave. » (R40/Royaume-Uni/F/21/A1) ; ou encore : « *C'est une langue très intéressante mais un peu perdue dans un monde immense. »* (R42/USA/M/43/B2) ; « *Une langue (très) peu connue, ce qui la rend encore plus attrayante. »* (R184/Espagne/M/62/C2).

5.5. LR est une fenêtre sur la culture roumaine/l'Europe de l'Est/d'autres langues et cultures/sa propre langue et culture. Dans l'IML des locuteurs non natifs, on retrouve également des métaphores classiques issues du domaine architectural, soulignant la LR comme un lieu de passage entre différents espaces linguistico-culturels, mais aussi comme un instrument de communication et de socialisation. D'une part, la LR peut être une porte d'entrée pour mieux comprendre l'Europe de l'Est en général : « *LR est une fenêtre sur l'Europe de l'Est. »* (R47/Allemagne/27/non précisé/B1), et les Roumains en particulier : « *L'apprentissage de la LR m'a permis de communiquer avec des Roumains et de me faire des amis. »* (R8/Cuba/F/19/B1) ; « *Communiquer avec les gens, se faire des amis roumains »* (R131/Tchad/M/24/A2+) ; « *Le fait d'avoir eu des colocataires et des professeurs roumains natifs a été la meilleure chose qui m'a aidé à mieux apprendre. »* (R10/Iran/21/non précisé/B1). Un locuteur espagnol met en avant la dimension géopolitique de la LR, soulignant son rôle de pont entre l'Europe romane et l'Europe orientale : « *Grâce à la connaissance de la LR, on peut accéder à une aire géographique et historique complètement différente de l'Occident. C'est une évidence, mais cet aspect est souvent négligé. C'est l'endroit où l'Europe occidentale (romane) s'unit avec l'Europe de l'Est. »* (R184/Espagne/M/62/C2).

Un musicien affirme que la maîtrise de la langue d'un peuple rapproche plus de celui-ci que la musique elle-même : « *Je suis musicien ; je parle de temps en temps sur scène avant de jouer, c'est-à-dire que je présente une œuvre particulière ou contemporaine, etc., afin que le public ait une idée de ce qu'il va entendre (probablement pour la première fois). Lorsque j'ai parlé en roumain à Bucarest, plusieurs personnes m'ont dit après le concert que c'était une grande surprise et un plaisir pour elles. Je crois que le fait qu'un étranger parle leur langue leur a plu plus que la musique elle-même. »* (R42/USA/M/43/B2).

Un locuteur bulgare évoque également cette idée de la LR comme accès à un espace culturel spécifique, tout en relevant un paradoxe inhérent : l'absence de communication entre des pays voisins aux « langues voisines », séparées néanmoins par une immense distance linguistique, que la proximité géographique ne peut compenser : « *Le roumain est la langue voisine de la*

Bulgarie, mais elle est inconnue là-bas. Le roumain est une fenêtre par laquelle on peut voir et comprendre la culture et l'histoire roumaines. » (R11/Bulgarie/F/25/B1). La qualité de « fenêtre » de la LR, issue de ses diverses influences linguistiques, en fait implicitement une voie de communication interculturelle, mais aussi un espace sécurisant et familier : « elle contient des mots issus de nombreuses langues européennes et orientales, ce qui crée un sentiment de reconnaissance interculturelle. » (R13/Allemagne/F/21/B1).

Pour les spécialistes en philologie, la LR est une fenêtre sur le latin : « Je ne sais pas quoi écrire, car en général, la LR a changé ma vie. J'ai d'abord étudié la philologie classique. J'ai toujours aimé le latin. Mais en Pologne, nous n'avons pas beaucoup d'opportunités de travail avec le latin ou le grec ancien. J'ai commencé à étudier la LR et j'ai immédiatement découvert que j'aimais son histoire. J'ai vu le latin dans la LR, j'ai observé les évolutions du latin... Oui. C'est ainsi que je suis devenue doctorante et que j'écris sur l'histoire de la langue roumaine. » (R54/Pologne/F/29/C1).

En même temps, la LR constitue également une fenêtre vers sa propre culture et son identité : « J'apprends plus sur moi-même et je suis plus proche de moi. » (R45/Allemagne/F/22/B1), contribuant ainsi à l'enrichissement de l'identité personnelle, comme le résume simplement un répondant : « Nouvelle vie. » (R19/Syrie/M/26/B2).

Pour les locuteurs natifs engagés dans l'interaction exolingue avec des étrangers, la LR constitue également un accès aux cultures maternelles des apprenants : « Nous avons eu de nombreux cours agréables lorsque nous avons fait des présentations sur nos pays. » (R29/Turkménistan/M/18/B2), y compris dans le cadre du cours multi- et pluriculturel de RLS : « La LR est très bonne pour la communication. La LR est facile si nous communiquons beaucoup. La grammaire est un peu difficile. La langue est très intéressante. Apprendre le roumain, c'est cool. » (R29/Turkménistan/M/18/B2). La facilitation de la communication avec les natifs, y compris en dehors de la salle de classe, est souvent signalée comme une fonction essentielle de la LR, dans de nombreuses expériences rapportées par les apprenants : « La première fois que j'ai pu comprendre et répondre à ce que disaient les vendeuses de Lidl, je me suis senti fier de moi. » (R192/Vietnam/M/24/A2+) ; « Quand j'ai commencé à apprendre la LR et que j'ai senti que je pouvais la comprendre, j'ai été très motivé à communiquer avec les Roumains, ce qui m'a poussé à l'étudier davantage. » (R209/Ukraine/M/18/B2+) ; « J'ai écouté des podcasts et des manele ; j'essaie de parler avec beaucoup de gens en roumain. » (R23/Azerbaïdjan/M/21/B2) ; « Pour moi, ce devait être un jour où j'étais dans une famille roumaine et que je pouvais tout comprendre, mais eux ne le savaient pas. » (R25/Inde/F/19/B2) ; « J'ai été volontaire en Roumanie. Pendant un an, j'ai essayé d'apprendre la LR.

J'ai participé à quelques cours, mais *j'ai appris bien plus en parlant avec les enfants et les voisins. J'ai aussi beaucoup parlé avec des étrangers en faisant de l'auto-stop.* » (R48/Allemagne/F/20/B1) ; « L'apprentissage de la LR est complètement différent pour moi, car c'est la première fois que j'apprends une langue en la pratiquant directement avec des natifs et dans le pays concerné. *La partie la plus importante de l'apprentissage a été de parler dans la rue, par nécessité réelle.* » (R178/Cuba/M/21/B1+) ; « J'aime parler avec les gens dans la rue. » (R3/France/F/23/B1). Certaines expériences amusantes, dues à des confusions linguistiques en LR, sont également rapportées avec humour : « Quand je ne parlais pas encore bien roumain, j'ai demandé à un homme : *"Sunteți urs ?" (Êtes-vous un ours ?). Je voulais, en fait, savoir s'il y avait des ours dans la région.* » (R52/République Tchèque/M/31/B1).

5.6. LR est « l'amour d'une vie » /romantique. Chez certains romanistes de niveau C2, la métaphore choisie appartient au champ lexical de l'amour, la LR étant assimilée à une grande passion : « *C'est l'amour de ma vie.* » (R234/République Tchèque/F/78/C2) ; « *J'aime profondément la LR.* » (R233/République Tchèque/F/44/C2) ; « *Ce fut tout simplement un coup de foudre à la première écoute.* » (R154/Brésil/M/44/C2). Un locuteur espagnol adopte également cette perspective en affirmant vouloir écrire des lettres d'amour en LR : « *Tomber follement amoureux d'une femme russe qui parle roumain et lui écrire une lettre d'amour en roumain.* » (R204/Espagne/M/43/C1). Bien que, parmi les réponses du présent questionnaire, cette association avec le romantisme soit unique, dans l'étude menée en 2021, parmi les jugements d'ordre esthétique ou affectif concernant les qualités « en soi » de la LR – *belle, sonore, unique, ancienne, riche, sophistiquée, variée, mélangée, polie, classique, traditionnelle* –, on retrouvait également l'adjectif « romantique » dans 25 % des cas. À notre avis, ce fait illustre une fois de plus le dynamisme et le caractère subjectif des normes fictives de l'IML sur la LR, qui, cette fois-ci, enregistre dans les réponses : 81 occurrences du qualificatif « belle », 49 du qualificatif « intéressante », 28 du qualificatif « riche », 6 du qualificatif « fascinante », 3 du qualificatif « amusante ». Un seul répondant associe encore la LR à un registre proche du romantisme, en la qualifiant de « sexy ». En revanche, on observe que les Roumains préfèrent parler une autre langue avec les étrangers : « *Quand je suis allé au magasin et que j'ai parlé en roumain, les gens m'ont répondu en anglais.* » (R139/Israël/F/18/B1).

5.7. LR est la langue des grands-parents. Pour les Roumains de la diaspora, la LR est la *langue des grands-parents*, un moyen de communication avec la famille restée en Roumanie et de redécouverte de son identité culturelle :

« Je suis d'origine roumaine du côté de mon père. Je n'ai pas eu l'occasion de parler roumain avec mes grands-parents, *mais maintenant, je peux découvrir leur langue maternelle et leur culture, qui est aussi un peu la mienne.* » (R37/Israël/F/41/ø). « Après des mois d'études, *j'ai pu communiquer et parler avec mon grand-père, ma tante et mon oncle.* » (R128/Jordanie/M/19/A2+). En tant que langue héritée, la LR apparaît parfois comme étant « cachée », surgissant dans des situations extrêmes d'une manière profondément émouvante : « J'ai appris la LR avec ma mère (roumaine). Enfant, je ne voulais pas dire un seul mot en roumain, personne ne savait que je pouvais m'exprimer dans cette langue. Ma famille l'a découvert grâce à ma tante, *qui m'a entendu parler roumain à un chien en Roumanie. À l'âge de 5/6 ans, j'étais convaincue qu'il ne me comprendrait pas si je lui parlais en allemand – logique, non ?* » (R50/Allemagne/F/24/B2+).

5.8. LR est énervante/difficile/inutile/complexe/humble. Bien que la majorité des métaphores expriment une valeur positive de la LR (musicale, harmonieuse, riche, diversifiée), quelques réponses négatives apparaissent pourtant. Une locutrice thaïlandaise exprime un rejet catégorique en répétant, sous différentes formes, la difficulté de la LR : « La LR *est difficile. Elle a beaucoup de mots compliqués. Il est difficile de la prononcer. Difficile à lire. Difficile à mémoriser.* » (R7/Thaïlande/F/34/B1). L'expression assertive de certains locuteurs témoigne d'une bonne éducation interculturelle : « *Ce n'est pas une langue très utile au quotidien.* Mais je suis étudiant en histoire et je l'utilise dans mon travail. » (R51/Suisse/M/25/A1+). Pour un autre locuteur, la perception de la LR comme extrêmement difficile est accompagnée d'une réaction de rejet catégorique, sa liste des « cinq mots » soulignant à la fois l'inutilité de son apprentissage et son impact négatif sur celui qui s'y engage : « *Difficile, Enervante, Compliquée, Inutile, Complexe.* » (R224/Angleterre/non précisé/16/C1). Le même répondant explique son attitude de rejet dans le récit de son expérience : « Je pense que la langue roumaine est très difficile. Quand on passe à la grammaire, ça devient de plus en plus compliqué, surtout à l'école. Pour moi, *apprendre où placer l'accusatif ne m'aidera en rien dans ma vie.* En roumain, on devrait apprendre à *parler correctement et à savoir lire. Plus que cela, ce n'est pas nécessaire.* » (R224/Angleterre/non précisé/16/C1). On remarque le jeune âge de ce locuteur, qui déclare l'anglais comme L1 (langue héritée), bien que le contexte suggère qu'il s'agisse d'un Roumain rapatrié. Ce fait transparaît aussi dans sa description des Roumains, dans une autre section du questionnaire, où apparaissent des stéréotypes sociaux typiquement locaux : « Les Roumains aiment beaucoup manger et se promener en charrette. *Le Roumain vole. Surtout l'État.* Si la Roumanie envie autant d'autres pays, pourquoi ne commence-t-elle

pas à rivaliser avec eux ? *Elle est toujours en dernière place.* Le soutien sportif est faible. Nous ne nous sommes pas qualifiés depuis longtemps pour le football, ni pour le basket, le handball, etc. » (R224/Angleterre/non précisé/16/C1). Par contraste avec cette réaction de rejet radical, les locuteurs étrangers ont tendance à formuler des réponses plus nuancées. Par exemple, un locuteur syrien bien qu'il mentionne la beauté et son plaisir personnel d'apprendre la LR, n'en recommande l'apprentissage qu'en cas de nécessité : « C'est une belle langue, mais *si l'on n'en a pas besoin, il n'est pas nécessaire de l'apprendre.* Personnellement, j'aime cette langue. » (R176/Syrie/M/19/A2+).

Enfin, dans le cas d'un autre locuteur, pour qui la LR est une langue héritée (né en Belgique, de parents roumains, puis élevé en Italie et enfin rapatrié), le métalangage grammatical – dont l'enseignement roumain fait un usage excessif – semble être le principal obstacle à son affinité avec la LR : « Je pense que *c'est une langue difficile à apprendre à partir de zéro.* C'est compliqué de mémoriser tous les noms des parties de la grammaire. » (R225/Belgique/Italie/Roumanie/F/14/B2+). Ce même répondant, toujours mineur, est le seul à classer la LR de manière clairement défavorable, sans appel, en comparaison avec les langues internationales qu'il connaît (français, anglais, italien), la qualifiant de langue « humble » : « Belle, difficile, calme, *humble*, imaginative. » Il lui reconnaît toutefois un caractère « calme », que l'on peut associer à son rythme plus lent, ainsi qu'un aspect créatif (« *imaginatif* »).

Par manque d'espace, nous n'avons pas pu reproduire un plus grand nombre de réponses, mais nous pouvons dire que, dans les grandes lignes, ce sont là les principales métaphores utilisées pour dessiner le profil de la LR dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs non natifs. Lorsque les occurrences étaient trop peu nombreuses (1-4), nous n'avons pas précisé le pourcentage, ce qui ne signifie pas que ces réponses sont moins pertinentes.

6. Conclusions

Comme nous l'avons affirmé au point deux, qui portait sur l'objectif de la recherche, les études consacrées à l'IML en DL s'intéressent généralement à l'impact des représentations sur la langue cible ainsi qu'aux stratégies mises en place pour l'acquérir (Dabène 1997), puisqu'il est bien connu que ces représentations peuvent accélérer ou ralentir ce processus. Les réponses analysées ici montrent sans aucun doute que l'image que les apprenants ont du profil linguistique de la LR, ou de son statut par rapport aux autres langues, a un impact significatif sur leur comportement dans le processus d'apprentissage de l'ALR. Cependant, nous considérons que le tableau qui en résulte est plus

complexe et plus nuancé, mettant en lumière quelques points de repère utiles pour reconstruire l'image de la LR dans l'imaginaire des locuteurs non natifs. Cette image semble relativement stable, la LR étant perçue comme : une musique belle et harmonieuse, chantée sur un rythme tantôt trop lent, tantôt trop rapide ; une langue à la grammaire trop compliquée, mais extrêmement riche lexicalement, grâce à ses diverses influences linguistiques ; une fenêtre ouverte sur la connaissance des cultures propres aux apprenants ou sur la culture de l'Europe de l'Est ; soit comme un grand amour ; un lien avec sa propre identité culturelle, dans le cas de la LR en tant que langue héritée. Toutes les structures métaphoriques utilisées dans le discours méta-/épilinguistique témoignent de la créativité des locuteurs non natifs dans leur rapport à la LR. Elles reflètent non seulement leurs propres imaginaires subjectifs, mais aussi les universaux de l'esprit humain et les différentes représentations socioculturelles collectives.

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PORTRAITS IN THE MAKING. GERMAN USERS OF ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT. *Portraits in the Making. German Users of Romanian as a Foreign Language.* The traditional approach to language learning has attempted to clearly differentiate between a first language or mother tongue and a second and/or a foreign language. In the last decades, these distinctions have become blurred – bilingual people admit having two first languages or L1-speakers living in a certain culture eventually view the foreign language as a second one. Consequently, the task of outlining sharp portraits of German users of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) seems hardly achievable, mostly since there are several parameters to consider, a significant one being exactly their proneness to alteration, due to the ever-changing linguistic process they are involved in. Nevertheless, the present study aims to fulfil such a task, rather from a broad perspective, by providing a series of concrete representations of the students enrolled in the Romanian-language courses (A1 – B2+ levels of proficiency) at the Leipzig University between 2019-2024, focusing on their non-permanent and variable-dependent nature.

Keywords: *error analysis, foreign language learning, heritage language, interference, interlanguage, RFL*

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REZUMAT. Portrete în devenire. Utilizatori germani ai limbii române ca limbă străină. Abordarea tradițională a studiului limbilor străine a încercat să traseze o delimitare clară între prima limbă achiziționată (L1) sau limba maternă și o a doua limbă (L2) și/sau o limbă străină. În decursul ultimelor decenii, aceste distincții s-au estompat din ce în ce mai mult, din moment ce persoane bilingve au recunoscut faptul că ar deține două limbi materne sau vorbitorii unei limbi anume, care trăiesc într-o cultură diferită, ajung să perceapă limba respectivă nu ca pe o limbă străină, ci ca pe limba a doua. Drept urmare, sarcina de a contura, în tușe clare, o serie de portrete ale unor utilizatori germani de limba română ca limbă străină (RLS) pare aproape imposibil de realizat, mai ales că sunt mai mulți parametri de luat în considerare, unul dintre aceștia fiind chiar transformarea permanentă, din punct de vedere lingvistic, a utilizatorilor mai sus amintiți. În ciuda celor afirmate, studiul de față își propune să ducă la bun sfârșit tocmai o astfel de sarcină, dintr-o perspectivă mai largă, oferind câteva reprezentări concrete ale studenților înscriși la cursurile de limba română de la Universitatea din Leipzig (nivelurile de competență lingvistică variind între A1 și B2+), pe parcursul anilor 2019-2024, punând accentul pe caracterul lor variabil, supus mereu schimbării.

Cuvinte-cheie: *analiza erorilor, achiziția limbii străine, limbă moștenită, interferență, interlimbă, RLS*

1. The basics. Ideas and first sketches

More than ever, in the actual geopolitical contexts, there are fewer and fewer people whose linguistic competence is restricted to merely one language. Out of touristic, political, economic or social reasons, individuals are compelled to appeal to (a) further language(s), other than their mother tongue, to communicate, to do business or even to save human lives. In a peaceful environment, people study languages willingly, for enjoyment or personal development.

This holds true also in the case of the Romanian language (classified among the 492 institutional languages, out of the 7,164 languages and dialects worldwide, according to *Ethnologue* - Eberhard et al., 2024) learned and taught outside the borders of the country, hence as a foreign language. The present article concentrates on the prismatic portraits of the Romanian-language students at one of the oldest universities in Europe, the Leipzig University, within the timespan 2019-2024. From time to time, there will be brief parallelisms to the students in Regensburg, since the author taught Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) at the Bavarian university for two years (2017-2019). In what regards the structure of the paper, the general theoretical framework will be followed by a series of portrayals based on empirical

evidence within the classroom, as well as on some examples excerpted mostly from the students' written exams, at the end of a language module and of the respective semester. Yet, before properly 'drawing' the student portrayals, we should *draw on* certain preliminary distinctions and remarks.

2. Theoretical frames

A reasonable first theoretical observation distinguishes between the acquisition of a first language (L1) and the learning of a second language (L2). We have all witnessed the amazing progress small children show in acquiring the idiom they are constantly exposed to, usually in the family, unaware of grammar rules but still able to reproduce the language naturally, authentically and in a more and more adequate manner. Up till roughly the age of five, there is also the possibility of acquiring two or more languages (Edmonson, 1999: 2), due to bilingual parents or even *au pairs*. On the other hand, we have certainly had various experiences with the languages we started to learn. We acquired our mother tongue almost unconsciously, in childhood and school, making it part of our identity. Later, we began learning mostly English and French in schools, sometimes for more than eight years. In my case, for example, I have also tried Italian, Japanese, Danish, Polish and Portuguese, the study of which lasted between two and eight months. In an ulterior explanation, besides the scarce exposure, I must have lost my motivation, due to the change of contexts (no longer an Erasmus student in Denmark, the difficulty of Japanese and Polish, or further personal prioritization). Edmonson (1999: 35) provides a basic list with such L1 and L2 differences, which play a significant role in shaping the general framework of L2-users:

1. External differences: *exposure* (L1 learners have unlimited access to L1), *input* (different input offered to children and adults), *social support* (children learning L1 most commonly receive strong social and emotional support from the learning environment), *pressure* (no pressure to acquire or understand, in comparison to L2 learning, both inside and outside the classroom), *feedback* (different types of correction and/or feedback).
2. Internal differences: *cognition* (cognitive development accompanies L1 learning, and precedes L2 learning), *language* (L2 learners may make use of their L1 in learning L2, which is not possible when learning L1), *social identity* (L1 is tied up with socialisation processes: SLA often involves losing or reducing one's social persona), *knowledge* (acculturation and gains in conceptual knowledge accompany first language learning, but antedate SLA).

At the same time, he also notices the individuals' ease in L1 acquisition and the relative difficulty (some languages are reported to be more difficult than others) in the case of L2, as well as the guaranteed success in L1 learning, yet not in L2. However, there are nowadays solid counterarguments to the claim that only L1 learning can be successful, once the L2 users are no longer perceived as "failed native speakers" (Cook 2002: *passim*), but as original and autonomous L2 speakers, who experience various stages in their linguistic development. Given Chomsky's Universal-Grammar competence or the "independent grammars assumption" (Cook 2002: 8), both children and L2 learners employ their own *approximative system* (Nemser, in Littlewood 1999: 33) or *interlanguage* (a term coined by Selinker, 2013: *passim*), rather than imperfect adult/L1 structures or "partial imitation(s) of what it might become one day" (Cook 2002: 8). Since the interlanguage is "the sum of all the rules a learner has acquired so far" (Pienemann, in Cook 2002: 20), the language system of such L2 users is never static, but alterable. In what concerns common traits in L1 and L2 (especially in the low-level courses), *motherese*² is a case in point, whose features include clear articulation, marked intonational contours, lexical adjustments/negotiations, grammatical well-formedness, limited range of grammatical relations, repetitions, checks and uptakes, tutorial and mostly non-genuine questions (the tutors already knowing the answer), the so-called "display questions" (Lightbown and Spada 2021: 140), high redundancy, as well as topics concerning the here-and-now (Ellis cited in Edmonson, 1999: 169).

From a behaviourist perspective, "a small part of the foreign language, such as a structural pattern, is presented as a *stimulus*, to which the learner *responds*, for example, by repetition or substitution" (Williams and Burden 1999: 10), a frequent case to be observed mostly in the low-level (A1-A2) language groups. On the other hand, a cognitive view would emphasize the active (not the mechanical) side of the learners, whose tasks are "to observe, think, categorise and hypothesise" (Williams and Burden 1999: 13), namely the way they process information. Within such a process, certain factors are of utmost importance: attention, memory and intelligence (see Williams and Burden 1999: 15-20). As teachers, we usually sense whenever our students pay attention to us or not, as well as whether some of them can memorise lexical items more easily than others. In Klatzky's definition, "attention should be seen as a process of filtering out an overwhelming range of incoming stimuli and selecting out only those stimuli which are important for further processing" (in Williams and Burden 1999: 15). Quite often, distracted attention occurred not necessarily out of boredom, but mainly because the respective students had

² In SLA, *motherese* is better known as *foreigner talk* or *teacher talk* (see Lightbown and Spada 2021: 41).

skipped class – at the Leipzig University the attendance is not mandatory, so such students could not follow any more the subject matter, due to unknown words or unfamiliar grammar topics. In what concerns the intelligence factor, the educational psychologist Philip Vernon suggests two further types of intelligence, besides the inborn one, namely the everyday, context-bound intelligence and the intelligence measured by IQ tests (in Williams and Burden 1999: 19). Accordingly, there are students who may solve tasks faster than others; some who shoot answers, as opposed to those indulging in silence; some who make prudent or rash inferences, the latter standing a high chance of being trapped in linguistic interferences³. As a result, a humanistic approach to the learner as a whole person seems the appropriate one, since it focuses on personal identity, self-esteem, lack of criticism, feelings, creativity, freedom and responsibility (see Williams and Burden 1999: 36-38). Nevertheless, the different approaches to L2 learning should conjoin for a realistic picture in the 21st century, otherwise we will resemble the blind men and the elephant in the Asian parable, by grasping mere fragments or parts, but never the real entirety. A viable L2-learning framework should thus consider theoretical structures, mimicry and ‘the formation of habits’ (in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 108), but not ignore the ‘innate language acquisition capacity’ (in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 109), which draws on ‘perception, memory, categorization, and generalization’ (Lightbown and Spada 2021: 112).

A second terminological remark between *user* and *learner* should be made, the linguist Vivian Cook (2002: *passim*) separating them into real-life speakers and, respectively, potential speakers. Our study will make use rather of the first generic term, which encompasses the latter, but at times, it sets an interchangeable relation between them, based on the assumption that most learners will eventually turn into actual users.

The third distinction has a linguistic character, since we are going to focus on German native speakers learning an Eastern Romance language. It is common knowledge that the German language has a clocklike structure and clear-cut lexical items depending on position, form, starting and final points, completeness and so on. Such details are usually conveyed by particles or verbal prefixes, as in *an-*, *ab-*, *aus-*, *be-*, *zer-* or *zuschneiden* (all equating to *cut*), that differentiate between cutting slices, margins, certain forms or partial, complete and even first pieces from a whole. Probably the biggest shock is triggered by the verb *umfahren*, whose vowel-stress distinguishes between successfully going around something or somebody by a vehicle, as well as tragically knocking them over. In comparison to the conservative character of the German language, Romanian is

³ See de Groot’s (2002: 32-45) argumentation on ‘layered memory’, responsible for integrating or segregating languages within comprehension.

rather flexible and user-friendly, a possible difficulty lying in the existence of synonyms with various etymologies or even in the basic vocabulary, which is no longer purely Romance, but heavily influenced by Ottoman Turkish, (Old) Slavic, Greek, Hungarian or German. Nevertheless, we have recently discovered two examples to blow our conceptions apart, by which Romanian actually ‘snarls’ at any RFL learner, whereas German suddenly becomes ‘tamed’: *Anhänger* means trailer (*remorcă*), disciple, worshipper (*adept, susținător*), fan, supporter (*suporter, fan*), pendant (*medalion*), while *Schlüsselanhängers* is a key chain (*breloc*). The second polysemantic word is *Schläger* – bully (*bătăuș*), also a productive component in sports vocabulary: *Tennisschläger* – tennis racket (*rachetă de tenis*), *Tischtennisschläger* – paddle (*paletă de ping-pong*), *Baseballschläger* – baseball bat (*bătă de baseball*), *Golfschläger* – golf club (*crosă de golf*) and *Hockeyschläger* – hockey stick (*crosă de hochei*). To conclude with, such lexical differences between German and Romanian pose a challenge for the RFL learners, as the following depictions will demonstrate.

3. Shape and patterns. Light and shade

The city of Leipzig is closely connected not only to the commercial exchanges with the Wallachian and Moldavian regions more than 300 years ago, but also to the foundation of the first Romanian Language Institute in Germany, in April 1893 (see Burlacu 2024: 326-330). After one century, RFL is still taught in an academic context, within the Romanian Lectorate supported by the Romanian Language Institute (ILR) in Bucharest. The lectorate in Leipzig offers optional practical courses (A1, A2, B1, B2 and B2+ levels of competence), a culture-and-civilisation seminar, a linguistic seminar (taught in German and based on the Romanian-language phonetics and phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicology and pragmatics), two translation courses (German – Romanian and Romanian – German), as well as further cultural events (film evenings, translation workshops or lectures given by visiting professors).

The students interested in the Romanian-as-a-foreign-language courses at the Leipzig University represent a heterogeneous category, in terms of age (18 to 45), studies (philological and non-philological) or connections to the Romanian-speaking context (from lack of any contacts whatsoever to Romanian friends, partners or families). Naturally the majority are Germans, but among the international students interested in the RFL courses so far, there have been three students with Arabic as their L1, an American, a Byelorussian, two Italians, a Korean, a Netherlander, three Russians, a Spanish, two Swiss, a Turkish and one Ukrainian.

In the timespan 2019-2024, there have been around 45 students/ year enrolled in the RFL courses, which makes a total number of 225 students. The groups are rather small, two to ten students in each level course, so they participate with great enthusiasm in the individual or pair work. Even if the courses (ranging from A1 to B2 levels) are part of language modules, they all have an optional character, being credited with 3, 5 or 10 ECTS points, depending on the weekly frequency of the course (2, 4 or 6 academic hours). What is special about the RFL students in Leipzig is the fact that some of them repeat the courses, not due to exam-failure, but on a voluntary basis. After an interruption of one, two or even four semesters – they had either to read for their bachelor's degree or study for postgraduate degrees, whereas others had applied for scholarships abroad – they returned to the RFL-classes, even more motivated and no longer under time pressure. Such students may be labelled as 'romantic', being part of the Romanian 'family' in Leipzig and outbalancing by far the group of the so-called 'pragmatic' students.

The descriptions to follow thus integrate concrete information with subjective observations on the RFL-learners, as well as certain 'errors' or deviations, which typically occur at low (A1-A2), respectively high (B1-B2) levels of competence. It is also worth mentioning the students are allowed to use a bilingual dictionary for the last part of the exam, the text-writing, hence the odd occurrences to be discussed below, under the generic category of error analysis (all errors were obtained mostly from the students' written exams and occasionally from oral elicitation and in-class work). In the case of Romanian-as-a-heritage-language users, the inaccuracies will be approached separately, in a distinct subsection.

3.1. Portrayals of 'pragmatic' students

Although stereotyping should be avoided at all costs, it is still the subject of self-ironical or satirical writings, such as *The Xenophobe's Guides* (1999-2017) or Adam Fletcher's bilingual books, *How to be German in 50 easy steps* (2013) and *How to be German in 50 new steps* (2016), all of them pinpointing national traits and eccentricities in a humorous manner, thus fostering cultural awareness and tolerance. The existence of national stereotypes was confirmed by James Coleman within a university context, as well, by analysing data from about 3,000 respondents: "Compared to the British, the Germans are serious, unemotional, logical, efficient, hard-working, competent, not lazy or shy in the slightest, arrogant, confident, impatient, intolerant, ill-tempered, loud and relatively unfriendly and ungenerous" (in Byram and Fleming 1998: 50).

Almost thirty years later, I would not describe the Germans by the above-mentioned negative adjectives, but the first four epithets serve me good. Indeed, my pragmatic students have been *serious*, apparently *unemotional*, *logical* and *efficient*, once they bluntly admit, already in the introductory class, that they have no connections to or direct interests in Romania or the Romanian language, but they do need the academic points provided by the RFL course: 10 ECTS for the A1-level language module: a practical course (4 hours/week) and a culture-and-civilization seminar (2 hours/week). Such rational students have usually decided not to continue the study of the language to the next level, since the difficulty increased, but the ECTS decreased to 5 (4 hours/week). A few of them have attended classes regularly and made visible progress, but, to my disappointment, I have never met them again in the A2-level course. On the other hand, there have been certain students in this down-to-earth category who did reach the B1 level. In their case, the initial realistic portraits received, towards the end of the first semester, some light touches of ‘romanticism’, once they decided to continue the RFL-study at the next level.

3.2. Portrayals of ‘romantic’ students

As already mentioned, the so-called ‘romantic’ students have emotional ties to the Romanian language or social context, be they the restricted or extended family, a circle of friends, a scholarship in Sibiu or Bucharest, a one-year stay within the Scout Movement in a village near Sibiu or within a volunteer association in Bucharest, a two-week trip to the poor villages in the region of Moldova within a charity organization in the last three years or summer schools in Timișoara, at a higher education institution within the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and in Chișinău, through Moldova Institute Leipzig; in special cases, there may also be the fondness of folk music or simply the polyglot curiosity of learning a new language. Either way, such individuals represent the stable audience in our RFL courses, keen on discovering more and more lexemes, subtleties, culturemes, grammar or translation challenges.

Probably the most representative case of ‘lifelong’ devotion towards the Romanian language applies to three overenthusiastic students (B., R. and S.) repeating the advanced course a fifth time already. B. started attending the A1 course in 2020, out of personal reasons (a Romanian boyfriend), later also out of professional reasons – she has recently become the manager of her own company (professional cleaning services), where all the employees come from Moldova and Romania, most of whom cannot speak German. R. is a doctoral student whose focus lies on the role of the Black Sea as a geopolitical argument in Romania’s official

foreign policy narrative since the 1990s. She frequently travels to Bucharest to do research in the academic libraries or to conduct interviews. If B. mostly practises the language orally, being exposed to informal and dialectal uses as well, R. deals with the written formal language, whereas S., who is a professional interpreter (German, English and French), benefits from both written and oral inputs (by sporadically reading novels and listening to podcasts). They can all speak Romanian fluently and constantly ask for journalistic, literary and idiomatic language or C1-level grammar structures, some of which are to be found in various thought-provoking articles excerpted from the cultural weekly magazine *Dilema veche*. These three students have attained such a good competence level that they would not lose contact with the linguistic or sociopolitical context, being eager to participate in further activities organized in Leipzig or abroad (online), such as conferences, discussions or Romanian-film evenings. B. and R.'s positive attitudes towards the language community and their high motivation are thus doubled by the necessity to speak the language, due to their professional context – the so-called “*instrumental motivation* (language learning for immediate or practical goals)” (Gardner and Lambert, in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 90). However, quite often, it is practically impossible to delineate it from “*integrative motivation* (language learning for personal growth and cultural enrichment through contact with speakers of the other language)” (Gardner and Lambert, in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 90). In a further analysis, Dörnyei discusses upon three phases of motivation (in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 90): ‘choice motivation’, ‘executive motivation’ and ‘motivation retrospection’, the last phase characterizing those students eager to continue the RFL study.

3.3. Error analysis. Typical errors for the A1-A2 levels

The students’ portrayals would not be complete without a minimum error analysis, based on the error correction complementing the regular activities in the language classroom. As a matter of fact, “[e]rrors have traditionally been regarded as signs of failure on the part of both the teacher and the learner and have frequently led to a sense of demoralisation on both sides. Now, however, we realise more clearly that they represent normal stages in the development of communicative skills” (Littlewood 1999: 95).

The most typical error the beginners produce is the false pronunciation of the graphemes that interfere with their mother tongue, hence [z], instead of [s]: *casă* [*kʌzə], instead of [kʌsə] (house), *frumoasă* [*frumqazə], instead of [frumqasə] (beautiful), or [t͡s] instead of [z]: *lucrează* [*lukrɛʌt͡sə], instead of [lukrɛʌzə] (he/she/it works). Even if they presumably master the rule, they fail

at using it correctly when speaking, the “variable performance [being] a normal phenomenon in second language learners’ speech” (Littlewood 1999: 81). Similarly, in writing, they tend to use mostly *k* instead of *c*, as in **Bukurești* (instead of *București*/Bucharest), **kafea* (instead of *cafea*/coffee) or **bibliothekă* (instead of *biblioteca*/library) and rarely, even *z* or *ts* instead of *ț* [țs]: **veniz* (*veniți*/pl. you come), **facetsi* (*faceți*/pl. you do/make).

The noun ending in the plural poses a further challenge in the learning process, as in the highly frequent occurrence **omi* or **ome* (because of the singular *om*), instead of *oameni* (people), **sori*, **sore* or **sorele* (because of the singular *soră*), instead of *surori* (sisters), **pisice* (instead of *pisici*/cats), **sale* (instead of *săli*/rooms), **bicicleți* (instead of *biciclete*/bicycles) or **clube* (instead of *cluburi*/clubs). Since the German noun *hair* is in the plural, *die Haare*, a student has used the singular noun with a plural adjective: *Are păr *bruni* (instead of *brun*)/S(he) has brown hair. Naturally, the lexical restrictions that brown has in Romanian are quite difficult to master, even in the intermediate courses: *maro* (general objects), *șaten/castaniu* (exclusively for hair), *căprui* (exclusively for eye-colour), hence the frequent inadequate juxtaposition *păr *maro*.

In some cases, when the students can speak other Romance languages, they make use of transfer, the positive transfer facilitating comprehension (Fr., Rom. *avion*/plane), in contrast to the negative transfer, which hinders it: *pom* (fruit tree), falsely understood as apple (Fr. *pomme*, Rom. *măr*) or, even at higher levels, *a pensa* (pluck one’s eyebrows) used as to think (Fr. *penser*, Rom. *a gândi/a crede*). Sometimes, English interferes with the Romanian in certain lexical innovations: **casă de pahar*, the word-for-word translation of the British *glasshouse* (Rom. *seră*), **din timp în timp*, from time to time, instead of *din când în când* or *găd* (the exact pronunciation of *guard*, falsely understood as such, instead of the correct meaning hedge/fence). Further written innovations include spelling mistakes influenced by English: **cheapă* (instead of *ceapă*/onion), **încherici* (instead of *încerci*/sg. you try), **chai* (instead of *ceai*/tea), and lexical errors, such as: *mâncare *germănească* (instead of *germană*/German food), *un cartier pentru *pensionați* (instead of *pensionari*/ an area for the retired).

The compound perfect tense is often problematic, the auxiliary verb forms of ‘to have’ being often confused with the ones of the primary verb: **are* (instead of *a*) *lucrat*/(s)he worked, **avem* (instead of *am*) *făcut* / we did/made, **aveți* (instead of *ați*) *ascultat* /you listened. The verb groups and the specific endings in the present tense do not always come in handy, as reflected by the oddest occurrence in an A1 written text, produced by L., a student who had hardly attended the course, but used a dictionary for the two verbs and the noun:

*Noi *venem un cozonac să *coacim.*

Correct: *Noi vrem/venim să coacem un cozonac.* /We want/come to bake a traditional cake (cozonac).

There are lexical, grammatical and word order-related errors in this example, such as verb confusion: *a vrea* (want) vs. *a veni* (come) or, since the context was rather ambiguous, it may also be a false ending (correct: *venim*); secondly, a false ending for the verbal third group (correct: *coacem*), as well as the placement of the main verb at the end of the sentence, which totally echoes the German word-position, yet not in the least the Romanian word order. According to Piaget's cognitive theory, the human mind seeks *equilibration* or *cognitive adaptation*, by assimilating new information, fitting it into the old information and accommodating the latter to the former (in Williams and Burden 1999: 22). Such processes must be gone through while learning new vocabulary and a different phonetic and grammar system, the students having to constantly reshape the newly acquired linguistic world, by making use of the *personal-construct theory*, initiated by the psychotherapist and clinical psychologist George Kelly: "Learners are actively involved in constructing their own personal understanding of things, and this understanding will be different for different people" (Williams and Burden 1999: 27). Beyond the strangeness of L.'s statement above, there surely lie the scarce command of L2 and the recurrent L1-structures, which L. has tried to apply completely, but with less 'inspiration'.

3.4. Error analysis. Typical errors for the B1-B2 levels

Sometimes, "errors are often described as *fossilized*, meaning that they have become permanent features of the learner's speech" (Littlewood 1999: 34), typical ones being overgeneralisation errors – mostly stress placed on the wrong syllable, hence the 'foreign accent', or the verb group confusion, hence inaccurate endings produced by students at all levels: **dormesc* (A1) (instead of *dorm*)/I sleep, *să *scriești* (A2) (instead of *scrii*)/you write, **terminex* (instead of *termin*)/I finish, **relaxește* (B1) (instead of *relaxează*)/it relaxes, **întârziez* (B2+) (instead of *întârzii*)/I am late. Starting with higher levels, students are likely to produce such utterances: **Pe mine îmi place* (the verb 'to like' requires a clitic in the dative which, for emphasis reasons, can be doubled by a stressed pronoun in dative; here, the first one (*pe mine*) is in the accusative instead of dative)/ I like; or they use the definite article incorrectly: *înot în *lacul* (instead of *lac*)/ I swim in the lake or *un teren în *pădurea* (instead of *pădure*)/ a ground in the forest. Not only nouns in the plural, but also simple present forms and special conjunctive endings in the 3rd person pose a difficult problem, reflected in the sentence produced by a student with competent knowledge in French:

*Oamenii mei *de* (instead of *din*) *jur* (a better variant: *Oamenii din jurul meu*) **dorește* (instead of *doresc*) *să *locuiește* (instead of *locuiască*) *în *cartierurile* (instead of *cartierele*) *populare*. /The people around me would like to live in popular districts.

A case of semantic interference with the German language can be observed in: *un parc *amabil* (in German, *nett* means both nice and friendly, but the Romanian *amabil* is restricted to humans, in comparison to *drăguț*, that applies both to humans and non-humans). A further example confuses *if (dacă)* with *when (când)*, semantically expressed by *wenn*, or *happy (fericit)* with *lucky (norocos)*, equalled by *glücklich*, resulting into a sort of hallucination-like statement:

**Când sunteți *fericiți* (instead of *Dacă sunteți norocoși*), *puteți vedea niște *animali *africani* (instead of neuter pl. *animale africane*), *ca *girafi* (instead of *girafe*) *sau *antilopi* (instead of *antilope*) *la *parcul zoologic* (instead of *la ZOO/în grădina zoologică*). /When you are happy (actually: If you are lucky), you can see some African animals, such as giraffes and antelopes, in the Zoo.

Additionally, the higher-level students seem more confident in writing, so quite often, they do not look up words in the dictionary, but coin surprising lexemes, mostly shaped by German and English, sometimes by cognates in Romanian. The following examples, excerpted from the written texts within the B1 exams, are indeed a feast for the eyes and the brain alike:

*Am încercat să *prepar* (instead of *pregătesc*) *o *prezentățiune* (instead of *prezentare*) *pentru acest caz*. /I have tried to prepare a presentation for this case.

*Ar fi *posibil* (instead of *posibil*) *să *postpunem* (instead of *amânăm*) *ședința noastră*. /It would be possible to postpone our meeting.

*Vă *cer pe dumneavoastră* (instead of *Vă cer dumneavoastră/Vă rog pe dumneavoastră*) *de* (instead of *din*) *toată inima să munciți cu o echipă*. /I ask you from the bottom of my heart to work with a team.

*Este o hartă *incompletată* (instead of *incompletă*), *care nu *depictează* (instead of *descrie*) *decât jumătatea cartierului*. /There is an incomplete map, that depicts only half of the district.

*O hartă *de* (instead of *din*) *1915 care este *total de* (instead of *complet*) **inutil* (instead of *inutilă*) *pentru că e *învârstit* (instead of *veche*)! /A map from 1915, which is totally useless, because it is old! The last adjective, *învârstit*, represents the most creative invention I have encountered, since the student must have been familiar with the expression *a fi în vârstă* (to be old), but he may have also been influenced by the German-specific verbal prefixes.

From a teacher's perspective, learners may be viewed as resisters, receptacles ('the jugs and mugs' theory), raw material, clients, partners, individual explorers or democratic explorers (Meighan, in Williams and Burden 1999: 57-58). One student may belong to the last category, since R., who authored the last three examples, did not attend the courses regularly, yet kept on learning the language (A1-B1 levels) on his own, working by the Assimil-Method (the Assimil 500-page textbook for Romanian, authored by Vincent Iluțiu, 2022). Honestly declaring his addiction to the language, R. thus preferred the individual RFL exploration to the social interaction in the classroom context, yet remaining one of the best in his group.

3.5. Error analysis. Typical errors for users of Romanian as a heritage language

Among the proficient RFL students there are obviously those whose families originate from Romania. There are indeed very few who benefit from *additive bilingualism* (from my teaching experience, there are fewer in Leipzig than in Regensburg) – “the maintenance of the home language while the L2 is being learned” (Lightbown and Spada 2021: 34), the others falling under the category of *subtractive bilingualism* – they have simply unlearned Romanian while learning German in a German context. They have been exposed less and less to their family language; some had also moved out to study at the university, so they lost any contact even with the Romanian-speaking grandmothers or grandfathers. This is one of the recurrent reasons why such students enrol in the RFL courses and naturally, once exposed again to the language, they will start remembering some words from their childhood, most of which are regional and familiar: *tuși* instead of *mătușă* (aunt); *a pricepe*, instead of *a înțelege* (to understand); *ăsta/aia*, instead of *acesta/aceea* (this one/that one), *aicea*, instead of *aici* (here), *trebe*, instead of *trebuie* (must), *naționalitatea nemțească*, instead of *germană* (the German nationality) or lexiculturemes, such as *mămăligă* (polenta), *sarmale* (stuffed cabbage), *mititei/mici* (grilled minced meat rolls), *papanashi* (cheese dumplings), *langoși* (fried flatbread), *țuică/pălincă* (plum brandy), *vișinată* (cherry brandy) or even *socată* (elder flower juice).

In writing, they tend to drop the final -l, due to the oral Romanian language they have been exposed to: *În *primu rând* (instead of *primul*, firstly), **râu Timiș* (instead of *râul*, the river) or **micu* (instead of *micul*) *dejun* for breakfast. In rare cases, the German language interfered in the written texts, due to the fact that *s* is pronounced as *z* [z] in German, and *e* as *ă* [ə]), since D., whose oral competence level was actually B1, wrote **văsut* (instead of

văzut/seen), **să* **chiamă* (instead of *se cheamă/is called*), *vremea a fost *calde* (instead of sg. *caldă*)/ the weather was warm, or *mâncare *bune, dar *scumpe* (the singular noun should be followed by singular adjectives, in this case with the ending -ă, not the plural -e)/good, but expensive food. In a listening exercise, D. got confused by a sort of French – German – Romanian phonetical interference, writing **jouceri* (instead of *jucării/toys*). Such students are indeed a fascinating category, yet not truly a consistent and proficient group, as at the University of Regensburg, where they bear the name of *Secondos*, namely second-generation immigrants, and are even taught separate RFL courses, focused on orthography and vocabulary enhancement.

4. Final touches

Relying on a micro approach, namely on direct observations within the classroom context, the present article has drawn, in sketchy lines, a series of portraits of the RFL learners at the Leipzig University in the last five years. The subsections, whose titles echo certain artistic or drawing-related concepts, have stemmed from a twofold perspective: firstly, a subjective perception, according to which the L2-users classify as realistic or ‘pragmatic’, and, on the other hand, as nostalgic or ‘romantic’; secondly, an objective recording of natural, tapered-off and fossilized ‘errors’ or better say, typical or personal divergences from the norm, artistically viewed as shades and tones which may be later scumbled, erased or thickened, yet each of them representing countless points in the learning process. It is worth highlighting anew the fact that: “Language development is not just a case of adding one rule after another. Rather, it involves processes of integrating new language forms and patterns into an existing interlanguage, readjusting and restructuring until all the pieces fit” (Lightbown and Spada 2021: 225). Actually, Færch and Kasper examine the two types of interlanguage knowledge, polarized between implicit and explicit, the L2-users experiencing a linear, yet not necessarily complete, sequence: from the L2 use without reflecting on the rule, then pondering on the rule by relying on intuition, to rule-description in own words and culminating with the explicit rule-description in metalinguistic terms (Færch and Kasper 1986: 212), the last stage being, without doubt, coveted by both students and teachers.

At the same time, we should not neglect the existence of plateaus in language learning, namely the apparent lack of any progress whatsoever, no matter the input, exposure, efforts, or time invested in understanding the L2 vocabulary, grammar or pragmatics. Krashen also speaks about the ‘affective filter’, “a metaphorical barrier that prevents learners from acquiring language

even when appropriate input is available” (in Lightbown and Spada 2021: 111). Additionally, stress can hinder not only learning (the case of C., who suffered from panic and claustrophobic attacks), but also recalling plain words, systematically reviewed from tens of note cards (the case of S. undergoing severe test anxiety, fearing failure and negative evaluation). In a further classification, learners may be called *monitor over-users* – one hardly says anything and is very heavy on the pauses and self-correction, in contrast to *monitor under-users* – one does not care whether what they are saying (or writing) is grammatical or not (Krashen, in Edmonson 1999: 182).

To conclude, yet preserving the artistic realm, the selected RFL portrayals can certainly not be shaped up, being prone to change, if their real references – the L2 users, continue to learn the language, be it within a formal or informal context, or even unlearn it. This is why the sketched depictions will remain ‘portraits in the making’, an intriguing mixture of photographic and self-portraiture, in which the sitters – the same L2 users, should be no longer voiceless; the teacher’s voice “is only a partial one. It is a voice which needs to be complemented by the other, oftentimes, hidden voices of the classroom” (Nunan, in Bailey and Nunan 1997: 53). Consequently, the students’ views should also be considered for further analysis, since they may change not only the lighting, the shades or the focus, but also the settings, the sitters and the viewers.

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LISTENING IN L2 ROMANIAN: WHY FUNCTION WORDS GO UNNOTICED

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ABSTRACT. *Listening in L2 Romanian: Why Function Words Go Unnoticed.*

Listening is a crucial but often overlooked component of second language (L2) acquisition. Despite its importance in developing linguistic competence, listening is frequently underemphasized in classroom instruction. This article examines L2 listening through the framework of cognitive linguistics, particularly cognitive grammar, which views language as an extension of general cognitive processes such as perception, memory, and categorization. By integrating insights from John Field's research on input processing and Baddeley's working memory model, we explore how L2 learners prioritize content words over function words in real-time listening. A small-scale empirical study was conducted with 37 students enrolled in a preparatory Romanian language course, using a paused transcription method to assess word recognition accuracy in speech. The findings confirm that L2 learners rely more on content words over function words, which is consistent with previous research in other languages. Notably, within function words, clitic pronouns and certain conjunctions were particularly difficult to recognize, suggesting that semantic schematicity and phonetic reduction play a key role in perceptual challenges. The study also highlights the continued reliance on top-down processing, even among B1-level learners, and the persistent difficulty in automatic segmentation of spoken input. Finally, the article argues for a reassessment of listening instruction, emphasizing explicit training in speech perception, function word recognition, and phonological processing. A balanced approach, combining comprehensible input, explicit instruction, and structured practice, is proposed to enhance L2 learners' ability to process spoken language more effectively.

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REZUMAT. *Ascultarea în limba română L2: De ce cuvintele funcționale trec neobservate.* În ciuda rolului esențial în achiziția limbii, receptarea mesajului oral este una dintre cel mai puțin reprezentate activități în predare. Perspectiva adoptată e cea a lingvisticii cognitive, mai precis a gramaticii cognitive, și valorifică o serie de studii dedicate în special decodării și recunoașterii cuvintelor în receptarea mesajului oral (Field 2009, Baddeley 2003). Scopul cercetării este ca, pornind de la un studiu empiric la scară mică, să aflăm în ce măsură vorbitorii de RLS prioritizează cuvintele cu conținut lexical față de cele cu conținut gramatical în ascultare. Metoda utilizată a fost cea a transcrierii cu pauză. Rezultatele confirmă faptul că vorbitorii de L2 se bazează mai mult pe cuvintele cu conținut lexical decât pe cele cu conținut gramatical, ceea ce este în concordanță cu cercetările anterioare pe alte limbi. În special, în cazul cuvintelor funcționale, pronumele și anumite conjuncții au fost dificil de recunoscut, probabil datorită schematismului semantic, formelor reduse din punct de vedere fonetic și poziției neaccentuate. Studiul evidențiază, de asemenea, înclinația spre o procesare vârf-bază, chiar și în rândul cursanților de nivel B1, și dificultățile întâmpinate de aceștia în segmentarea automată a inputului vorbit. În final, articolul pledează pentru o reevaluare a felului în care ascultarea e abordată în predare, subliniind importanța unor activități dedicate explicit decodării și recunoașterii cuvintelor, în special a celor cu conținut gramatical și relațional. O abordare echilibrată, care combină expunerea la input, predarea explicită și exersarea sistematică ar putea spori capacitatea cursanților L2 de a procesa mai eficient limba vorbită.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ascultare L2, segmentare, decodare, cuvinte funcționale, specificitate semantică, schematism semantic, lingvistică cognitivă, româna ca limbă străină*

1. A case for Listening

Even after decades of research, Michael Rost notes, “we may just be scratching the surface of a deep understanding of the fundamental processes and mechanisms that underpin our ability to communicate with members of our own species” (Rost 2011, 1). Listening is both mysterious and complex for reasons that we will detail later, but it is nevertheless essential for language learning, both for L1 and L2 speakers. First, it allows language learners to engage with and process language input, supporting the development of other language skills (Vandergrift and Goh 2012, 4). Then, it is particularly important for the transfer of the knowledge and the abilities developed in the classroom in the outside world. After leaving the classroom, learners expand their language

knowledge through reading and listening. While both are valuable, listening is crucial as it enhances spoken competence by providing syntactic, lexical, phonological, and pragmatic input. Therefore, training learners in listening is essential to support their autonomy in language learning (Field 2008, 5).

In this article, we are going to look at listening (and language in general) through the lenses of cognitive linguistics, more specifically cognitive grammar, which treats language as an integral part of cognition rather than a separate module, since language recruits general cognitive phenomena, such as attention, perception, categorization, memory, from which it cannot be dissociated. According to R. Langaker, the founder of cognitive grammar, a language is a structured inventory of conventional linguistic units, while a unit is a pattern of processing activity that is thoroughly mastered and can thus be carried out more or less automatically (a “cognitive routine”). A specific structure becomes a linguistic unit through gradual psychological entrenchment and conventionality. It is also important to note that according to this specific view of language, all linguistic units are abstracted from usage events, from actual instances of language use. As a consequence, every usage event “has some impact, however slight, on the linguistic system as currently constituted” (Langaker 2007, 421-463). This sheds a different light on the relevance and the emphasis we should place on practising the actual language activities, reception, production and interaction, rather than on explaining the language system to the students. While dedicating time to explaining and practising various language structures is not wrong per se, teachers are called to find balance in their approach. However, to find balance, one needs to understand first how language in general and language acquisition in particular work.

Although most students consider listening a priority, we notice that, at least in some contexts, this is not entirely reflected in the attention it gets in the actual class setting. “When there is pressure on contact hours, remarks Field, it is often the listening session that is cut. Students are rarely assessed on their listening skills, and the problems of many weak listeners pass undiagnosed” (Field 2009, 1). Despite an increase in classroom listening activities, learners are still largely expected to develop their listening skills independently, with minimal direct guidance from the teacher. Plus, there is an over-emphasis on comprehension tasks, the listening activity taking the form of an anxiety-inducing test rather than an opportunity for training students how to approach listening (Vandergrift and Goh 2012, 4). There are many reasons for this and we will mention here just a few of them.

The very first reason has to do with the fact that the outcomes of a listening activity are mostly unclear to both the students and the teachers involved. There is, as John Field puts it, no shared view “of the *behaviour* that we want them to achieve by the end of the programme” (Field 2009, 120). In order for the

teachers to be able to understand these outcomes and then communicate them to the students, they first need to understand themselves the main difficulties that learners encounter when asked to listen to a spoken text in a second language.

Another thing we need to remember is that, alongside reading, listening is an “invisible” skill. While in the case of speaking and writing, we have a product to assess, for the two receptive skills, all the work happens in the learner’s brain. We can of course check comprehension with the help of certain questions, but especially at lower levels, it is not clear if (or to what extent) the accuracy of the answers comes from truly understanding the text or from the learner’s ability to draw on general knowledge. We know that it is always a combination of the two, but we remain unsure of how much the text is transparent to the learner at the end of the listening activity. Also, it is perceived as being “passive” because, despite some progress in the field, a good number of teachers still treat listening exercises as practice for exams: they offer students handouts, play the recording twice and then check the answers and possibly clarify some vocabulary issues, at best. This is felt by both the teachers and the students as interrupting the natural flow of communication, it is unnatural, passive and, more importantly, progress is difficult to assess. When it happens (because it does eventually), it seems to be the result of chance, rather than specific practices. This reinforces the traditional view that since in L1 we were taught to speak, read and write, but nobody taught us to listen, things should follow the same course in L2.

Finally, one characteristic of the spoken text is the fact that it unfolds in real-time, which makes it very hard for students to break it down into the appropriate segments. Unlike reading, where we have the visual clues and the text to go back to, in the case of listening, learners find themselves without much support and thus they don’t seem “to understand the processes that are involved in learning to listen in a new language” (Vandergrift and Goh 2012, 4, 5). We assume that after the learner gets used to the phonology of the target language, “listening skills from the first language (L1) will transfer themselves to the second (L2) by some process of osmosis” (Field 2009, 1, 2). At least in the case of the Romanian language, or, rather, in the contexts we are familiar with, a relatively short period of time is dedicated to the phonological peculiarities of the language.

2. Stages of listening comprehension

Listening is a multi-faceted process that involves different levels of neurological, linguistic, semantic, and pragmatic processing. A complete understanding of listening must integrate all these levels of processing, as they work together. As far as neurological processing is concerned, we need to

understand the physiological basis of listening, while linguistic processing covers the way in which listeners recognize and interpret speech sounds (speech perception, identifying speech units, such as words, syllables or other prosodic features, through phonotactic knowledge and syntactic parsing). Through semantic processing, listeners derive meaning by appealing to prior knowledge (or schemata), and by making use of various types of inferences to fill the gaps in understanding. Finally, the pragmatic level of processing helps listeners interpret the implied meaning and the speaker's intentions (Rost 2011, 11-95).

In this article, we will focus on the linguistic and semantic aspects only, but before moving to the actual analysis, a brief description of how the brain processes speech is necessary. As mentioned above, spoken language is continuous, so it is the brain's job to divide speech into meaningful units. In order to do this, listeners apply a set of phonological rules which makes it possible for them to recognize patterns in sounds that help them separate words or phrases. They also rely on various prosodic cues, such as intonation, stress, rhythm, etc. Once they have done this, or rather, while doing this, the brain quickly retrieves possible word meanings from memory, thus trying to gain lexical access. A step further would be organizing words into grammatical structures to make sense of them (syntactic parsing) (Rost 2011, 34-39).

In short, for L2 learners, initially, the ear receives raw acoustic signals, which must be matched to phonemes of the target language. These phonemes are then grouped into syllables and later assembled into words. At a higher level, words often form familiar clusters, corresponding to common phrases or expressions. Beyond word recognition, listeners must also identify two crucial patterns: grammatical structure and intonation (Field 2009, 113).

Similarly, Vandergrift and Goh (2012, 36-56) describe the three stages in listening comprehension: a perception phase (word segmentation), a parsing phase (grouping words into chunks) and a utilization phase (using background knowledge and inference to interpret meaning.). According to their cognitive model, listeners use parallel processing (top-down & bottom-up) to build comprehension and it integrates acoustic processing (hearing sounds), lexical access (recognizing words), syntactic processing (understanding grammar), semantic interpretation (deriving meaning) and pragmatic processing (inferring intent & social meaning).

2.1. Challenges for L2 learners

Several things make listening harder for L2 speakers. First, it is the lack of automaticity (L2 learners process words more slowly), then there is a higher cognitive load (L2 learners must consciously decode words rather than recognize

them instantly) and finally, the variability in speech (accents, speed, and informal speech patterns) makes comprehension even harder for them. Lack of cultural schema may also play an important part.

Also, it is important to note that when learning to listen in a second language, listeners do not start from scratch. They already possess a well-developed listening competence in their first language, where the various cognitive processes involved in comprehension operate well. The challenge in L2 listening is not about acquiring entirely new skills but about adapting existing ones to function effectively in a different linguistic environment. This adaptation requires the listener to suppress some highly automatic routines used in their L1, as these may not always apply to the structure and sound patterns of the second language. The core difficulty for L2 listeners lies in adjusting to the unfamiliar characteristics of the second language, including its phonological system, function words, word forms, grammatical structures, and intonation patterns. These aspects differ from those of the listener's native language and require deliberate adaptation and practice (Field 2009, 112-114).

A key distinction between novice and expert listeners is the degree of automaticity in decoding speech. Expert listeners possess highly automatic decoding routines, enabling them to recognize and match sound patterns to words with speed, accuracy, and confidence. In contrast, novice listeners struggle with decoding, requiring greater mental effort to match sounds to words. This additional cognitive load limits their ability to process overall meaning, as much of their attention is occupied with basic decoding rather than understanding the speaker's message in its entirety (Field 2009, 115). In essence, successful L2 listening development involves refining and automating the decoding process. With targeted practice, learners gradually reduce their reliance on conscious effort, allowing them to process speech more fluently and focus on comprehension rather than struggling with word recognition.

More specifically, among the cognitive factors that influence listening success working memory capacity and processing speed play the most important part. Working memory, as defined by Alan Baddeley, refers to the limited-capacity system responsible for temporarily maintaining and storing information while supporting cognitive processes such as reasoning, learning, and comprehension. It acts as an interface between perception, long-term memory, and action (Baddeley 2003). The model of working memory proposed by Baddeley includes a four-component framework: *the central executive* (the control system that directs attention and manages cognitive processes), *the phonological loop* (a subsystem dedicated to verbal and auditory information), *the visuospatial sketchpad* (which processes visual and spatial information) and the episodic buffer (which serves as a link between working memory and long-term memory) (Baddeley 2000).

Out of the three components, the one most relevant to language learning is the phonological loop. The phonological loop consists of two sub-components: the phonological store (“Inner Ear”), which holds auditory information for a few seconds before it decays and the articulatory rehearsal process (“Inner Voice”) which refreshes the information in the phonological store by subvocal rehearsal (mentally repeating words) and which prevents decay of short-term verbal memory. The way the phonological loop works explains a few key phenomena related to language acquisition: the phonological similarity effect (words that sound similar are harder to remember than those that sound distinct, which suggests that verbal information is stored based on sound rather than meaning), the word length effect (short words are easier to recall than longer words, because longer words take more time to rehearse, leading to greater memory decay) and articulatory suppression (if participants are asked to say an irrelevant sound while trying to memorize words, their verbal memory performance declines, as the articulatory rehearsal process is disrupted, preventing refreshment of information) (Baddeley 2003). So, in the case of foreign language learning, the phonological loop supports new phoneme acquisition, learning and retaining unfamiliar words.

Given the limited capacity of working memory, we should perhaps turn our attention towards the way L2 speakers tackle the spoken text. Research suggests that less experienced L2 listeners primarily rely on individual word recognition as their entry point to understanding speech. Rather than interpreting speech through a broader contextual framework, they often build hypotheses based on isolated words. This fragmented approach indicates that early-stage listening training should focus on word recognition and common lexical chunks, rather than the traditional bottom-up progression from phonemes to larger discourse units such as intonation groups (Field, 2009, 118). By developing a foundation in word recognition, even listeners with a lower proficiency can establish initial footholds in comprehension, enabling them to engage more effectively with spoken input. In order to comprehend speech effectively, listeners draw upon three key sources of information: input (Speech Stream), linguistic knowledge (phonology, vocabulary, and grammar of the language, including word meanings) and context (general knowledge and prior knowledge about the unfolding discourse) (Field 2009, 126).

While all three are essential, the final part of our article is dedicated to a little experiment regarding linguistic input: we want to find out whether learners of Romanian as a second language favour vocabulary over grammar-related words in the process of listening comprehension. The answer to this question is relevant because it will help us identify the true challenges learners encounter when listening to an L2 text, it will offer us some direction in how we plan our

listening activities in class, by taking into consideration those challenges and consequently designing activities that will help learners overcome them. In other words, the next section is a window into what happens in our students' brains, thus making the process of listening comprehension less of an invisible skill.

3. Content or function words?

Before we dive into the practical aspects of the research, one more terminological clarification is needed. According to the view put forward by cognitive grammar, lexicon and grammar form "a continuum consisting solely of symbolic structures". So, both "content" and "function" words are, in fact, "symbolic units", with a phonological and a semantic pole. The two differ from each other in their level of semantic specificity (or schematicity) and symbolic complexity. Lexical items are fixed expressions and have a high degree of semantic and phonological specificity, while the symbolic assemblies that are considered part of grammar, are more schematic (Langacker 2007). Though we treat the two in a unified way, by regarding them as symbolic units, we still think that their variation in terms of specificity or even phonological complexity has an impact on the way listeners process them.

In an article entitled "Bricks or Mortar: Which Parts of the Input Does a Second Language Listener Rely on?", John Field investigates how second language (L2) listeners process spoken language, focusing on whether they rely more on content words (bricks) or function words (mortar) (Field 2008). In fact, this study in particular represents the starting point for our research. We wanted to see if his results could be confirmed in the case of Romanian as a second language. For Field, content words (bricks) are open-class words that carry lexical meaning, such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, while function words (mortar) represent words that signal grammatical relationships, such as prepositions, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, and determiners. The study found that L2 listeners process content words more accurately than function words, even though function words appear more frequently in speech and this was consistent across different L1 backgrounds and proficiency levels. On the other hand, function words are often misheard or ignored. Even at higher levels of English proficiency, L2 learners continued to struggle with function words. This suggests that the difficulty is not just phonetic, but also cognitive since L2 listeners seem to prioritize meaning over grammatical structure. Another factor contributing to this (and this seems to align with Baddeley's 2000 assumption that verbal information is stored based on sound rather than meaning), is the fact that content words are stressed, therefore more perceptually salient, while function

words tend to be unstressed, making them harder to identify. L2 listeners use stressed syllables as anchors, often ignoring weak syllables that are typically associated with function words.

Similarly, Vafaei and Suzuki examine the relative importance of vocabulary knowledge and syntactic knowledge in second language listening ability. According to their findings, vocabulary knowledge had a stronger effect on listening ability than syntactic knowledge (twice as much), and, more specifically, aural vocabulary knowledge was a significant predictor, confirming previous research suggesting that spoken vocabulary size directly influences listening comprehension. While syntactic knowledge significantly contributed to listening ability, its effect size was half that of vocabulary knowledge. Metacognitive knowledge and working memory also had an impact on listening ability, as did listening anxiety (Vafaei and Suzuki 2020).

3.1. Participants and procedure

This is a rather small-scale study that recruited 37 students enrolled in the preparatory year at Babeş-Bolyai University. The participants began their language course in October and followed an intensive language learning programme of 25 hours weekly. At the time when they were asked to participate in this research they had completed their A2 module and they were almost halfway through their B1 module. It is important to note that they had various linguistic backgrounds (Arabic, English, Ukrainian, Farsi, Turkish, Turkmen, French, English, Italian), but the influence of L1 on their performance was not analysed for the purpose of this article. Previous studies have shown that L1 was not a significant factor in students' ability to recognize function words, but further research dedicated to investigating L1 impact on word recognition in Romanian is needed. In a focus group, they were asked to name the aspects they found the most difficult when listening in Romanian. Among the things they mentioned the most were "pronunciation", "accent", "speaking too fast" or words being "similar to others", which created confusion. Only one mentioned grammar among the factors that influenced their listening ability, and one said that context (or lack of) can have an impact on comprehension. It seems as if learners consider decoding and correctly identifying words in the speech stream the most difficult part of listening.

The method used here is that of paused transcription: participants listened to a recording that had brief pauses inserted at certain intervals. During the short pauses, they had to write down the last few words (five or six). The material consisted of two recordings, a travel vlog and an interview with a student, and they included 18 such pauses and a number of 97 words, divided

approximately equally between function words (48) and content words (49). We included verbs, nouns and adjectives in the category of content words, while pronouns, conjunctions and prepositions were considered functors. Although, as mentioned above, we cannot draw a sharp line between the two, we used as primary criteria for this division the level of semantic specificity/schematicity. So, while prepositions, conjunctions or auxiliary verbs are semantically more schematic, nouns, verbs and adjectives have a much higher degree of semantic specificity. Also, function words tend to be not only symbolically noncomplex, but also much shorter (often consisting of one syllable).

3.2. Results and interpretation

The results of the study confirm the fact that content words seem to play a more important role in listening than function words (58.7003% vs. 42.004%) (Table 1), so with a marked difference between the two (a 16.696% gap). So how can we explain the gap? First of all, the results confirm the conclusion of previous studies: L2 listeners focus on meaning rather than grammatical structure and seem to struggle with function words even at a B1 level, despite the high frequency of these words in speech. Because most function words are symbolically noncomplex and short, the inability to recognize them can be caused by poor word segmentation, by difficulty in decoding, in the perception phase. However, we believe that the difficulty of accurately identifying function words cannot be placed simply at a phonetic level, but it has to do also with their semantic specificity. As numbers will show, even within the category of content or function words, there are considerable differences among sub-categories. We believe that their level of schematicity and specificity determines the level of accuracy in recognition.

Thus, out of all function words, pronouns have the lowest level of recognition, 32.046% overall. If however, we eliminate the relative pronoun “care”, the percentage drops to 25.405%, the lowest of all categories analysed. In the subgroup of pronouns, there were several personal and reflexive pronouns, especially unstressed, preposed forms of these pronouns. The plethora of personal pronouns in Romanian, especially the Accusative and Dative forms, are often difficult to learn by L2 speakers and the results seem to confirm this, as listeners struggle to even hear or recognize them in speech. The explanation comes partially from the fact that they form one-syllable words (“ne”, “le”, “-o”, “îl”), in unstressed positions, and are easy to ignore, but also from their high degree of semantic schematicity. Also, perhaps listeners find the clitic doubling redundant. The clarity or emphasis that they bring, at this level of language competence, is more of a subtlety that comes later. The high error rate in clitic

pronoun recognition aligns with Baddeley's (2012) model, suggesting that limited phonological working memory capacity may hinder processing of less salient lexical items.

Conjunctions come next with a higher level of accurate recognition. However, we notice that within this subcategory, again, not all conjunctions are created equal. Conjunctions such as "și" (and) or "iar" (but), are considerably more semantically specific than the conjunction "să" (used to introduce verbs in the subjunctive). While the number of accurate answers for this category overall amounts to almost 43%, the percentage drops to 34.459% for the conjunction "să", despite its high level of frequency in Romanian and the extensive time dedicated to teaching the structure in class. The explanation comes almost certainly from its high level of semantic schematicity, which makes it easier to miss in speech.

Out of all function words, prepositions have the highest recognition rate, well above the category overall: 50.990%. This is again consistent with our expectations, given the fact that prepositions tend to be more semantically specific: "pe" (on), "la" (at), "pentru" (for), "în" (in), etc. The particle "a" that marks the infinitive, considered a segmental morpheme of a prepositional origin, represents a special case because it is desemanticized. There are very few occurrences in the texts, so it is hard to draw any definite conclusions for now, but it is still worth noting that it registers the lowest rate of accuracy. More research is needed to confirm this, but it is consistent with the rest of the results: the lower the semantic specificity, the more difficult for the word to be recognised by listeners. Predictably, when part of a familiar collocation such as "pe jos" ("on foot"), the percentage of accurate recognition was very high.

Moving on to content words, the results here are even more striking. According to Langaker 2007, symbolic units can be divided into two main categories: *things* (a thing being a bounded region in the same domain of conceptual space) and *relations* (relational expressions that profile the interconnections among conceived entities). A noun, by this definition, would be a symbolic structure that designates a thing, while adjectives, adverbs and verbs designate relations. If we analyse the results, we notice that nouns tend to be recognised to a much greater extent than members of the other categories 70.981%, followed by adjectives, verbs and adverbs. Adverbs come last, with only 45.410%, again due to their higher semantic schematicity.

This is consistent with findings coming from electrophysiological, neuropsychological, and neuroimaging studies, which note that nouns and verbs activate overlapping but functionally distinct areas in the brain, depending on meaning, task complexity, and linguistic structure. Thus, nouns and verbs differ in processing speed and complexity: studies show that nouns are processed faster

than verbs in isolated word recognition tasks. Also, in sentence-level processing, verbs impose greater syntactic and morphological demands, requiring integration with surrounding words. Also, interestingly, verb processing is more impaired in Broca's aphasia (frontal damage), possibly due to its higher cognitive demands. Broca's area is known to be in charge of grammar and syntax (Vigliocco et al. 2011). This suggests that cognitive grammar categorization of verbs as "relations" is accurate and explains why they are more difficult to process than nouns. It is perhaps worth noticing that in the case of certain high frequency verbs (for example *a avea* "to have"), students identified it correctly, but obviously focused on content, since they wrote down a variety of forms from the grammatical paradigm of the verb (different tenses, moods, inflections).

Accuracy in function words (overall)	Accuracy in content words (overall)
42.004%	58.7003%
Pronouns (overall)	Noun (overall)
32.046%	70.981%
Pronouns (without care)	Adjective (overall)
25.405%	55.945%
Conjunctions (overall)	Adjective (pronoun)
42.972	55.405
The conjunction "să"	Verb (overall)
34.459%	51.158%
Prepositions (overall)	Adverb (overall)
50.990%	45.410%

Table 1

The results seem to confirm Field's findings that function words are perceptually weaker due to their unstressed nature in connected speech and are significantly more difficult to recognize by L2 listeners.

3.3. Applications for teaching

One of the findings of this article is that L2 learners pay considerably more attention to content words than function words, and this remains true even for intermediate-level learners. In the first stages of language learning, they most likely approximate the meaning of a paragraph starting from a few content words that they grasp. Then, they use top-down processing to fill in the gap. The fact that they continue to do this even at higher levels may also be a

sign that directed, intentional listening activities are necessary to increase the accuracy of function word recognition, with a focus on the more semantically schematic ones such as clitic pronouns or certain complementisers or conjunctions. One may argue that if comprehension is achieved despite the listeners' ability to spot these words, then there is no need to draw their attention towards them.

Ever since Krashen's Monitor Model and comprehensible input hypothesis, we have been aware of the importance of input processing for language acquisition in general. His research marked an important switch in language teaching from structure-based approaches to approaches that place emphasis on meaning. According to Krashen, learners make a lot of progress simply by being exposed to comprehensible input (the $i+1$ model, where i is the student's level, while $+1$ is the new language to be acquired) (Krashen 1985). Though we think most of his conclusions are accurate, we still think that in order for students to progress faster, they benefit from guided instruction. Several theories and models in language acquisition confirm this: Richard Schmidt's noticing hypothesis, according to which nothing is learned unless it is first noticed (Schmidt 2001), Pienemann's processability theory (Pienemann 2003) and especially Bill VanPatten's input processing theory (VanPatten 2004).

In VanPatten's view, input processing refers to the way learners process linguistic input to extract meaning and function. It involves perceiving (auditory recognition of a sound), noticing (consciously registering a form), and making form-meaning connections. An important distinction for him is the input-intake distinction: input is all the language that a learner is exposed to, while intake is the portion of the input that gets processed and made available for further learning. As we have seen from the results of our research, not all input becomes intake, as learners filter and prioritize certain linguistic elements while ignoring others. VanPatten presents several key principles that govern how learners prioritize meaning over form when processing input: *the primacy of meaning principle* (learners process input for meaning before processing it for form), *the primacy of content words principle* (learners first process content words before function words), *the lexical preference principle* (when both a lexical item and grammatical marker encode the same meaning, learners rely on lexical items), *the preference for nonredundancy principle* (learners prioritize grammatical markers that are not redundant with lexical meaning), *the meaning-before-nonmeaning principle* (learners process meaningful forms before non-meaningful ones), *the availability of resources principle* (if processing meaning is too demanding, learners will ignore grammatical forms), and *the sentence location principle* (learners tend to process items in sentence-initial position before medial or final positions) (VanPatten 2004, 5-33).

There have been several attempts to investigate the effects of input on language learning, from extensive exposure to certain language forms (input flood method), to highlighting language features in enriched texts (enhanced input method) and finally to processing instruction (students are asked to process a text, without appealing to prior knowledge or context and relying solely on the language). (Lightbown and Spada 2017, 162-164). Though these comprehension-based approaches do indeed show that students make important progress when exposed to language, other researchers see comprehension-based activities as “an excellent way to begin learning and as a supplement to other kinds of learning for more advanced students” (Lightbown and Spada 2017, 165).

Similarly, a combined approach is suggested by Catherine J. Doughty in *Effects of Instruction on Learning a Second Language*. She examines how instruction influences learning outcomes and notes that while instruction can accelerate certain aspects of language acquisition and seems to be highly effective in the short term, “explicitly learned knowledge is indeed forgotten unless the feature is subsequently encountered in the input for a period of time” (Doughty 2004, 198-199).

In conclusion, a balanced approach would be useful, with some explicit instruction and enough exposure to input, as well as enough focus on both form and meaning. While comprehension of the general or global meaning of a text (or even of detailed information) may not depend on successfully decoding and understanding every function word, some targeted listening activities may improve both listening skills (by helping students avoid misunderstandings or even facilitating access to the more subtle and nuanced shades of meaning) and speaking and writing. By repeated exposure to language input, students learn that certain patterns are more probable than others, learn to anticipate and, finally, manage to use those patterns in speech.

Here are some practical suggestions on how we could improve students’ listening abilities when it comes to word segmentation and function word recognition:

a. Switch from testing listening to teaching listening

Traditional listening lessons often test comprehension rather than train listening skills. Learners listen to an audio recording, answer comprehension questions, and receive feedback, but they are not explicitly taught how to process spoken input better. Teachers should incorporate activities that train decoding skills, rather than just assessing understanding. There are several ways of doing this. Micro-listening tasks may be useful, by focusing on individual phonemes, function words, and weak syllables rather than full-sentence comprehension. Dictation and transcription, although largely viewed as old-fashioned, can help

students practice decoding. Also, especially as a warm-up activity we can use word recognition drills: we play fast-paced speech and have students write/underline words they hear to train their segmentation skills.

b. Prioritize word recognition

Since L2 learners struggle to identify words in connected speech, due to weak segmentation skills, we could focus on helping them become more efficient at recognizing words and lexical chunks in fast, natural speech. Typical activities include chunking practice (have students listen to a sentence and mark word boundaries), minimal pair exercises (train students to distinguish similar sounds, such as [a], [ă] [î]) and listening to naturally fast speech to gradually expose learners to authentic speech rates.

c. Train function word recognition explicitly

As we have seen, L2 learners over-rely on content words and pay less attention to function words, which can sometimes lead to misinterpretation. To avoid this, we can design focused listening tasks that draw attention to function words, such as function word gap-fills (remove function words from transcripts and have students predict missing elements), contrastive listening (play two similar sentences that differ only in function words and have students identify the difference), stress and rhythm exercises (teach how function words are unstressed and reduced in fast speech).

d. Provide more exposure to natural speech

Natural speech is perceived as very difficult by students due to certain phonetic alterations and fast delivery. An increased exposure to authentic connected speech, using materials featuring real-life conversational speech (which should be level appropriate) instead of scripted audio would be beneficial and so would be activities that highlight weak forms or focus on intonation patterns.

e. Encourage active listening and self-monitoring to improve metacognition

Teaching learners metacognitive strategies will help them monitor their listening process and improve comprehension. First, students are asked to give their pre-listening predictions, then they are exposed for the first time to the input. After the first listening, students are encouraged to do some self-monitoring and to reflect on which words they missed and why. They may work individually or may discuss with a partner what they understood and what they missed and perhaps identify why that happened. Pause-and-guess exercises (stop a recording mid-sentence and ask students to predict the next word) may

also be useful during this first phase. Then they are exposed to listening the second time. This second listening will be dedicated to monitoring and fixing the problems identified. The listeners check the points where there was disagreement, correct them, and add additional details. Then, a whole-class discussion takes place, in which all participants contribute to reconstructing the text and reviewing the most important details; attention is drawn to how students understood certain words, pieces of information, and parts of the text. In the final verification stage, students listen for the third time, while focusing on the information discussed with the entire class in the previous stage. This third listening may be accompanied by a transcription of the text (Vandergrift 2004). This approach allows both teachers and students to identify problems, to understand what the sources of the problems are and to tackle them effectively.

4. Conclusions

The results of our small scale experiment point to the fact that explicit training in speech perception for instructors is certainly important, since background knowledge, topic familiarity, or conversational context will not compensate for difficulties in recognizing spoken words. Additionally, research on L2 listening has historically prioritized the study of contextual cues over the examination of how learners decode the speech signal itself. This has contributed to the widespread notion that “context saves the day” (Field 2009, 127), a belief that, while partially true, overlooks the reality that effective listening must also involve *precise* phonetic and lexical processing.

This study was an attempt to look closely at L2 Romanian speakers’ word recognition skills, more specifically, to determine whether they favour content words rather than function words and to what extent. As expected, the results revealed differences between the two types of words, with L2 listeners struggling more with function words despite their high frequency in speech. Moreover, the numbers showed that the level of accuracy in word recognition varies even within the same category: prepositions have a higher recognition rate than conjunctions and certain subcategories (the conjunction “*să*”, the infinitive particle “*a*”, pronominal clitics), mostly due to their semantic specificity/schematicity. The more schematic a category is, the harder it is to recognize. As for content words, nouns had the highest recognition rate (70.981%), which is in line with the findings of several studies from neuroscience that show nouns are easier to process than relational categories, such as verbs. Adverbs achieved the lowest level of recognition due to a higher semantic schematicity.

The results highlight the need for targeted instruction in word recognition, with a focus on function words in general and, more specifically, the more problematic ones or the ones that are harder to grasp. More generally, we believe additional research is needed in order to identify the specific challenges L2 Romanian listeners encounter at various stages of cognitive processing, whether it is speech perception, syntactic parsing or semantic processing. When both teachers and students are aware of what the sources of the difficulties are, they can come up with better solutions. We have suggested several activities to use in classroom practice to improve word recognition and we think more time should be dedicated to them than we currently do in standard instruction. The fact this specific group of students was well into their B1 level suggests that difficulties with decoding and word recognition are preserved even at higher levels of language competence. The fact that, initially, students rely so heavily on context and background knowledge (which is also something that teachers typically encourage) may sometimes prevent them from paying attention to certain language structures.

Future research should examine whether explicit instruction in function word recognition leads to measurable improvements in listening comprehension over time. Additionally, cross-linguistic comparisons with learners from different L1 backgrounds could provide further insights into phonological processing in L2 acquisition.

A combination of explicit instruction, targeted practice and, very importantly, extensive exposure to input may be the right approach when it comes to listening. With the rapid growth in technology, English has become even more of a lingua franca in the last few decades. Most of us spend a few hours on various platforms daily and the content we are exposed to is overwhelmingly in English. For example, the most used language on TikTok is English with 10.3 billion hashtag views, followed by Chinese with only 2.4 billion, which is a huge gap. According to some sources, 66% of all content available on YouTube is in English. Overall, it seems that certainly more than half of all web content is in English (compare almost 60% to less than 6% for the next language in ranking). This puts L2 speakers of Romanian at a disadvantage, as they are flooded with input in English while trying to learn a new language. Although the content that is freely available in Romanian on social media platforms has increased lately, we believe that designing and developing resources for extensive listening in Romanian would bring important benefits to learners.

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STORY GRAMMAR AS A STRATEGY FOR ENHANCING NARRATIVE SKILLS IN THE CASE OF L2 ROMANIAN ADULT LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT. *Story Grammar as a Strategy for Enhancing Narrative Skills in the Case of L2 Romanian Adult Learners.* The present study analyses the storytelling abilities of L2 Romanian learners, students enrolled in the Preparatory Program for Foreign Citizens at Babeș-Bolyai University. It aims to give an interpretation across Story Grammar (SG) episodes of three stories from Mercer Mayer's *Frog Stories* to track the development of the L2 Romanian oral productions, namely the macrostructure of the Story Grammar (SG) constituents and the microstructure of the temporal, causal, and additive cohesion markers. The spoken corpus, a small L2 Romanian corpus of pictured-based oral productions, was the data source for the research. The stories were assessed progressively, from level A2 to level B2, and the scoring model and methodology focused on the macrostructure of the L2 oral productions and the overall organisation, at the same time, aiming to outline the milestones reached by students as evidence that made possible the provision of sufficient granularity to the data assessment. The results showed that teaching narrative strategies to students who learn a second language is a necessary step if one aims to impact the development of their ability to tell and retell and give them (self)assessment instruments that can foster access to SG strategy in L2 and provide tools for optimising structural organisation when producing oral or written texts in L2.

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The results regarding their narrative skills became valuable for improving teaching methods that enhance storytelling strategies in L2 Romanian.

Keywords: *L2 narrative skills, L2 adult learners, Story Grammar constituents, macrostructure, cohesion markers, microstructure*

REZUMAT. *Gramatica Poveștii (GP) ca strategie de îmbunătățire a abilităților narative în cazul adulților care învață limba română ca limbă străină (L2).* Studiul de față analizează abilitățile narative ale studenților care învață limba română ca limbă străină (L2), studenți înscriși în Programul de An Pregătitor pentru Cetățeni Străini de la Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai. Scopul acestuia este de a interpreta datele extrase din înregistrarea a trei povești din seria *Frog Stories*, de Mercer Mayer, pentru a urmări modul în care sunt procesate unitățile narative, specifice GP, în raport cu progresul în limba română ca L2, punând accent pe elemente de macrostructură, cum ar fi constituenții GP, și microstructură, prin analizarea elementelor care marchează coeziunea în textele produse de către participanții la studiu, de la un nivel de limbă la altul. Sursa datelor a fost un corpus oral redus, alcătuit din producții orale bazate pe imagini. Poveștile au fost evaluate progresiv, de la nivelul A2 la B2. La nivel macrostructural, producțiile orale au vizat organizarea generală, urmărind totodată să evidențieze și etapele semnificative atinse de către studenți, astfel încât să ofere suficientă granularitate în evaluarea datelor. Rezultatele au demonstrat că exersarea strategiilor narative în cazul studenților care învață limba română ca limbă străină este necesară pentru dezvoltarea abilității lor de a povesti și de a repovesti, pentru a le oferi instrumente de (auto)evaluare care să faciliteze accesul la strategiile GP în L2 și pentru a le furniza instrumente eficiente în vederea optimizării modului de organizare la nivel de structură narativă în L2. Concluziile privind abilitățile narative ale studenților s-au dovedit valoroase pentru îmbunătățirea metodelor didactice și pentru eficientizarea strategiilor narative în limba română ca L2.

Cuvinte-cheie: *abilități narative în L2, L2 adult learners, Constituenții Gramaticii Poveștii (GP), macrostructură, markeri ai coeziunii, microstructură*

1. Introduction and overview

The study approaches Story Grammar (SG) models from first (L1) and second language (L2) acquisition research and adopts the core components of this conceptual framework, namely Setting and Characters, Initiating Event, Internal Response, Attempt, and Outcome. The methodological approach aimed to observe how such schemes manifest in the case of L2 learners enrolled in an intensive one-year-long academic program at the university level. The participants in the study produced oral texts based on three *Frog Stories* published by Mercer

Meyer that resulted in a small oral corpus of L2 Romanian. The CEFR - Companion Volume (2020) descriptors were used in assessing the proficiency level of the oral productions for the Waystage (A2), Threshold (B1), and Vantage (B2) levels. The goal was to see how or if the results showcased a possible path to structure complexity from one story to another. The interpretation of the results could lead to specific measures that could impact future teaching strategies, task-based activities for SG constituents, and formative assessment tools. Such initiatives aim to monitor the progress across levels and to support the development of the narrative competence with teaching tools. In this undertaking, the main challenges that could have factored into the process were considered, such as possible cultural differences in approaching the oral text, the impact of L1 SG patterns on the L2, the limits imposed by the lexical inventory available to the students at each CEFR level, the complexity of the temporal, causal, and additive markers that could affect the correlation between story sequences, as well as the complexity of the story elements and the episodes, in the progression from one story to the other. The paper is organised as follows: Section 2 provides a brief description of the participants in the study and of the corpus used for the investigation; Section 3 presents the core concepts that create the theoretical framework, namely the SG models and the studies conducted on monolinguals and bilinguals; Section 4 deepens the quantitative and the qualitative investigation of the data collected from the corpus and describes the methods used to interpret the results and elaborate the preliminary findings at the (4.1.) macrostructure and (4.2.) microstructure levels; and Section 5 concludes the study.

2. A brief description of the oral corpus

There were 21 participants in the study, all students enrolled in the Preparatory Program for Foreign Citizens at the Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The group is characterised by cultural and linguistic diversity. Most students have completed high school or university studies (bachelor's or master's degrees) in their home countries. Two of the most common goals expressed by the respondents were to continue their university studies and to integrate professionally into the Romanian workforce. The students represented 16 countries. The most common L1 languages in the corpus were Spanish, French, Arabic, and Burmese, with one representative for each of the following languages: Thai, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Turkish, Hebrew, German, Persian, and Greek. Most of the participants were adults between 20-25 years old.

The oral corpus includes the audio recordings in L2 Romanian of 21 participants. The oral productions had as support picture prompts in the form of three wordless picture books: *A Boy, a Dog and a Frog* (Mayer 1967), *Frog Goes*

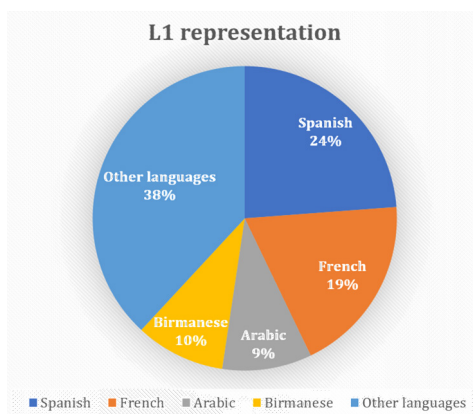


Figure 1. L1 representation

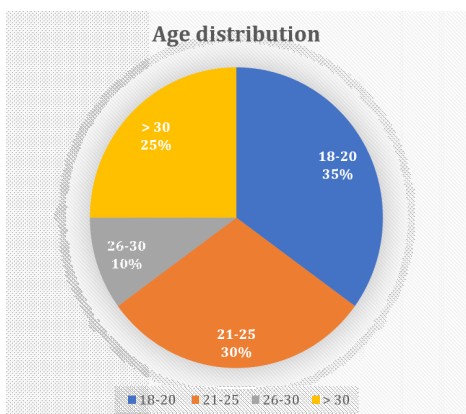


Figure 2. Age distribution

to *Dinner* (Mayer 1969), and *Frog on His Own* (Mayer 1974). The first recordings occurred after the students were examined at the A2 level, the second book recording was conducted after level B1, and the third after level B2. For the SG interpretation, the three stories were divided into episodes. The first story was segmented into three episodes, and the second and the third stories were each divided into five. As mentioned above, the core SG units selected for tracking the sequences were Character and Setting, Initiating Event, Internal Response, Attempt, and Outcome. As such, the story format was used to elicit oral responses in L2 Romanian and served as a framework for the present data assessment. The macrostructure components scored 0 to 3 points each. The picture-based tasks targeted the overall progression and complexity of the storytelling abilities in L2 Romanian as well as the quality of the narrative range to investigate and assess the macrostructure (the overall organisation) together with the microstructure (the relationship generated between event sequences by the cohesion markers as discourse units) of the oral productions of adult learners of L2 Romanian.

3. The conceptual framework

The core concept of the SG model is *schema* and was used in cognitive psychology, linguistics, and discourse analysis to demonstrate that the story's coherence consists of shared sets of elements and must be understood as a universal underlying design (Rumelhart 1975). The frameworks consisting of settings and sequences of events became what was accepted as underlying schema, a set of cognitive structures contributing to comprehension and production in

general (Rumelhart 1975). The concept was associated with mental frameworks that allowed individuals to access information and organise thoughts sequentially and cohesively. It was posited that knowledge exists a priori and, as a result, can be retrieved, in this case, by using a narrative format in first and second language. Under this framework, the underlying patterns, or the grammar of the story, are organised into sets or units, and the succession of episodes is the result of segmentation and functions based on underlying patterns cross-linguistically. The theoretical proposal includes the setting and episodes divided into events, reactions, and actions, with goal-attempt-outcome constituents (GAO) representing the main components used in studies and experimental data processing. Model proposals included comprehension and production, with a focus on coherence and cohesion, and the role played by *working memory* and the organisation of the information to be retrieved by L1 and L2 learners due to a priori experience and knowledge (Kintsch and Dijk 1978; van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). The schema-based models were used frequently to observe how children understand, process, and recall stories (Stein and Glen 1979) and to analyse how individuals with different language backgrounds and of varying age groups could process and construct texts in L1 and L2. The research was prolific in first and second language acquisition, and it was adopted as an instrument in language learning theories, following methodologies that employ the conceptual framework. In teaching storytelling strategies to children and L2 learners, it was argued that the personal or emotional response, based on prior knowledge and experience, had to be grounded in the underlying SG model (Stein and Glenn 1979, Stein and Albro 1997, Stein and Albro 2012). Hierarchy in the organisation, with high and low levels from a structural perspective, working memory, and the role of mental schema required the retrieval of prior information or knowledge and was indispensable in telling and retelling stories, as well as recalling schemes to make sense of new stories (Thorndyke 1977).

Studies on the narrative development of monolingual, bilingual, and SLI children also impacted the research on L2. Factors such as language proficiency, complexity, and SG units changed the perspective on the interpretation, respectively, the macrostructure and the microstructure elements, proving that such abilities work cross-linguistically and are critical to literacy development in schools. The assessment was conducted in several languages, and the elicitation tasks focused on the ability to tell and retell stories under an SG model (Gagarina 2010; Gagarina et al. 2015; Gagarina et al. 2016; Gagarina and Lindgren 2020). The investigation of SG components and the proficiency level in L2 were examined in second language acquisition (SLA), and the research on oral corpus connected literacy and its development to such skills in children, their ability to organise their thoughts, namely planning and organising coherently a discourse (Gagarina and Lindgren 2020).

The focus was on narrative competence and how that could be mapped and monitored in the oral productions. Studies on monolingual and bilingual children with specific language impairment (SLI) provided insight into children's cognitive competence and the internal response terms in processing the structure (Greenhalgh and Strong 2001; Paradis et al. 2011; Pearson 2001; Tsimpli et al. 2015). The ability to use cognitive skills and express the characters' thoughts and feelings pertains to the *Theory of Mind* (ToM). The models were associated with language domains and how such a theory could contribute to a better understanding of comprehension and production in learners. This theory is essential as it relies on understanding other individuals' mental states and perspectives. The assessments were performed on monolinguals and bilinguals, depicting the underlying abilities positing that the construction based on the underlying structures in L1 and L2 might differ (Tsimpli et al. 2015). Qualitative analyses using fables as production tasks proved that in the case of adolescents, the results led to higher complexity at the syntactic and narrative levels (Nippold 2005, 2014). Language literacy was linked to SG and ToM in the case of SLI children to understand how other perspectives work and to explain the need for intervention to improve such a layout, specifically the ability to connect sequences of events to lead to academic success (Westby 1991, 2005, 2014, 2021).

The research became more relevant as the assessment targeted comprehension, production, and knowledge of the narrative at the structural and organisational or coherence level (Mandler and Johnson 1977). Moreover, for L2 learners, it is argued that the cognitive strategies might differ, especially if there is a degree of familiarity with the content (Mandler 1980). On the same note, research on the role played by associative memory in understanding how storytelling and retelling work is relevant for L2 learners as studies have shown that information retrieval works cross-linguistically in the case of bilinguals (Gillund and Shiffrin 1984). The SG constituents integrate schema and the cognitive processes involved in the comprehension and production of stories in L1 and L2, with applicability across languages, influencing different research domains from linguistics to cognitive psychology, teaching, etc. In conclusion, research was prolific in the domains of first and second language acquisition and highly relevant in empirical studies on L2 acquisition and L2 learning, offering insight into how narratives work in L2 in terms of complexity and cohesion, cross-linguistically. The educational implications for L2 learners in instructional settings were also significant as the research results contributed to proposals for improving the skills via efficient practices and curriculum adjustments.

4. Corpus Analysis

The methodological approach to analysing SG units and cohesion markers collected from an L2 Romanian spoken corpus employs a mixed-methods design grounded in Stein and Glenn's (1979) theoretical framework. The theoretical model, based on schema theory, provides the foundation for the interpretation of hierarchical narrative components and the predictability of structural patterns in L2 Romanian narrative structures. The standardised instruments used as theoretical frameworks for control were the CEFR - Companion Volume (2020) and the Minimal Description of Romanian for Levels A1, A2, B1, and B2 (Platon et al. 2016). The aim was to observe and describe how SG units and episodes develop across proficiency levels, from level A2 to level B2, and to trace specific patterns of cohesion marker usage. In conducting the quantitative analysis, the occurrences were counted manually. The counting and assessment system included binary scoring for the presence or absence of elements and weighted scoring for the completeness of each component. The premise was the existence of the internal structure of the stories, which follows predictable patterns and mental schemas, hence controlling the spoken productions to see if frequency and complexity patterns could be traced. The qualitative analysis included an analysis of the Internal Response and its representation across proficiency levels. The in-depth analysis gave insight into the difficulties encountered by the participants, the problematic manifestation from one level to the other and the problems encountered by the students in mastering the narrative structure in L2 Romanian. Based on the corpus findings, new teaching materials could be created to develop students' narrative competence in L2 Romanian. The validity of the study is supported by the alignment with the SG model and with the descriptors from the CEFR - Companion Volume (2020) and the Minimal Description of Romanian (Platon et al. 2016). The results helped identify problematic areas in the development of L2 narrative competence. They contributed to the foundation for developing evidence-based and targeted teaching materials, possibly scaffolded activities to improve narrative abilities in students, and assessment tools for narrative structures in L2 Romanian.

The examples provided by the spoken corpus represent a rich data source in a natural context that is available for inquiry. The students did not have previous training on the topic, and the qualitative and quantitative analyses of SG units and cohesion markers aimed to get insight into the students' proficiency levels and observe how the structures develop from one text to another, from a macrostructure and microstructure perspective. The following elements were selected: Setting (Place and Time), Initiating Event, Internal Response, Attempt, and Result/Outcome to get an insightful look at how narrative

features work progressively in the case of L2 learners of Romanian. The data was collected from a corpus of texts, transcribed oral stories, three *Frog Stories* recounted in L2 Romanian, progressively, at the levels A2 (*A Boy, A Dog and a Frog*), B1 (*Frog Goes to Dinner*), and B2 (*Frog on His Own*) levels. Three criteria were taken into account: completeness, whether all the proposed constituents could be identified; cohesion, as part of determining if all the components were presented and logically connected, and given that the data were collected progressively, at the levels A2, B1 and B2, according to CEFR levels; and the complexity of the SG components which were identified by segmenting each episode with its parts. However, there were a few variables that could have impacted the predictions, such as L1 influence, cultural differences regarding the norms of storytelling, and how they organise their narratives in L1, as opposed to L2, as well as the load on the cognitive abilities when it comes to operating with L2 structures. Still, such variables were not directly investigated at this point. Given that the exposure to picture prompts was done progressively, from A2 to B2, another prediction was that the performance would improve from one story to another. However, specific patterns identified in the process challenged the data interpretation. Some of the considered variables were: linguistic limitations, lack of awareness at a given moment, lack of exposure to such exercises in L2 Romanian before this task, and, possibly, cultural differences. In the first story, simplified structures specific to level A2 were predominant. Sequences were less organised, and few cohesion markers were used to show logical connections. The omission of episodes was predominantly observed in Story 1. At the same time, some SG constituents were skipped in all the stories, but overall, the data showed that the participants faced challenges in completing the tasks.

4.1. Macrostructural features

The assessment included a qualitative and a quantitative section. The data evaluation used as input the visible evidence in the productions at the macrostructure and the microstructure levels. The picture prompts were selected to allow them to produce more complex texts from one level to the other. As the essential elements of the SG model adopted for this study were the Setting and Characters, the Initiating Event, which marked the Goal, the Internal Response, the Attempt, and the Outcome, the premise was that the episodes were based on underlying universal patterns that operate cross-linguistically (Rumelhart 1975, Mandler and Johnson 1977, Stein and Glenn 1979). The three stories corresponded to all the criteria envisioned, including the Internal Response of the students, which was also part of the scoring rubric to see the evidence of

ToM in the L2 oral narratives. After collecting the data, the decision was to mark the presence of the Goal-Attempt-Outcome sequencing (GAO) for each production and separately select the most relevant qualitative data for the Internal Response segment, which seemed challenging for the students based on the results. For the global assessment, the SG components were scored per presence or absence of episodes in the sequence for each of the three stories. For Story 1 (*A Boy, A Dog and a Frog - 3 episodes*), 20 out of 21 participants identified the correct number of episodes. There was only one subject that missed episode 2 of Story 1. In the case of Story 2 (*Frog Goes to Dinner - 5 episodes*), all 21 subjects could identify the 5 episodes, even though some episodes were more difficult for them and insufficiently explored, as will be shown in the following sections. In Story 3 (*Frog on His Own - 5 episodes*), all the subjects identified and talked about all the 5 episodes, but generally, there was difficulty in recognising the Internal Response in some episodes.

In the review of the Setting and Characters, the scale adopted was 0 to 3 points (0=absent, 1=minimal/unclear, 2=adequate/basic but clear, 3=elaborate/well-developed). For Story 1, the following elements were expected. Episode 1: Setting – ‘vara’ [summer], ‘ziua’ [day], ‘la amiază’ [noon], ‘în pădure’ [in the woods], ‘lângă un lac’ [near a lake]; Characters – ‘un băiat’ [a boy], ‘un câine’ [a dog], ‘un cățel’ [a puppy], ‘o broască’ [a frog], ‘o broscuță’ [a little frog]. Episode 2: Setting – ‘în pădure’ [in the woods/forest], ‘lângă lac’ [near a lake], ‘pe un lemn’ [on a piece of wood], ‘copac’ [tree], ‘buștean’ [log]; Characters – ‘un băiat’ [a boy], ‘un câine’ [a dog], ‘un cățel’ [a puppy], ‘o broască’ [a frog], ‘o broscuță’ [a little frog]. Episode 3: ‘în pădure’ [in the forest/woods], ‘acasă’ [at home]; Characters: ‘un băiat’ [a boy], ‘un câine’ [a dog], ‘un cățel’ [a puppy], ‘o broască’ [a frog], ‘o broscuță’ [a little frog], ‘o broască țestoasă’ [a turtle].

The results showed two situations when the time and place were not named. Still, it could be understood from the context of these two situations. A score of 1 was given for ‘foiaj’, a word transferred from French expressing the right reality for the expected answer ‘în pădure’ [in the woods], ‘lângă lac’ [near a lake], ‘pe un lemn’/‘copac’/‘buștean’ [near a piece of wood/tree/log]. A score of 2 was given for a missing element, commonly the time or the word ‘pădure’ [forest]. The word ‘piscină’ [pool] was used instead of ‘lac’ [lake], and the word ‘fluviu’ [river] was used instead of ‘lac’ [lake]. For the character identification, 2 was given if a character was missing or the speaker did not use the correct word. For example, ‘bărbat foarte tânăr’ [very young man] instead of ‘băiat’ [boy], what was the expected word. In the case of the last episode, the subjects usually named only the previous place, ‘acasă’ [home] and/or ‘baie’ [bathroom], and ‘cadă’ [bathtub], omitting the word ‘pădure’ [forest]. Probably, considering it was the same place as in the previous episode.

For the second story, the predictions were as follows: Episode 1: Setting – ‘acasă’ [at home], Characters – ‘băiat’ [boy], ‘câine’ [dog], ‘broască’ [frog], ‘broască țestoasă’ [turtle], ‘mama’ [mom], ‘tata’ [dad], ‘sora’ [sister], ‘familia’ [family]. Episode 2: Setting – ‘restaurant’ [restaurant] ‘cina’ [dinner], Characters – ‘mama’ [mother], ‘tata’ [father], ‘băiat’ [boy], ‘soră’ [sister], ‘broască’ [frog], ‘chelner’ [waiter], ‘muzician’ [musician] ‘saxofonist’ [saxophonist]. Episode 3: Setting – ‘restaurant’ [restaurant] ‘cina’ [dinner], Characters – ‘chelner’ [waiter], ‘broască’ [frog], ‘femeie’ [woman] ‘doamnă’ [lady]. Episode 4: Setting – ‘restaurant’ [restaurant] ‘cina’ [dinner], Characters – ‘broască’ [frog], ‘chelner’ [waiter], ‘cuplu’ [couple], ‘familie’ [family], ‘clienți’ [clients]. Episode 5: Setting – ‘mașina’ [car], ‘acasă’ [home], Characters – ‘familie’ [family], ‘copil’ [child], ‘broască’ [frog], ‘câine’ [dog], ‘broasca țestoasă’ [turtle].

As shown, there were many situations when the time and place were not named in the second story (45 instances). Most of these involved the restaurant, probably considered not necessary to repeat the place since the previous episode/episodes happened in the same setting. Additionally, there was a tendency not to indicate the time; when it was stated, it was ‘într-o zi’ [one day]. Usually, the characters were named, but there were a few cases when one was omitted. Subject 21 omitted mentioning the family and the turtle, but he used the word ‘toți’ [all].

For the third story, the predictions were as follows. Episode 1: Setting – ‘parc’ [park], Characters – ‘băiat’ [boy], ‘câine’ [dog], ‘broască’ [frog], ‘broască țestoasă’ [turtle]. Episode 2: Setting – ‘parc’ [park], ‘picnic’ [picnic], Characters – ‘broasca’ [frog], un cuplu’ [couple], ‘bărbat și femeie’ [man and woman]. Episode 3: Setting – ‘parc’ [park], ‘lac’ [lake], Characters ‘broasca’ [frog], ‘copil’ [child], ‘mama copilului’ [child’s mother]. Episode 4: Setting – ‘parc’ [park], Characters ‘broasca’ [frog], ‘femeia’ [woman], ‘bebelușul’ [baby], ‘copilul’ [child], ‘pisică’ [cat]. Episode 5: Setting – ‘parc’ [park], Characters – ‘broasca’ [frog], ‘pisică’ [cat], ‘copil’ [child], ‘câine’ [dog], ‘broasca țestoasă’ [turtle]. For the use of ‘în alt loc/ în altă loc’ [in another place] the scoring was 1. The parc was not mentioned, but it was specified in the beginning. What was added is ‘la picnic’ [at the picnic], ‘fac un picnic’ [they have a picnic] or ‘lângă lac’ [near the lake], ‘la lac’ [at the lake]. For these occurrences 2 points were given. Another instance was the use of a general term, ‘natură’ [nature] instead of ‘parc’ [park]. In Episode 4, the setting was specified only in 3 instances. ‘În pod’ instead of ‘pe lac’, because S16 confused the two words as it can be seen from the answer ‘Profesor: ai folosit aici, ai spus podul, podul. Te referi la acesta?’ (arată imaginea) [Teacher: you used here, you said here bridge. Is this what you are referring to? (The teacher shows the student the picture)] S16: ‘Da, la apă’ [Yes. The water].

For the quantitative segment of the study, numerical methods were used to count the components of the narrative structures. The investigation started with the setting and the characters; a segment marked almost entirely by the participants in all the stories. In the case of the Goal-Attempt-Outcome relationship, each constituent was assessed individually as well (0 to 3 points). A close look at the percentages on the structural presence of the Initiating Events across episodes and the three stories, as presented in *Figure 3*, *Figure 4*, and *Figure 5*, reveal that in Story 2, 52% of the participants scored the highest possible (3 points), followed by Story 1 and Story 3. However, the percentage of participants that scored 2 or 3 points is higher in Story 1 and Story 2, as opposed to Story 3, where a downward trend was observed. Also, the number of students who did not identify the Initial Event grew from 2% in Story 1 to 9% in Story 2 and 17% in Story 3, a significant increase. A curve is observed in the case of the participants who scored 1 point as well.

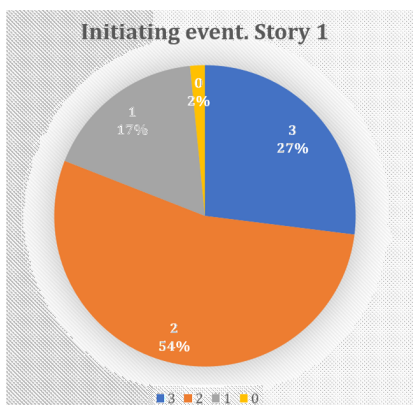


Figure 3. Initiating Event. Story 1

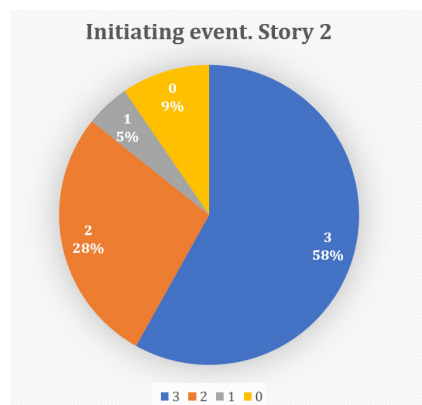


Figure 4. Initiating Event. Story 2

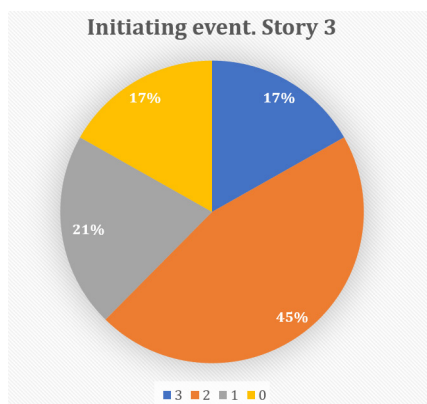


Figure 5. Initiating Event. Story 3

The distribution of the percentages for the Attempt occurrences in the three stories are presented in *Figure 6*, *Figure 7*, and *Figure 8*, with the highest scores (3 points) for Story 2 and similar scores for Story 1 and Story 3. Interestingly, 38% of the students did not present the Attempt in Story 2, while 39% did. In Story 1 and Story 3, only 3% of the participants failed to identify it. Once again, it was difficult to mark significant changes from one story to the other regarding structural complexity or sophistication.

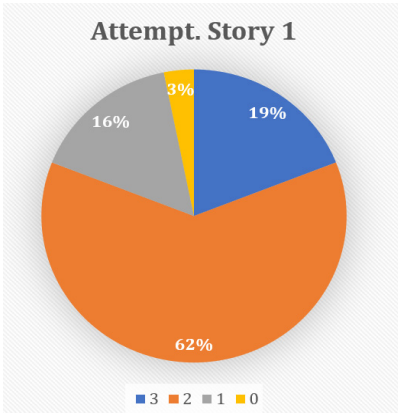


Figure 6. Attempt. Story 1

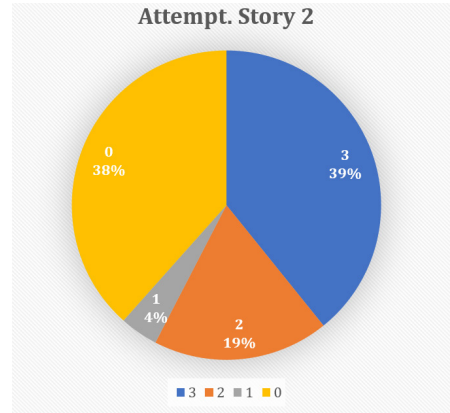


Figure 7. Attempt. Story 2

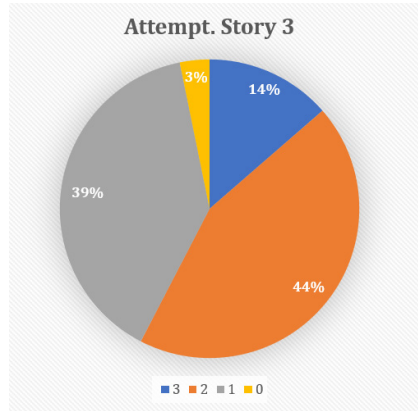


Figure 8. Attempt. Story 3

A curve is also observed in the data analysis of the Result segment. Story 2 registered 35% of students with the highest score (3 points), and a 10 per cent difference is noticeable when comparing Story 1 (27%) with Story 3 (17%). Also, if the percentages of the students who scored 2 or 3 points are summed up, it

can be noted that there is a downward trend from Story 1 to Story 3. Relative to Story 1 and Story 3, where the participants scored low on missing results, a quarter of the participants could not ground the results in the narrative of Story 2. Overall, the participants better integrated the components in Story 1 and Story 3 than in Story 2.

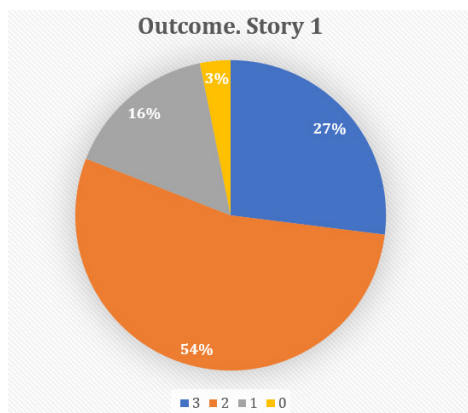


Figure 9. Outcome. Story 1

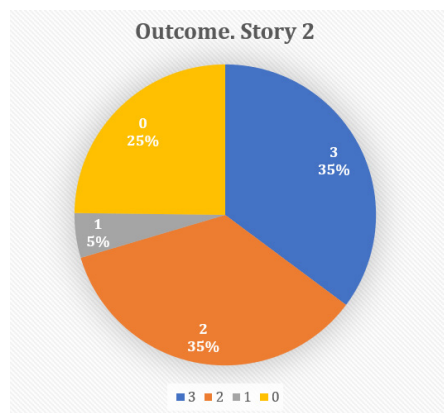


Figure 10. Outcome. Story 2

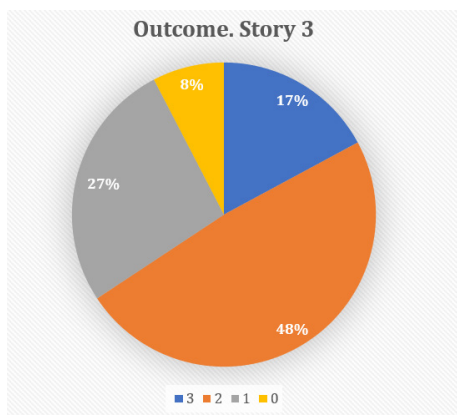


Figure 11. Outcome. Story 3

As part of the SG model, the interpretation of the data included the Internal Response to incorporate the emotional process and the ability to emotionally present the character's perspective (Stein and Albro 1997, 2012; Gagarina et al. 2016). The communicative function was the main driving force, but, at this point, the analysis did not offer satisfactory results on the types of inferences and repair strategies that could have been employed by the students

across narratives (Berman and Slobin 1994), but rather some qualitative results on metacognitive verbs referential to what the characters are thinking and the expression of emotion (Gagarina et al. 2016, Nippold et al., 2005; Westby, 2005). Book narration tasks in school-aged children analysed under a ToM approach how children understand and use mental-state and emotional-state terms (e.g. *be hungry, be ashamed, be envious*), and the differences between comprehension and use of the metacognitive and metalinguistic terms (Grazzani and Ornaghi 2012: 358). It could be observed that, in this case, the Internal Response segment was omitted by the participants quite frequently. As it can be observed, for the most part, the Internal Response segment is absent in the three stories, showing that the students failed to map the understanding of the SG unit in the productions.

From a qualitative perspective, for the most part, the same phrases were used repetitively to express the mental states of the characters: ‘a-i fi frică’ [to be scared], ‘a-i fi foame’ [to be hungry], ‘a-i fi rău’ [to be sick], ‘a se simți rău’ [to feel sick], ‘a se simți bine’ [to feel good], ‘a se simți rău’ [to feel bad]; however, in Romanian the expression does not have this meaning, it was transferred from English, ‘a fi enervat’ [to be annoyed], ‘a fi nervos’ [to be angry], ‘a se supăra’ [to get upset], ‘a fi puțin/foarte supărat’ [to be a little/very upset], ‘a se simți supărat’ [to feel upset], ‘cu față supărată’ [with an upset face], ‘a deveni supărat’ [to become upset], ‘a arăta supărat’ [to look upset], ‘a fi fericit’ [to be happy] was used the most, ‘a se simți fericit/bucuros’ [to feel happy], ‘a fi nefericit’ [to be unhappy], ‘a fi enervat’ [to be annoyed], ‘a se enerva’ [to get annoyed], ‘a se simți plictisit’ [to feel bored], ‘a fi trist’ [to be sad], ‘a se simți plictisitor’ [to feel boring] there were situations when the phrase was not used appropriately, the students opted for [to be boring] instead of the correct form [to be bored], ‘a fi singur’ [to be alone], ‘a se simți singur’ [to feel alone], ‘a fi trist’ [to be sad], ‘a se simți trist’ [to feel sad], ‘a se enerva’ [to get annoyed], ‘a se simți obosit’ [to feel tired], ‘a se simți singur’ [to feel lonely], ‘a fi singur’ [to be alone], ‘a se speria’ [to get scared], ‘a fi șocat’ [to be shocked], ‘a fi liniștit’ [to be calm], ‘a fi surprins’ [to be surprised], ‘a fi iritat’ [to be irritated], ‘a fi amuzat’ [to be amused], ‘a fi amuzant’ [to be amusing] used sometimes inappropriately with the meaning [amused], ‘a fi curios’ [to be curious], ‘a fi relaxat’ [to be relaxed], ‘a deveni gelos’ [to become jealous], ‘a avea teamă’ [to have fear/to be fearful], ‘a se gândi’ [to think]. The terms expressing mental or emotional state and the metacognitive verbs were not frequent in the corpus. It was also noticed that the participants omitted the internal response quite frequently.

From a qualitative perspective, the same phrases were used repetitively to express the characters’ mental states. These included expressions such as ‘a-i fi frică’ [to be scared], ‘a-i fi foame’ [to be hungry], and ‘a-i fi rău’ [to be sick]. The participants also used ‘a se simți rău’ [to feel sick], ‘a se simți bine’ [to feel good], and ‘a se simți rău’ [to feel bad]. However, in Romanian, this last expression does

not have this meaning. It was transferred from English. Phrases for annoyance and anger included 'a fi enervat' [to be annoyed], 'a fi nervos' [to be angry], and 'a se supăra' [to get upset]. For expressing varying degrees of upset, the candidates used 'a fi puțin/foarte supărat' [to be a little/very upset], 'a se simți supărat' [to feel upset], and 'cu față supărată' [with an upset face]. The students also used 'a deveni supărat' [to become upset] and 'a arăta supărat' [to look upset]. 'A fi fericit' [to be happy] was used most frequently, followed by 'a se simți fericit/bucuros' [to feel happy], and the opposite 'a fi nefericit' [to be unhappy]. Expressions such as 'a fi enervat' [to be annoyed] and 'a se enerva' [to get annoyed] were also used in various contexts. For boredom, the most common were 'a se simți plictisit' [to feel bored]. There were situations when the students opted for 'a se simți plictisitor' [to feel boring] instead of the correct form, 'a se simți plictisit' [to feel bored]. For loneliness and sadness, the most common were 'a fi singur' [to be alone] and 'a se simți singur' [to feel alone], 'a fi trist' [to be sad] and 'a se simți trist' [to feel sad]. Other emotional states included 'a se simți obosit' [to feel tired]. Less frequent expressions included 'a se speria' [to get scared], 'a fi șocat' [to be shocked], 'a fi liniștit' [to be calm], and 'a fi surprins' [to be surprised]. Students also used 'a fi iritat' [to be irritated], 'a fi amuzat' [to be amused], and 'a fi amuzant' [to be amusing]. The latter was sometimes misused with the meaning of [amused]. Occasional expressions included 'a fi curios' [to be curious], 'a fi relaxat' [to be relaxed], 'a deveni gelos' [to become jealous], 'a avea teamă' [to have fear/to be fearful], and 'a se gândi' [to think]. The terms expressing mental or emotional state and the metacognitive verbs were not frequent in the corpus. It was also noticed that the participants omitted the internal response quite frequently.

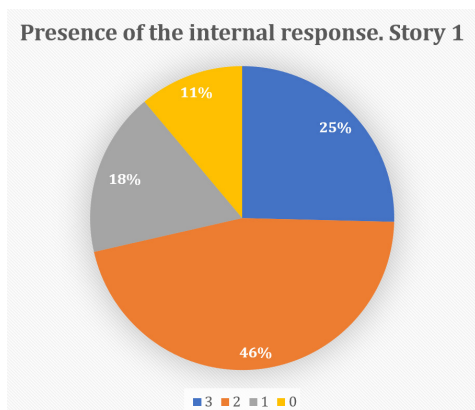


Figure 12. Presence of the internal response. Story 1

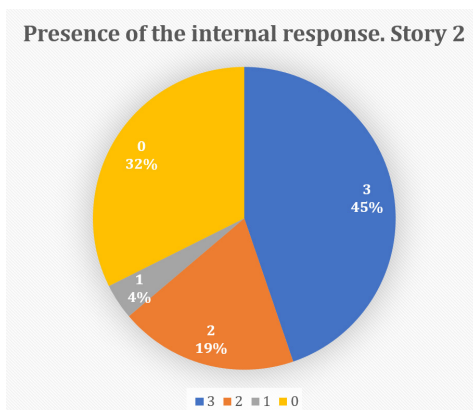


Figure 13. Presence of the internal response. Story 2

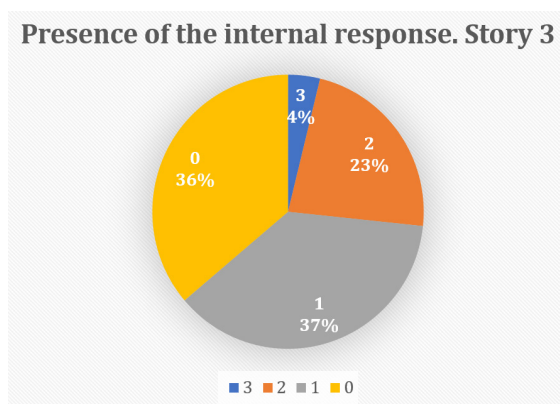


Figure 14. Presence of the internal response. Story 3

The presence or absence of Internal Response led to interesting results. As mentioned above, the participants tended to skip this segment. As reflected in *Figure 12*, *Figure 13*, and *Figure 14*, there was a downward trend from Story 1, where only 11% of the participants scored 0 points, to Story 2 with 32% and Story 3 with 36%. The results are valuable even though the participants faced challenges with the production of the Internal Response, proving that it was one of the more vulnerable categories. At the macrostructure level, the Internal Response component was included to see how L2 adult learners can incorporate in the speech productions the characters' perspective under a ToM framework, with a focus on how the metalinguistic and the metacognitive a priori knowledge can be observed in the speech productions of the students.

At the macrostructure level, the results are significant and give a perspective on how the students cope with the production of SG units in L2 Romanian and how to incorporate more narrative-based tasks in teaching Romanian, both for oral and written productions. After processing the data, a closer look was taken at the Q&A section between the teacher and the student after recording each story. When asked if they understood the story, the students responded affirmatively. When addressing the question *Which was the most difficult thing for you in telling the story?* some of the most common answers included not having in their active lexical inventory specific words or not being able to explain the particular relationships between the sequences, which, consequently, affected the quality of their story, not being able to access some words determined them to produce a simpler version of the story. Some students stated they had more difficulty processing a new input and creating a coherent text. As expected, the participants indicated that they had an understanding, respectively knowledge, of the story and the meaning behind the sequences of events but struggled with the mapping in the oral productions.

4.2. Microstructural features

The data collected led to an insightful display of the cohesion markers in L2 Romanian at the microstructural level. The prediction was that with every production, the cohesion markers would increase in number and complexity and contribute significantly to developing complex and coherent oral stories from the A2 level to level B2. With increasing L2 proficiency of the participants, progression of narrative complexity was expected. There was awareness regarding the progressive complexity of the three stories and the possible challenges that could have been faced in the activation of working memory for an L2 story. Also, given that they had the chance to activate and exercise the schema in the A2, further practice of the strategies in the following stories was expected to be natural, the prediction that there would be significant progress with the second and third story seemed sound. The data processing on the corpus was limited to temporal, causal, and additive markers for this study. The assessment focused on their role in episode linking and whether consistency and complexity could be traced from one level to another. Moreover, frequency and appropriate use of the temporal, causal, and additive markers were among the criteria selected from the corpus. To better illustrate the reasoning behind the assessment of the cohesion connectors in the three *Frog Stories*, in the case of Romanian L2 adult learners, the descriptors for cohesion and coherence from the Companion Volume (2020) were selected. The scales for communicative language, namely the pragmatic competence descriptors for coherence and cohesion, indicate what was predicted before the analysis and distribution of data. The cohesion markers play an essential part in the macrostructure of the story as they connect SG units in the stories and work as cohesive devices for the narrative as a whole. The results were assessed against another instrument designed for Romanian L2, which presents a Minimal Description of Romanian for Levels A1, A2, B1, and B2. In the assessment of the cohesion markers, the description was also aligned to the contents for expressing time circumstances on categories such as time placement, anteriority, simultaneity, posteriority, frequency and duration, as well as adverbial phrases, prepositional phrases and conjunctions (Platon et al. 2016).

At the A2 level, in the oral productions of the students, a preference for the following temporal connectors was observed: ‘când’ [when], ‘apoi’ [then], ‘și apoi’ [and then], ‘atunci’ [at that time], ‘după’ [after], ‘după ce’/‘după aceea’ [after that]/[afterwards], as well as ‘într-o zi’/ ‘dimineață’ [one day/morning]. Other connectors were also used but with much lower frequency. To be more specific, some of the temporal connectors used with less frequency were: ‘după acest moment/această ocazie’ [after this moment/occasion], ‘acum’ [now], ‘din

nou' [again], 'în acest moment' [at this moment], 'la început' [in the beginning], 'într-o zi/diminează' [one day/morning], 'în timp ce' [while], 'în sfârșit/la final/în final' [finally/at the end/in the end], 'și apoi' [and then], 'deja' [already].

Coherence and Cohesion (CEFR – Companion Volume, 2020: 141)	
A2	<p>"Can use the most frequently occurring connectors to link simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points.</p> <p>Can link groups of words/signs with simple connectors (e.g. "and", "but" and "because").</p> <p>Can link words/signs or groups of words/signs with very basic linear connectors (e.g. "and" or "then")."</p>

Figure 15. Temporal markers for A2 level (A Boy, A Dog and a Frog)

At level B1, despite the more advanced level of proficiency, the frequency of temporal connectors remained somewhat similar, with a preference for the same connectors as the previous level: 'când' [when], 'apoi' [then], 'și apoi' [and then], 'atunci' [at that time], 'după' [after], 'după ce'/'după aceea' [after that]/[afterwards]. Other connectors are also used, but only once per production or less frequently: 'după acest timp' [after this time], 'în momentul în care' [at the moment when], 'și mai departe' [furthermore], 'în continuare' [continuously], 'odată' [once].

Coherence and Cohesion (CEFR – Companion Volume, 2020: 141)	
B1	<p>"Can use the most frequently occurring connectors to link simple sentences in order to tell a story or describe something as a simple list of points.</p> <p>Can link groups of words/signs with simple connectors (e.g. "and", "but" and "because").</p> <p>Can link words/signs or groups of words/signs with very basic linear connectors (e.g. "and" or "then")."</p>

Figure 16. Temporal markers for B1 level (A Boy, A Dog and a Frog)

Even at the B2 level, the results show that the same temporal connectors were preferred: ‘apoi’ [then], ‘și apoi’ [and then], ‘când’ [when], ‘după aceea’ [after that], ‘și după aceea’ [and after that], ‘după ce’ [after], ‘acum/ acuma’ [now/right now], ‘din nou’ [again], ‘iarăși’ [once more]. However, phrases were also derived from the following preferred elements, such as ‘după această întâmplare’ [after this incident], ‘după ce s-a întâmplat’ [after what happened]. Some phrases were built around the word ‘moment’ [moment]: ‘în același moment’ [at the same moment], ‘într-un moment’ [in a moment], ‘în primul moment’ [at first], ‘după niște momente’ [after a few moment], ‘a mumon dat’ the correct form being ‘la un moment dat’ [at some point]. Other examples include, ‘în primul rând’ [firstly], ‘la final’ [in the end], ‘într-o zi’ [one day], ‘în continuare’ [furthermore].

Coherence and Cohesion (<i>CEFR – Companion Volume</i> , 2020: 141)	
B2	<p>“Can use a variety of linking expressions efficiently to mark clearly the relationships between ideas.</p> <p>Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link their utterances into clear, coherent discourse, though there may be some “jumpiness” in a long contribution.</p> <p>Can produce text that is generally well-organised and coherent, using a range of linking expressions and cohesive devices.</p> <p>Can structure longer texts in clear, logical paragraphs.”</p>

Figure 17. Temporal markers for B2 level (A Boy, A Dog and a Frog)

As an interesting fact to note, in Story 1, out of the 644 occurrences of connectors, ‘și’ [and] accounts for 346 of these occurrences, making it the most frequently used connector in the productions of all subjects. *Figure 18* shows a clear pattern, as the number of temporal markers remains constant in the three stories. Variation can be observed regarding other connectors used in the three stories. However, although increased values and an upward trend are observed when comparing Story 1 to Story 2, the values decrease slightly from Story 2 to Story 3, and a downward trend is noticed. The graphics in *Figure 19* illustrate the use of the three categories of cohesion markers selected for the analysis. In the case of temporal markers, as stated before, there are no noticeable differences between the stories, and a similar trend applies to the causal markers, which are the least frequently used out of the three categories of markers. Increased values are observed in the case of additive connectors, with a peak in Story 2, followed by a slight downward trend in Story 3.

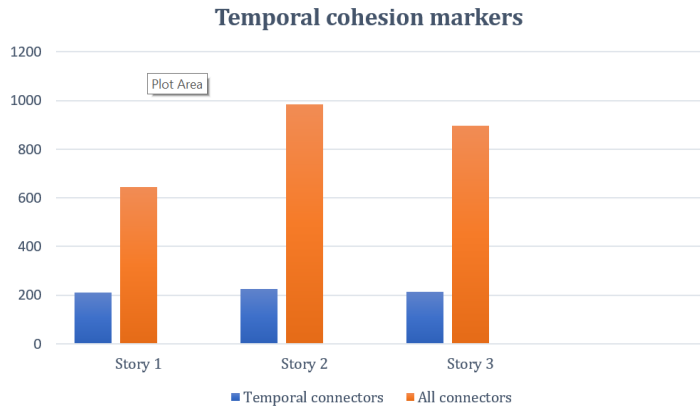


Figure 18. Temporal cohesion markers in the 3 stories

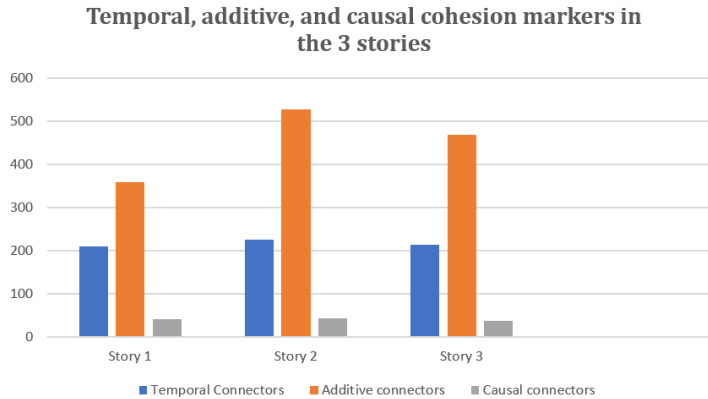


Figure 19. Temporal, additive, and causal cohesion markers in the 3 stories

Another noticed aspect was that the A1 temporal connectors were the most frequently used. For an oral corpus, one explanation could be that they lacked awareness of using A2 connectors in real time, and they likely relied on habitual usage. One question that could be addressed in future research is what would happen with the cohesion markers in written productions regarding distribution, frequency, appropriateness, and complexity.

In the case of the additive connectors, it was noticed that the conjunction ‘și’ [and] was the most frequent element, even when compared to the entire range of connectors. There were minimal situations (under 5 occurrences) when ‘iar’ with the meaning [and/and also] was used with additive value. Otherwise,

other additive connectors could not be identified, even though the expectation was to find in the corpus instances of 'în plus' [in addition] or 'mai mult' [moreover] in the corpus, which are more complex markers of additive value.

The results on causal connectors showed that this category of elements was not used extensively. There were productions without causal markers, and even when present, they were represented by 'pentru că' [because], which is the most commonly used in speech. The use of 'fiindcă' [because], 'din cauză că' [due to the fact that/since] or 'din cauza' [because of] was rarely identified in the productions.

5. Conclusions

The overarching objective was to observe how the respondents' level of proficiency in Romanian was supported by the SG model in each of the three elicited tasks. The purpose was to see how the participants' proficiency level affected or benefited their narrative abilities and strategies to organise their discourse. The selected tasks aimed to demonstrate that language proficiency impacts development in the case of adult learners of Romanian as L2. The presumption was that, by the time the B2 level is reached, the respondents would be able to mark in speech all the units and organise them cohesively by establishing interrelations in the stories (Mandler & Johnson 1977), given that they have knowledge of story patterns and can cohesively organise the information (Applebee 1978).

As presented in the section on the conceptual framework, SG models support cross-linguistic influence and a transfer of L1 schema into the L2 narrative for bilinguals and L2 learners. The goal was to see if the students could produce progressively well-formed, complete episodes according to the language level reached; however, the results show that it was quite challenging, and the structure complexity was not reflected from a descriptive standpoint from one level to another. Reviewing the three tasks involving elicited productions led us to start with quantitative patterns by documenting the frequency of the patterns in the three stories and the presence or omission of episodes, so the SG units were scored to see if the results were soundly based on our predictions. The interpretation yielded some results but did not offer sufficient insight into the narrative data processing and organisation in L2. A written corpus and scaffolding activities should be created to continue the inquiry into progressive storytelling, especially when episodes or SG segments are missing or poorly represented.

At the microstructure level, cohesion markers, such as temporal, causal, and additive, were tracked based on frequency, appropriateness, and complexity in the three stories. The narratives' coherence was affected, as the markers function as

links between sequences. The results did not reflect, for the most part, the predictions made, as the structure patterns were repetitive from one story to the other, with very few occurrences that marked higher complexity in Story 2 and Story 3. Another objective was to provide a qualitative description of the terms used for the Internal Response to show how the students could express in L2 Romanian the characters' intentions, feelings, and mental states. A closer look at the data showed that the internal response was omitted in many episodes. In the instances when it was present, the patterns were somewhat repetitive, with mentions of emotional-state terms that did not gain in complexity from one story to the other, proving that this cognitive operation was challenging for the students.

The present analysis had teaching implications as well. After conducting a more detailed analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data, it could be noticed that there is a need to work on these strategies in teaching Romanian to enhance the narrative abilities of the students. More explicit instruction is required, and awareness should be raised regarding including the internal responses as inferential elements to improve the quality of storytelling, help organise the text, and cope better in real-time with factors such as cultural background and language proficiency. The SG model was used to see how L2 Romanian learners can process and produce oral texts and further develop teaching strategies in the classroom that will help them be more proficient. From a teaching perspective, the data showed areas that needed improvement if the goal was to train the above-mentioned capacity of students in L2 Romanian. As such, during formative assessment and when planning to practise in the classroom, the focus should shift to metacognitive processes by supporting the students in training and improving their ability to use the metacognitive processes and storytelling strategies more efficiently in L2 Romanian. Also, the teaching and research process should continue with a written corpus and exercise metacognitive abilities in a written format. The research offers insight into how specific skills develop and improve in L2 learners. It can be an instrument for assessing narrative proficiency and incorporating new content into the academic curriculum.

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THE PORTRAIT OF THE ROMANIAN L2 USER AS A YOUNG [ROMANIAN!] MAN

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ABSTRACT. *The Portrait of the Romanian L2 User as a Young (Romanian!) Man.* The present study represents an attempt to sketch the portrait of a speaker of Romanian as a foreign language - a speaker, however, not at all ordinary, who does not fit into the categories already attested in the literature and who contains, in itself, a linguistic paradox: it refers to a less common, but increasingly numerous, category of young emigrant students of Romanian origin, native speakers of Romanian as an ethnic/heritage language, who have completed their entire pre-university school system in another country and in a language other than Romania/Romanian, and whom we meet as students enrolled in the specialization "Romanian language and literature" at universities abroad, therefore, by default, as a foreign language. Their profile is quite heterogeneous, even within the group, which makes it extremely interesting and challenging for who teaches. The process of creating a schematic, typical portrait of such a learner/speaker requires a necessarily interdisciplinary approach (linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics), and its completion in terms of teaching strategies and methodology is still an open chapter, still being drafted and constantly updated. I should mention that all the data and information on which

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our analysis will be based are drawn from the experience of teaching Romanian abroad, within the Romanian language lectureship at the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy, and from our own research on this subject carried out in recent years.

Keywords: *mother tongue, heritage language, migration, acquisition, learning, foreign language, teaching*

REZUMAT. *Portretul vorbitorului de RL2 ca tânăr român (în străinătate).*

Studiul de față reprezintă o încercare de creionare a portretului unui vorbitor de limbă română în varianta ei de limbă străină – un vorbitor, însă, deloc obișnuit, care nu intră în categoriile deja atestate în literatura de specialitate și care conține, în sine, un paradox lingvistic: este vorba despre o categorie de studenți mai puțin obișnuită, dar tot mai numeroasă, de tineri emigrați, de origine română, vorbitori nativi de limba română ca limbă etnică/moștenită, care au parcurs întregul sistem școlar pre-universitar într-o altă țară și într-o altă limbă decât România/limba română și pe care îi întâlnim ca studenți înscriși la specializarea „limba și literatura română” la universități din străinătate, deci, implicit, ca limbă străină. Profilul lor este un profil aparte, destul de eterogen chiar și în cadrul grupului, de aceea extrem de interesant și de provocator pentru cel de la catedră. Procesul de creionare a unui portret schematic, tip, al unui astfel de student/vorbitor presupune o abordare obligatoriu interdisciplinară (lingvistică, sociolingvistică, psiholingvistică), iar completarea lui, din punctul de vedere al strategiilor și al metodologiei didactice rămâne, încă, un capitol deschis, în curs de redactare și de actualizare continuă. Menționez că toate datele și informațiile pe care se va baza analiza noastră sunt extrase din experiența personală de predare a limbii române în străinătate, în cadrul lectoratului de limba română de la Universitatea Sapienza din Roma, Italia și din cercetările proprii pe acest subiect întreprinse în ultimii ani.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limbă maternă, heritage language, migrație, achiziție, învățare, limbă străină, predare*

Motto: “When the soul of a man is born in this country there are nets flung at it to hold it back from flight. You talk to me of nationality, language, religion. I shall try to fly by those nets.” James Joyce,
A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man

Premise

The aim of the present study is to synthesize and consolidate the data and analyses carried out in recent years, disseminated in a series of conferences and studies published in specialized journals. Throughout the text, references to these sources will be made, and particular sections will be included in the following pages (the most recent Neșu 2024, 177-193; Neșu 2023a, 477-491;

Neşu 2023b, 209-227; Neşu 2023c, 411-427; Neşu 2023d, 249-267; Neşu 2022a, 211-221; Neşu 2022b, 218-228; Neşu 2021, 91-99, Neşu 2020a, 11-19; Neşu 2020b, 243-253). We are thus nearing the conclusion of a comprehensive research initiative that has spanned several years and has focused on a less conventional didactic context for teaching Romanian as a foreign language in a university set outside Romania. As demonstrated in our previous articles, the distinctiveness of this project arises primarily from the structure and characteristics of the student body under examination, which consists of Romanian-origin students from families that have emigrated from Romania. These students pursue philological studies abroad, where Romanian is obviously approached from the outside, as a foreign language. As we have done at the outset of all our previous studies and research, we wish to provide some necessary clarifications: first and foremost, the foundation of this project is rooted in our personal experiences acquired during our tenure as a Romanian lecturer at Sapienza University in Rome. We do not aim to generalize or to speak on behalf of colleagues with whom, for objective reasons, we shared, up to a certain point, a similar teaching experience in a common geographical and cultural space, but with whom, despite similar administrative elements and the presence of students of Romanian origin, we happened to have different perceptions and/or propose different solutions. Second, it is essential to highlight the importance of an inter- and transdisciplinary approach to this phenomenon, particularly as we navigate the intersection of various fields, including the philosophy of language, sociology and sociolinguistics of migration, linguistics and psycholinguistics, and so on. And, thirdly, but perhaps most importantly, it is essential to highlight that the observations and conclusions we have drawn thus far are only partial and should not be regarded as a comprehensive and specialized investigation into the psychological, sociological, or sociolinguistic phenomena as such. Both the social phenomenon of migration and the sociolinguistic aspects of ethnic, inherited, or heritage languages were not treated as standalone subjects in this research. Rather, they served as a carefully curated and enhanced backdrop aimed at addressing a didactic challenge: to comprehend and delineate the underlying phenomena while continuously seeking suitable strategies, solutions, and methodologies tailored to the unique teaching circumstances that arise in this context.

Theoretical background and historical reality

Our research is grounded in two essential theoretical dimensions: on the one hand, the social phenomenon of migration and, on the other hand, the linguistic phenomenon of a slow and gradual dissolution of the Romanian

mother tongue into an ethnic, heritage language. Both levels were correlated with various issues related to the structural and perceptual transformations that accompany the significant shift in the centre-periphery dynamic resulting from migration. From a sociological standpoint, the context underlying the situation we have analysed reveals that migration and the migratory process are interrelated, closely linked to the concepts of habitation and otherness. From a philosophical perspective, the human experience of inhabiting a space, along with the identification and ownership of that space, is intrinsically connected to the experience of inhabiting language. However, it is not always the case that individuals find themselves in the optimal scenario of existing simultaneously in a physical space and a language whose geographical and temporal dimensions align harmoniously. This idyllic scenario, as we have referred to it in previous studies, involves residing within the borders of a state while also engaging with a historical language that rightfully belongs to that state and serves as the mother tongue of its inhabitants. The real situation of our analysis group is, on the contrary, far from representing such a happy overlap—specifically, in our case, the coordinates of living in the space do not coincide (anymore), do not overlap (anymore), neither geographically nor temporally, with those of linguistic living; they have changed as a result of the migratory act, and, consequently, the individual who finds himself in such a situation is forced to change his perspective. Humboldt considered that transitioning from the sphere of one's native language to that of a foreign language, through a process of education, introduces a transformative perspective. The individual is compelled to align with the norms and historical traditions of the new language, which involves generating new content that reflects its character. Simultaneously, there is an endeavour to preserve the individual's skills in the mother tongue, which slowly recedes from its dominant position and becomes increasingly marginal over time. Consequently, it is evident that, in addition to political, socio-economic, or demographic factors, the migration process significantly influences the socio-cultural aspects of individuals, communities, and society as a whole. Central to this influence is the linguistic factor, which is widely recognized for its crucial role in shaping an individual's identity and their affiliation with a specific linguistic community, thereby affecting how they are perceived by others. The sociolinguistics of migration, an increasingly prominent interdisciplinary field that has gained traction in recent years and that focuses on the dynamics of language contact and the interplay between language and migration, elucidates the very transformations and repercussions stemming from such interactions. From a linguistic perspective, shifts in the centre-periphery relationship and the outcomes of language and cultural interactions can manifest in various ways: the emergence of new

linguistic phenomena, instances of linguistic interference, the establishment of partial or complete bilingualism, the acquisition of a new language alongside the potential loss of the mother tongue, instances of linguistic abandonment, and so on. In the fortunate scenarios where the mother tongue is neither intentionally forsaken nor inadvertently lost, it may still experience a range of changes, primarily due to its diminished central status and the rise of a peripheral language within the new sociolinguistic environment. This “new” reality goes by different names in specialized literature—ethnic language, heritage language, family language, minority language, community language, and so on—multiple definitions that all acknowledge, among other aspects, the hybrid nature of a “variant” of the mother tongue and, at times, a variant of the L2 language, which is part of the bilingualism framework. Additionally, these languages share common characteristics, such as diatopic variety, influenced by geographical factors, and diastratic variety, shaped by socio-cultural strata. The significant role of family-type idiolects, which encompass the unique verbal traits of individuals or groups, is also recognized. We have also endeavoured to provide a definition through various studies referenced at the outset of this work, drawing from our own experiences. We aim to highlight some of its most significant characteristics as revealed in our analyses, and we present a description below, as articulated in a study conducted in 2020²: an ethnic language³ or heritage language (the term that is most often preferred in the

² For more details regarding this aspect, please see Neșu 2020a, 11 – 19.

³ The phrase “ethnic language” was introduced in Italian literature by Paolo Balboni in the late 1980s, specifically in a 1989 study, and it primarily pertains to the language utilized by the Italian immigrant community in the United States and Canada, highlighting the necessity for distinct materials and methodologies compared to those employed in teaching Italian as a foreign language in these nations. The ethnic language is defined as “the language spoken in the community of origin of a person who has not acquired it as a mother tongue but who nonetheless hears it spoken in the family and community environments. For example, the children of Italian immigrants often grow up as Italian speakers, yet they hear these languages spoken at home, by friends of the family or on radio or TV programmes” (Balboni 2015, 118; Balboni 2018, 14). From the outset of our research, we have linked the term “ethnic language” to the notion of ethnopragmatics as defined by A. Duranti. He describes it as “uno studio della comunicazione che, integrando metodi etnografici con metodi d’analisi del discorso, documenta i diversi modi in cui il linguaggio fa differenza tra le persone e rende possibile un particolare tipo di socialità, che caratterizza l’essere nel mondo dell’homo sapiens/a study of communication that, by integrating ethnographic methods with discourse analysis techniques, captures the various ways in which language serves to differentiate individuals and facilitates a particular form of social interaction that defines existence within the realm of homo sapiens” (Duranti 2007, 13, our translation). Duranti further clarifies that the prefix “ethno” in “ethnopragmatics” indicates an “impegno *etno*-logico verso le attività comunicative prese in esame, cioè un interesse per il rapporto tra azioni particolari e la loro collocazione all’interno dell’agire sociale di particolari gruppi (...) che implica la documentazione di specifiche pratiche culturali, come

context of English-language literature) is essentially a mother tongue that, for various objective reasons, becomes increasingly confined to a limited social environment, typically within the family. Its usage is predominantly informal, leading to a loss of its institutional significance. Consequently, it no longer serves as the medium for academic or professional pursuits, nor does it function as a language for broader social or institutional interactions. The vocabulary of a heritage language is often minimal, sometimes incorporating regional or dialectal features, and its grammatical structure—encompassing phonetics, syntax, and morphology—may not adhere strictly to normative standards. Furthermore, it frequently lacks the cultural, historical, and social contexts that are essential for a comprehensive understanding. Referring to Krashen's theory (Krashen 1981), it can be stated that this language remains in the initial phase of *acquisition*, which is characterized by an intuitive and unintentional process, failing to advance to the second phase, that of *learning*, that would include grammatical rules and cultural understanding, akin to the experiences of foreign language learners⁴. In addition to all these characteristics, it is clear that there are, as we have mentioned above, additional influences, some of which may be considered “negative,” that arise from interaction with the official language of the country of adoption—in this instance, Italian, a language that is particularly similar in form, which further enhances its impact. This can be observed through phenomena such as code-switching, the use of expressions from one language in another, alterations in intonation and accent, phoneme distortions, both deliberate and accidental mispronunciations, borrowings, linguistic adjustments at the phonetic, morphological, or syntactic levels, and so on.

The phenomenon of Romanian migration to Italy represents a significant socio-historical reality that warrants our attention. In recent years, this migration has resulted in a notable increase in the number of Romanian students enrolling and diligently attending courses in the “Romanian language and literature” specialization at the Faculty of Letters of Sapienza University. This program, which focuses on philological and humanistic studies, offers, as we have mentioned above, Romanian as a foreign language. According to the annual statistical data from the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) and the

al esempio lo scambio dei saluti, la narrazione di esperienze vissute, la richiesta di un favore, l'offerta di cibo, e l'interpretazione che di tali pratiche danno i partecipanti in particolari situazioni/ethno-logical commitment to understanding the communicative activities under scrutiny, that is an interest in the connection between specific actions and their contextual placement within the social dynamics of particular groups (...) which further necessitates the documentation of distinct cultural practices, such as greeting exchanges, sharing personal narratives, requesting assistance, offering food, and the interpretations that participants assign to these practices in various contexts” (Duranti 2007, 14, our translation).

⁴ For more details, please see Neșu 2022a, 212-213.

Dossier Statistico dell'Immigrazione (IDOS), the Romanian community has been the largest immigrant group in Italy since the 2015-2016 academic year, with official figures indicating 1,168,552 residents, followed by 1,145,718 in 2019, 1,083,771 in 2021, and 1,073,196 as of January 1, 2024. Despite a slight decline in the number of Romanian citizens officially residing in Italy, this community remains the largest among foreign populations, significantly outnumbering those from Albania (416,829), Morocco (415,088), China (307,038), and Ukraine (249,613).⁵ As of January 1, 2024, Italy recorded a total of 5,307,598 foreign nationals living within its borders, placing it fourth in Europe, following Germany, Spain, and France.⁶ The Romanian community's demographic structure has seen only minor alterations over the years. As of the end of 2016, a pivotal year, as we have mentioned above, in which the Romanian community emerged as the predominant immigrant group in Italy, the official count of Romanian residents stood at 1,168,552. This number constituted 23.2% of the total foreign population in Italy, indicating that Romanians accounted for roughly one-third (33.8%) of all Romanians who have emigrated globally, with a 1.5% increase noted in 2016. In recent years, there has been a growing trend of individuals returning to Romania or migrating to other EU and non-EU countries. The foremost reason for immigration is providing for the family and family unity, followed only in second place by the pursuit of business opportunities. Romanians are spread throughout the peninsula, particularly in major urban centres in the central and northern regions, such as Rome, Turin, Milan, Bologna, Florence, and Venice, with 20% residing in Lazio and 15% in the "Province of Rome". The average age of immigrants is 34 years, and the community is predominantly family-based, typically consisting of at least two members. Women make up a significant portion, with 57.4% of Romanian immigrants being female. Mixed marriages are quite common, with 2,727 registrations, the majority of which involve Italian men and Romanian women. Regarding educational qualifications, most individuals possess secondary education, while a smaller percentage have completed high school; university and postgraduate education are less common. Consequently, labour market statistics for 2016 indicate that Romanians account for 20.4% of foreign workers with employment contracts, achieving an employment rate of 63% within the Romanian community. The primary sectors of employment for males include construction, transport, and agriculture, while females predominantly work in family services (such as caregiving and domestic work), hospitality, and

⁵ The data has been gathered after examining the materials available in the Dossier Statistico Immigrazione 2024, released by the Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS in Rome, along with information accessed from the official ISTAT website, consulted at <https://demo.istat.it/app/?i=RCS&l=it>.

⁶ Idem.

retail. Of these workers, 96.6% are on fixed-term contracts, with only 3.4% holding indefinite contracts. Additionally, 2016 also saw a rise in self-employment among Romanian citizens in Italy, with 51,366 individuals managing private enterprises. The distribution of these activities shows that 61.9% are in construction, 12.5% in trade, and 5% in services. Unfortunately, during the analysed period, the Romanian community continues to be particularly vulnerable to undeclared work and illegal exploitation (Neșu 2020b, 243-253). The data available for the 2021-2022 period indicate that there have been no substantial changes: the Romanian community continues to be the largest foreign demographic, constituting 20.8% of the overall foreign population, with a total of 1,076,412 individuals, a decline from 1,145,718 in 2020. It is noteworthy that the number of Romanians acquiring Italian citizenship has been increasing annually; in 2020, for instance, 11,449 Romanians obtained citizenship, with women making up 57.9% of this figure. Furthermore, research reveals that more than 10,000 Romanian children are registered as born in Italy each year, in addition to those born to mixed couples; in 2019, for example, there were 16,335 newborns with at least one Romanian parent. According to Italian legislation, children from mixed couples (where one parent is Italian) are granted Italian citizenship at birth, while those born to two Romanian parents may only request Italian citizenship upon turning 18. The enrolment of Romanian children in Italian schools is also steadily increasing, with 156,715 students representing 17.9% of all foreign students in the 2019-2020 school year (Ricci 2022, 40-67).

Sociolinguistic integration, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and a portrait sketch

Migration should not be regarded as simply a biological event; it is, in fact, an existential political act that involves a complicated exchange of living spaces, a process that is deeply intertwined with the idea of hospitality and is often associated with trauma, loss, dislocation, and suffering. For this reason, it necessitates an ongoing process of identity renegotiation, both at the individual level and within the broader community⁷. The integration of immigrants into a new society is not limited to linguistic adaptation, which is an important initial phase aimed at dismantling language barriers. Instead, it fundamentally involves sociolinguistic integration, which requires an understanding of the sociolinguistic and communicative models, of pragmatic use, of the society in which one seeks to integrate, rather than just a comprehension of the language

⁷ We refer here to the extensive studies on this issue by Di Cesare, 2017 and Volkan, 2019.

at a theoretical level.⁸ As previously mentioned in the studies referenced at the outset, the successful integration of immigrants encompasses at least two essential components from a linguistic and cultural perspective. The first is basic *linguistic integration*, which involves overcoming language barriers and developing proficiency in the adopted language. The second is *sociolinguistic integration*, which necessitates an additional understanding of the communicative or pragmatic norms specific to the community in which the immigrant resides. It is evident that language serves as a significant marker of identity in the migration process, fundamentally shaping the identity of the migrant through the linguistic aspects of their experience. Specifically, this entails a “savoir-faire” in verbal interactions, which is crucial for establishing genuine communicative competence⁹. It is precisely from these needs that the English version of the

⁸ We would like to highlight here the relevant commentary by Florin Olariu, who notes that “în context migraționist eforturile de contextualizare influențează în mod profund procesele psihocognitive prin intermediul cărora fiecare individ își construiește și își definește propria structură identitară. Imigrantul, ca urmare a procesului de modificare a reperelor socioculturale în care este antrenat, ajunge în situația de a problematiza cu o și mai mare acuitate semnificația comportamentelor cotidiene pe care le observă – atât cele proprii, cât și ale membrilor societății gazdă sau chiar ale membrilor societății de origine (acestea din urmă fiind mult mai vizibile acum, în condițiile alterității date). El va trebui acum să-și reconfigureze noile grile de lectură a cotidianului care să-i permită să se plaseze cât mai bine în cadrul raporturilor comunitare de zi cu zi. Altfel spus, el va trebui să ia decizii în legătură cu propriile practici lingvistice (ce limbă, cu cine și în ce condiții poate să o vorbească?), sociale (cu cine să stabilească și să întrețină relații: cu persoane de aceeași origine ca și el? cu membri ai comunității gazdă?), cu atitudinile sau reprezentările sale – aceste decizii fiind de primă importanță pentru propria sa identitate socială” / “within the context of migration, the efforts of contextualization significantly impact the psychocognitive processes through which individuals construct and define their identity frameworks. Immigrants, as they navigate changes in the sociocultural landmarks surrounding them, find themselves compelled to critically reassess the meaning of their daily behaviours—both their own and those exhibited by members of the host society, as well as those from their society of origin (which become more pronounced in the face of otherness). Consequently, they must reconfigure their interpretative frameworks of daily life to better position themselves within the dynamics of community interactions. This necessitates making informed choices regarding their linguistic practices (which language to use, with whom, and under what circumstances?), social connections (whether to engage with individuals of similar backgrounds or to integrate with the host community?), and their attitudes or perceptions—decisions that are crucial for the formation of their social identity” (Olariu 2017, 147 our translation).

⁹ “Construcția interactivă a identității presupune din partea actorilor sociali apropierea unui ansamblu de norme și principii discursive conforme universului etno- și sociocultural în care aceștia își duc existența cotidiană.” / “The interactive construction of identity requires social actors to adopt a set of norms and discursive principles consistent with the ethno- and socio-cultural universe in which they navigate their daily lives” (Olariu 2017, 146 our translation). It is important to note that the same researcher has also introduced a novel method and emphasized its crucial significance in the study of migratory phenomena. This method, referred to as “migraphy,” was first presented in the aforementioned 2017 volume and has

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, CEFR, was born in 2001, a document that delineates and defines various levels of language proficiency, grounded in specific competencies, serving as benchmarks for both the learning and instruction of foreign languages. This document emphasizes the necessity for individuals to have access to resources that enable them to enhance their language skills. Such skills are essential for fulfilling personal needs, including conducting daily activities in a foreign country, exchanging information and ideas with speakers of different languages, and gaining a deeper understanding of the customs and mindsets of diverse cultures. It is evident that this document challenges traditional methods and strategies of foreign language instruction, which have primarily focused on grammatical and lexical elements, often neglecting the communicative and interactive dimensions of a pragmatic nature. The framework also suggests the need for a change in methodological design, emphasizing that the act of learning, respectively teaching, must be oriented according to the needs, motivations, characteristics, and possibilities of those who study, must formulate valid and realistic objectives, must develop methods and materials appropriate to the needs and situations, and must eventually create and develop adequate methods for evaluating study programs.

On the other hand, it is equally important to outline a profile of the individual studying a foreign language, a profile that should encompass not only physiological and psychological attributes but also, as much as possible, a range of contextual, motivational, temporal, intentional, and subjective factors. In numerous studies, P. Balboni¹⁰ managed to bring together most of the theories and their results in terms of drawing such a “robot/pattern” portrait of individuals who aspire to learn a foreign language. In the following sections, we will endeavour to briefly outline this portrait, highlighting both its commonalities and unique characteristics. We may begin with a metaphor proposed by Balboni, who likens the human individual to a learning machine, where the brain functions as the hardware and the mind as the software. This is complemented by an exploration of the physiological mechanisms underlying the human brain’s learning processes, alongside a description of the human mind through Chomsky’s concept of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD),

since been further explored in subsequent research (Olariu & Olariu 2024, 121-140; Olariu 2024, 23-47). In the view of the author, migraphy, or migratory biography, functions as a research tool comparable to life history. This approach is predominantly centred on a compilation of linguistic biographies that are developed by individuals and then recorded and analysed by researchers, specifically within the context of migration, thereby distinguishing its particular focus.

¹⁰ We refer here only to P. Balboni, *Imparare le lingue straniere*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2008; P. Balboni, *Fare educazione linguistica. Insegnare italiano, lingue straniere e lingue classiche*, UTET, Torino, 2013; P. Balboni, *Le sfide di Babele. Insegnare le lingue nelle società complesse*, UTET, Torino, 2015.

which is a physiological feature shared by all humans. The first distinction arises when considering the various types of intelligence and learning styles, which are regarded as personal rather than universal. Here, we encounter several types of intelligences, referred to as multiple intelligences, that contribute to individual intelligence, each present in varying combinations and proportions across different individuals. These intelligences include linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, kinaesthetic or procedural, as well as intra- and interpersonal intelligences, with later additions of naturalistic and philosophical-existential intelligence¹¹. It is crucial, as emphasized by Balboni, to avoid conflating these types of intelligence with the classifications of learning styles, including analytical versus globalizing, creative versus executor, and tolerant versus intolerant of ambiguity, or with personality traits such as introvert versus extrovert, cooperative versus competitive, and optimistic versus pessimistic. Furthermore, Balboni introduces the emotional or affective filter, which he describes as a psychodidactic metaphor that relates to a distinct organic reality that underpins the memorization process. This notion of “affective filter” first appeared in Krashen’s SLAT theory (Second Language Acquisition Theory)¹², as one of the three principles that indicate how “acquisition” occurs as distinct from “learning”: comprehensible input, natural order (interlanguage) and affective filter (in which an important role is played, again, by physiology, the balance between physiological chemical processes, adrenaline/noradrenaline which facilitates the memorization process). Additional elements that set apart the profiles of learners of foreign languages include variables such as age, which influence the distinct teaching and learning approaches suitable for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors. In relation to age, the social role of the learner and their motivation are also significant factors. Within Balboni’s perspective, motivation is likened to the energy that facilitates the interaction and movement between hardware and software, the

¹¹ Balboni resumes here Howard Gardner’s theory on multiple intelligences (Gardner 1983; Gardner 2006) emphasizing that, in Garner’s opinion, linguistic intelligence would account for the social and relational use of language, while formal and grammatical aspects would be managed by logical-mathematical intelligence.

¹² It is widely recognized that Professor Stephen Krashen, building upon Chomsky’s LAD theory, developed his own framework known as the Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLAT) in 1981. This theory fundamentally distinguishes between *acquisition* and *learning*, echoing Chomsky’s dichotomy of *knowing* versus *cognizing* (Krashen 1981). Subsequently, this theory became linked to J. Bruner’s Language Acquisition Support System (LASS) theory. Bruner, in opposition to the LAD theory and influenced by the ideas of philosophers such as Wittgenstein, Austin, and Searle, as well as Vygotsky, proposed a social-interactionist approach to language development, highlighting the critical role of social interaction in this process. Researchers have noted that children learn to speak primarily to communicate with others, a process that occurs within the context of parent-child interactions, which aligns with Krashen’s notion of “comprehensible input.”

essential elements of the learning process, and is seen as a vital subjective factor in this dynamic. Balboni discusses two key models for examining motivation: the ego dynamic model, proposed by Renzo Titone in the 1970s, which centres on the learner's ego and personal motivations that may contribute to larger life or career goals, and a motivational model inspired by marketing theories, which divides human motivations into three categories: duty, need, and pleasure. According to the Italian researcher, duty serves as the paramount "motivation" within the traditional educational framework. However, this motivation does not facilitate the retention of information over the long term, as emotional filters impede the transfer of knowledge into short- and medium-term memory. The necessity for learning is primarily associated with the left hemisphere of the brain, which governs reasoning and awareness. While this "motivation" is effective, it is constrained by the individual's recognition of this need and the subjective nature of evaluating its fulfilment. In contrast, pleasure, which is linked to the right hemisphere but can also engage the left hemisphere under certain conditions, emerges when those assisting the learning process, educators or parents, successfully stimulate interest and enjoyment in the learning process (this pleasure encompasses various aspects, such as the joy of discovery, the excitement of acquiring new knowledge, the appreciation for variety and diversity, the thrill of the unexpected, the satisfaction derived from overcoming challenges, the fulfilment of both needs and duties, including professional satisfaction, and so on).¹³

The profile of the Romanian L2 user as a young Romanian (abroad) – a portrait sketch

It is obvious that the profile of the student under investigation is influenced by the aforementioned series of general, common, characteristics. Nevertheless, its distinctiveness and uniqueness arise, as previously indicated in our study, from the fact that this individual is a speaker (primarily a native one) of Romanian who enrolls to learn this language as a foreign language, which carries various implications due to this atypical circumstance. The Romanian language, fundamentally a mother tongue, transitions into an ethnic or heritage language (LE/HL) and subsequently evolves into a variant of a foreign language (L2). We refer to it as a "subspecies" because, from a linguistic perspective, it does not constitute an "authentic" foreign language; rather, as discussed throughout this article, this classification applies only at specific levels, particularly concerning metalinguistic, normative, and, in many instances,

¹³ Especially Balboni 2015, 67 – 87.

cultural dimensions. We have previously provided a general overview of this student group on several occasions, and we will reiterate it here, citing a study conducted in 2023 (Neşu 2023c, 411-427). Therefore, the working group consists of students of Romanian descent, who were born in Romania and have both parents who speak Romanian as their first language. These individuals are children of immigrant families who relocated to Italy around the year 2000, arriving at a relatively young age, with more than 90% having done so during their preschool years. Consequently, their entire education has been undertaken in Italian. For these individuals, the Romanian language serves as their “home” language; however, it is frequently supplanted, even within familial settings, by Italian or a blend of both languages. The characteristics of the group pertinent to our analysis, derived from questionnaires administered at the conclusion of each academic year, are as follows: they have infrequent interactions with standard Romanian, primarily within a familial context rather than an institutional one. Romanian is not utilized as the medium of instruction in their education, nor is it the language for social or institutional interactions. Communication among themselves occurs predominantly in Italian, with Romanian being used rarely. They do not engage with Romanian newspapers or magazines, nor do they watch Romanian radio or television channels; they aren’t up to date and use Romanian social media in small numbers (Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok etc.) Consequently, they are disconnected from the political, social, and cultural developments in Romania, lacking awareness of even widely publicized issues. Their knowledge of Romanian history, geography, culture, and art is minimal, and they are unfamiliar with notable figures from both traditional and contemporary Romanian culture, including social media *influencers* popular among young Romanians. While they exhibit an interest in Romanian history and geography, this is often accompanied by an idealized perception of Romanian realities. Their friendships are primarily with other Romanian-origin youth, with whom they communicate in Italian, although they are also well integrated into Italian society. Their culinary preferences are mainly Romanian, largely influenced by their parents. Participation in the League of Romanian Students Abroad (LSRS) is minimal, with only one individual out of twenty-four involved in 2020, and they are not active in the Romanian community in Italy. However, they do participate more frequently in the Orthodox Church in Italy and some cultural events organized by it. Their attendance at the Romanian language, culture, and civilization course (LCCR), offered free of charge in Italian schools by the Romanian Ministry of Education, has been limited and sporadic (with only two individuals participating). There is a moderate interest in exploring educational prospects in Romania, yet there is no inclination to return to Romania after finishing their

studies. Regarding how they perceive themselves from the point of view of ethnic affiliation, we consider the evolution over the years to be interesting (Neșu 2024, 182-183): in response to the inquiry regarding the (ethnic) identity individuals identify with (with the available options being *Romanian*, *Italian*, or *other*), there has been a gradual emergence of a European identity since 2015. Initially, only two individuals selected this European option that was not included in the provided choices. By 2022, however, this response had gained significant traction, achieving an absolute majority that mirrored the percentage of respondents identifying as Romanian in 2015. The data compiled and formalized in the accompanying table reflects this trend, standardizing the number of student respondents while maintaining the original proportions:

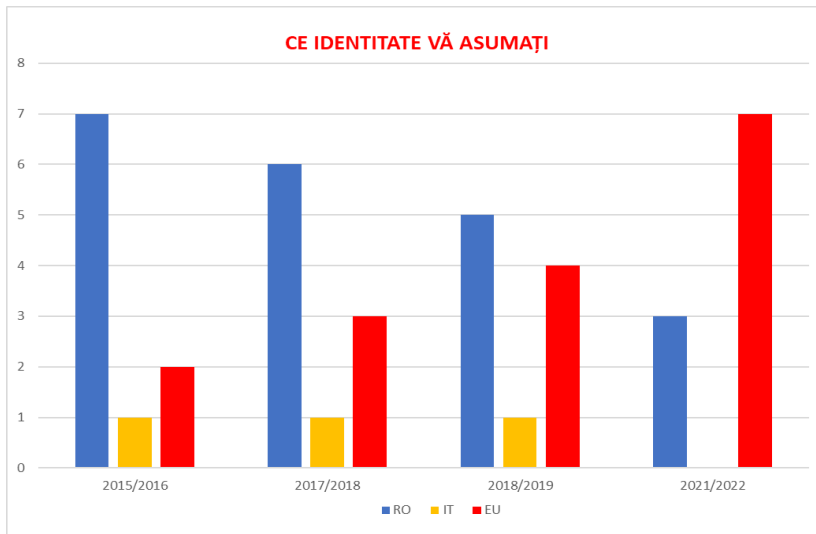


Figure 1. Students auto perception of ethnic identity

As can be easily observed, the *Italian* voice completely disappears in the 2021/2022 questionnaire and we would like to emphasize that this absence does not pertain to their citizenship from a political or administrative perspective, even if this remains a determining factor, but rather to their self-perception as belonging to a nation/nationality. As we showed throughout the studies cited above, the reasons behind this outcome are highly intricate and reveal a range of equally complex issues. It is obvious that their status as immigrants, particularly as second-generation individuals who have lived (and in some cases were born) in Italy and completed their education there, yet are not recognized as Italian citizens for various reasons that are beyond the scope of

this discussion, complicates matters. These individuals operate administratively under Romanian citizenship but no longer identify with that nationality for reasons that are both identifiable and understandable. Consequently, they “resort” to the solution of adopting a middle, intermediary, and neutral identity—namely, a European identity. Whether this identity genuinely exists and under what circumstances remains to be seen in the future. For the time being, in the context of these students, it serves as a mechanism for the ongoing renegotiation of their identity, a process ingrained in the experience of migration. It is important to note that it isn’t an inherent trait at all; rather, it is a constructed phenomenon¹⁴.

An additional element of the profile of this category of RLS students that we wish to highlight in this discussion pertains to the coordinates of the imaginary, a topic we explored in depth in a separate study published in 2023 (Neșu 2023d, 249-267) and from which we will extract some ideas. Following the completion of questionnaires and the analysis of letters addressed to a personified Romania on its National Day (December 1st) in the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, we sought to delineate certain dimensions of the collective imaginary of these students. This process, aimed at shaping the identity imaginary that these students construct regarding their homeland, consists of two key components: the first involves a requirement from the questionnaire that asks participants to associate a noun, an adjective, and a verb with Romania, while the second component comprises, as mentioned above, free, anonymous compositions in the form of open letters addressed to Romania, on the occasion of its National Day. The findings from the initial phase reveal the following associations: the noun category includes HOME (7 occurrences), LONGING [DOR] (5 occurrences), FAMILY (5 occurrences), CHILDHOOD (4 occurrences), GRANDPARENTS (4 occurrences), FOREST (3 occurrences), HOLIDAYS (1 occurrence), and VACATION (1 occurrence). The adjectives identified are BEAUTIFUL (10 occurrences), SLOW (5 occurrences), WILD (4 occurrences), BALKAN (3 occurrences), DEAR (3 occurrences), DELAYED (2 occurrences), FAR AWAY (1 occurrence), CHEERFUL (1 occurrence), and TOXIC (1 occurrence). The verbs listed are TO FIGHT (7 occurrences), TO RETURN (6 occurrences), TO DREAM (6 occurrences), TO HEAL (4 occurrences), TO CHANGE (3 occurrences), TO DEVELOP (2 occurrences), TO RECOVER (1 occurrence), and TO MOVE FORWARD (1 occurrence). It is noteworthy that the selection of these terms serves primarily to foreshadow the detailed descriptions found within the compositions. Indeed, some of these terms were utilized in the formulation of the principal conceptual metaphors, which we regard as fundamental to the construction of this imagery. We have identified four such metaphors:

¹⁴ For more details on this aspect, see Neșu 2023b, 209 – 227.

ROMANIA IS TRADITION (AND/OR CUSTOMS), ROMANIA IS HOME/FAMILY/GRANDPARENTS, ROMANIA IS VACATION/MEMORIES, and ROMANIA IS IDEAL/IDEALIZED. The conclusions drawn in the referenced study remain valid today and are further substantiated by two additional sets of materials (questionnaires and letters to Romania) from 2023 and 2024, which are yet to be analysed. The perspective of the imagery that arises from these textual fragments is strikingly contradictory to the assertions made by the same students in earlier questionnaires regarding their home language, their understanding of Romanian culture, their general perceptions of Romania, particularly in relation to the increasingly European identity they embrace, which seems to overshadow their national identity, and so on¹⁵. By removing the context, one might interpret these fragments as patriotic microtexts infused with a distinctly romantic ethos, characterized by a profound sense of national pride, occasionally bordering on nationalism. The idea of country/homeland/mother, which serves as the backbone of romanticism and patriotism, intersects with an identity perception that starkly contrasts, as we have mentioned, with the realities of daily life. This contradiction is evident in their apparent lack of awareness and interest in the current circumstances of Romania. From this perspective, it would be particularly enlightening to examine and compare the reactions of Romanian students living in Italy with those of their peers residing in Romania. The fundamental aspect that would underpin such a comparison—the explanatory, critical, and defining factor that emerges prominently—is emigration, and scholars who investigate this phenomenon from sociological and psychological angles are likely to provide valuable insights¹⁶. This greatly supports our efforts in identifying teaching strategies that are pertinent to the advancement of cultural competence.

Instead of a conclusion

The conclusion of this endeavour to articulate the current situation and to synthesize various research findings on this subject is centred on the recognition of several pressing needs. First of all, it is essential to acknowledge, at multiple levels, the existence of this “problem” and to recognize, where

¹⁵ Regarding the questionnaire item about the engagement with Romanian literature prior to university studies and outside the academic syllabus, the results indicated that all respondents reported no prior reading, except for one student in 2019 who referenced poems by Eminescu and tales by I. Creangă. In response to the inquiry about well-known personalities in Romanian culture, the answers predominantly included Dracula, Ceaușescu, Nadia Comăneci, Simona Halep, and David Popovici (particularly in the most recent surveys), with Eminescu being mentioned infrequently, akin to the responses from foreign students who are absolute beginners in this field.

¹⁶ We referenced and commented some of them in the previously mentioned study.

applicable, this category of RLS students as a distinct group, characterized by a unique profile, specific structure, and tailored objectives. Consequently, there arises a necessity for a dedicated pathway designed specifically for them. Secondly, there is a critical need to further investigate this issue from a range of theoretical and practical perspectives that can enhance the educational process. It is imperative to emphasize the requirement for an inter and/or transdisciplinary approach in this context. Thirdly, closely related to the previous observation, it is important to develop specialized textbooks that cater to the specific needs of this student demographic, taking into account their linguistic, psycholinguistic, and sociolinguistic attributes. Finally, it is crucial to identify effective teaching solutions that extend beyond the existing methods we have developed over the years and which we have termed “in the mirror”. This was investigated in previous studies (Neșu 2020b, Neșu 2021, Neșu 2023c, etc.), taking into account the fact that, in reality, these students must also be adequately prepared for the eventuality of becoming potential teachers of the Romanian language, a highly plausible outcome for students from the Faculties of Letters, philological, and humanistic fields, in Romania as well as abroad.

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SOCIO-CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF ROMANIAN THROUGH THE LENS OF RL2 LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT. *Socio-cultural Dynamics of Romanian through the Lens of RL2 Learners.* This research investigates the social and cultural dynamics of the Romanian language, with a particular emphasis on its status as a prestige language within the RL2 learner communities. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study combines quantitative data with qualitative data obtained from observations and a questionnaire addressed to RL2 learners. Shifting the role played by the Romanian language from being a ‘minor’ language to being a prestige language within an RL2 community of practice through cultural immersion underscores the significance of social interactions in the language learning process. By offering a detailed understanding of the Romanian language within its cultural milieu, this study seeks to contribute to the portrayal of the RL2 learner profile.

Keywords: *prestige language, ‘minor’ language, RL2, community, socialising identity*

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REZUMAT. *Dinamica socio-culturală a limbii române prin filtrul vorbitorilor de RL2.* Această cercetare investighează dinamica socială și culturală a limbii române, cu accent pe statutul său de limbă de prestigiu în cadrul comunităților de vorbitori de RL2. Folosind o metodă mixtă de cercetare, studiul îmbină date cantitative cu date calitative obținute din observații și dintr-un chestionar adresat vorbitorilor de RL2. Schimbarea rolului jucat de limba română de la o limbă „minoră” la o limbă de prestigiu în cadrul comunităților de vorbitori de RL2 subliniază importanța interacțiunilor sociale în procesul de învățare a unei limbi străine. Oferind o înțelegere detaliată a limbii române în mediul său cultural, acest studiu urmărește să contribuie la portretizarea profilului vorbitorului de RL2.

Cuvinte-cheie: *limbă de prestigiu, limbă „minoră”, RL2, comunitate, identitate socială*

Introduction

The online communities of influencers who promote Romanian as a second language (RL2) provide a fresh perspective on the social and cultural dynamics of RL2. In this context, this study aims to explore the language-culture nexus from an emic perspective. By selecting five reels produced by RL2 speakers, we delve into the experiences of RL2 speakers, presenting their digital narratives. Through qualitative analysis of these reels and the answers provided by RL2 respondents to a questionnaire, this study allows us to better understand and portray the RL2 learner profile. Our questionnaire was applied in the timespan November-December 2024, and targeted RL2 speakers living in Romania and abroad. We present the relevant theoretical concepts and ideas, then we proceed to qualitatively analyse and discuss a selection of examples. All selected reels, as well as the answers to the questionnaire are in Romanian and in English. We reproduce all of them verbatim, and we also provide an English translation of the examples that were produced in Romglish or Romanian.

Weaving Online Stories and Identities: Superdiversity and RL2

Online discourses today take place within the conditions of superdiversity in which 'globalization has altered the face of social, cultural and linguistic diversity in societies all over the world' (Blommaert 2011, 1). Superdiversity is thus marked by globalisation, digital technologies, and increased migration and it is understood as a condition which is 'distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally

stratified immigrants' (Vertovec 2007, 1024). These shifting demographics are reflected in communication practices within a social world which is configured by globalization and movement of people, objects and ideas around the world (see Barton and Lee, 2013). To these features of superdiversity, we might add the uncharted dimensions configured by the participation in online social network sites where digital affordances create a space in which different linguistic profiles co-create each other in an attempt to communicate to audiences and create meaning.

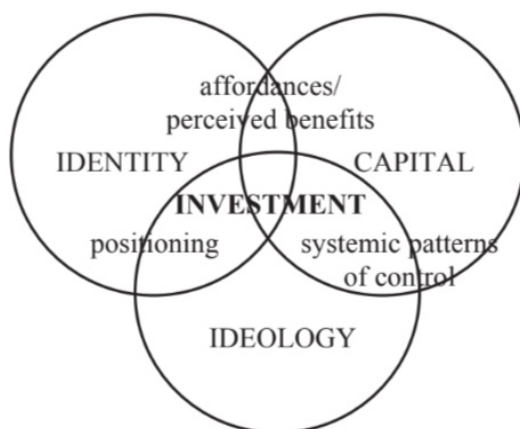
The daily encounters in the digital space show a complex 'communicative ecosystem' (Ardévol and Gómez-Cruz 2014: 7, apud Cotoc and Radu 2024, 355) which portrays 'ritual practices and cultural modes' (Cotoc and Radu 2024, 355). They also show a connection with a global network in which local languages are represented, while global and local discursive participations mark new identities and also identity affiliation and community membership. The language choice and the social-cultural practices in day-to-day online interactions show that there is an inherent power dynamics which reflects the intention of some users to expropriate the Anglocentric hegemonic language in favour of Less Widely Used Less Taught (LWULT) Languages and Langues moins Diffusées et moins Enseignées (MoDiMEs) in the EU (see for example Torres and Drobnik-Rogers 2024; Kakoyianni-Doa, Monville-Burston, Papadima-Sophocleous, Valetopoulos 2020) or Less Commonly Taught Languages (LCTLs) in the USA (see for example Uebel, Kraemer and Giupponi 2023).

The online discourses are shaped semiotically and socially and there is an 'awareness of language as imbued with social, political and cultural narratives' (Nero 2006; Brutt-Griffler 2007 apud Myrrh Domingo 2016, 551). As 'storytelling has become a suitable social practice for studying the complex ways in which social actors assume, reject and/or contest individual and collective identities, as well as forms of production and reproduction of a particular social and institutional order' (Patiño-Santos and Relaño-Pastor 2018, 2), the online narratives of some RL2 users construct linguistic biographies through storytelling strategies that show their attitude towards the Romanian language and culture, food and its quality, ideas and beliefs. Moreover, 'Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) is reimagined as a linguistic resource that provides popularity to its speakers and also functions as a self-branding online tool' (Radu and Cotoc 2024, 28). RL2 users become cultural ambassadors of Romania in the global space of the Internet and also commodities because they construct a self-brand that is recognised and validated within the communities of practice of social network sites. This online self-branding manoeuvre is configured by storytelling and identity is constructed in the context of marking a sense of belonging through 'discourses that cross and merge cultural and linguistic boundaries' (Darvin 2016, 533).

On the Internet, the self-branding techniques and storytelling take place in multilingual, translingual and multimodal scenarios because several languages and modes of representation intertwine in order to produce meaning. 'While multilingual indicates the combination of separate languages, translingual signals how languages mutually influence each other and produce new hybrid meanings and grammar. The meshing of diverse languages and modalities in digital texts results in unconventional idioms and word choices' (Darvin 2016, 529). In our case, RL2 users on social network sites engage in code-meshing, blending their mother tongue and/or other languages with Romanian. This results in RL2 discourses that demonstrate a bona fide language variety, characterised by stylistic choices, creative expressions and meshed idiomatic expressions. Moreover, a useful concept to describe these linguistic productions would be the concept of *interlanguage* as used by Gass and Selinker who states that the focus on the learner and the processes involved in learning are inherent in an analysis of interlanguage data (1994, 14). Accordingly, Romanian as a foreign language can be viewed as an interlanguage - a linguistic system that emerges when non-native speakers are in the process of learning the target language. This interlanguage consists 'not only of elements from their native language and the target language, but also "autonomous" elements.' (Gass and Selinker, 17). RL2 online, regardless of the level, can serve as an effective productive branding strategy used by certain influencers promoting Romanian culture and language. This moves beyond the narrow focus of the native-speaker perspective which can be limiting when analysing online communicative repertoires.

The RL2 self-identification in the context of social media landscape is emergent in these narratives because these online users represent themselves as subjects of discourse. They are 'points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made, within the discourses of history and culture' (Hall 2019, 226).

All the points advanced so far show that RL2 users on online social network sites affirm identity affiliation and exhibit knowledge of the Romanian culture as a capital and the reels they produce are cultural resources for native and non-native speakers alike. This entitles us to say that RL2 users construct an identity reflecting a model of investment generally valid for L2 learners in conditions of superdiversity and digital technologies (this model borrowed from Darvin 2016 and can be seen in Figure 1 below).



Source: Darwin and Norton (2015: 42).

Figure 1. RL2 Model of investment

In consideration of Darwin's assertion that there are 'three dynamics in Internet-mediated interactions: indexical linkages to macro-level categories (ethnic or nation-state affiliations); functionally defined subject positions (e.g. youth, author, expert, novice), and fluid shifts in language choice, stance and style' (Darvin 2016, 530), the RL2 profiles on social network sites manifest a macro-level category (for example: American learning Romanian), a subject position (e.g. influencer), and different language productions which are fluid and transitory (see for example the Reels on Instagram). This three-dimensional conceptualisation of online RL2 identities show an understanding of everyday online activities combined with linguistic data and this 'provides a way of reaching deeper into the ethnographic description of social or institutional processes. The slow and intensive analysis of language and communication sheds light on small (but consequential) aspects of social practice, taking the ethnography into smaller and more focused spaces and drawing analytic attention to fine detail'. (Shaw, S., Copland, F., Snell, J. 2015, 8). Hence, the combination of ethnographic details with linguistic analysis helps us understand the complex process of constructing an RL2 identity in conditions of superdiversity, globalisation and digital technologies. In addition, 'by communicating across multiple symbolic systems in the online world, individuals can imagine new identities and ways of being in the world. They are able to share these self-representations with diverse audiences, who may interpret the meanings of these representations in very different ways' (Darvin 2016, 531).

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the emic perspective of RL2 speakers scattered throughout the world towards the use of Romanian as a foreign language as used on Instagram by influencers who create stories and identities, actively promoting Romanian culture and language. This would contribute to a better understanding of the status quo of this LWULT language within the framework of constructing a self-brand on social networking sites.

Participants and Procedure

Our study utilizes a complementary research method. On the one hand, the study concentrates on observing the online discourse in five reels created by non-native content creators, with the goal of identifying linguistic and digital trends in the construction of RL2 identities. On the other hand, it focuses on the emic perspective of RL2 speakers aiming to collect their views on Romanian culture and language as well as on the content depicted by these content creators in their reels.

Besides the analysis of the online discourses, the study utilized a survey distributed via Google Forms in November and December 2024. The participants are adult non-native speakers of Romanian, including those living in Romania, those who previously lived in Romania but no longer reside there, and those who have never lived in Romania. The data collected via this survey was analysed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The first section of the survey collects general information about the respondents, and we analyse the responses provided by 81 participants in the research. Our respondents declared having the following mother tongues: Albanian (4), Arabic (12 respondents), Chinese (1), Czech (2), Dutch (1), English (4), French (5), German (6 respondents), Greek (1), Hebrew (1), Hungarian (30), Italian (5), Polish (1), Russian (2), Spanish (5), Ukrainian (1), Tamazight (1), Turkmen (2). Among these, 5 respondents declared being bilingual: English-Spanish, Arabic-English, French-Spanish, German-Romanian and Italian-Romanian. It is important to note that the respondents who declared being bilingual in Romanian and another language are members of the Romanian diasporic communities. They were born in Romania and have at least one Romanian parent, but they emigrated from Romania as children. The profile of our respondents is multilingual, as all of them speak at least one foreign language besides Romanian. Most of the respondents

declare being proficient in several languages like English, German, French, Chinese, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Hungarian, Italian, Ukrainian, Russian, Turkish, Albanian and many others. Moreover, our participants also engage in translingual practices as they use all the repertoires available whenever they speak RL2.

When asked to self-assess their level in Romanian language, almost half of our respondents chose B1-B2 (45.7%), many of them declared being C1-C2 level (24.7%), some of them declared being A1-A2 level (18.5%) and the lowest percentage was registered for pre-A1 (see Figure 2 below).

Nivelul meu de limba română este: My Romanian level is:

81 responses

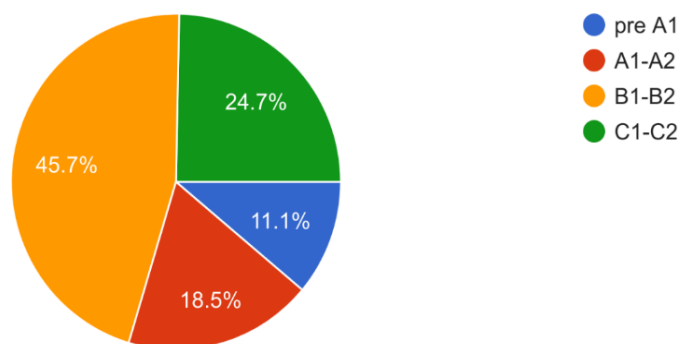


Figure 2. Level of RL2

Research Instruments

The survey contains three main sections: the first section focuses on Demographic information about our respondents such as their mother tongue, the foreign languages they speak, their level of Romanian, and the reason they have learned/are learning Romanian. It also asks our respondents whether they watch nonnative Romanian speakers. The second section focuses on general aspects of RL2 and includes 4 checkboxes. The first part of the third section focuses on our respondents' attitude towards the content produced by five nonnative speakers on Instagram, and it includes 4 open questions, 1 checkbox and two yes/no questions. The last part of this section contains two items focusing on the respondents' attitudes and viewpoints on the Romanian language (1 checkbox, 1 open question).

Research Hypotheses

Our research concentrates on exploring three hypotheses that guide our investigation and provide a view on RL2: 1. Generally, the profile of RL2 speakers is multilingual and their discourse productions are translingual; 2. RL2 as a LWULT language is produced in a translingual and superdiverse space online; 3. The content created online shows a curated brand tailored for niche communities comprising both nonnative speakers and native speakers who engage with and consume this kind of content.

Findings and Interpretations

The study analyses a selection of the responses, linking the findings to our research hypotheses, and illustrating how respondents perceive the use of RFL online. We provide our translation for each of the responses selected in this analysis.

The motivations for our respondents to learn Romanian can be grouped into the categories below. Here are a few examples for each category:

- **Necessity:** *I live in Romania; Romania is the country that I live in, and because of that I have to learn the romanian language; Pentru facultate si acuma ma gandesc sa stau in romania dupa facultate* [For college and now I'm thinking about staying in Romania after college]; *Am trait in Romania* [I once lived in Romania]; *Învăț limba română ca să mă afirm mai bine în țară* [I'm learning Romanian to establish myself in this country]; *Vreau să fiu la fel de fluent în această limbă cum sunt în maghiară sau engleză. Știu cât de important este să ai competențe lingvistice bune în țară. Vreau ca barierele mele lingvistice să dispară* [I want to be as fluent in this language as I am in Hungarian or English. I know how important it is to have good language skills in the country. I want my language barriers to disappear]; *îmi place și este necesară pentru jobul meu* [I like it and it is necessary for my job]; *Cetățenie* [Citizenship]; *Pentru a lucra* [to work].
- **Studies and future plans:** *Studii, I will do my master's degree on Romance language; For educational purposes; I studied in Romania, Erasmus, Cluj-Napoca; I was studying master degree in Cluj; M-am născut în România, în copilărie am început deja să învăț limba română. M-am înscris la Facultatea de Litere la specializarea Română pentru că vreau să predau limba română vorbitorilor nonnativi* [I was born in Romania, I already started learning Romanian as a child. I enrolled in the Faculty of Letters,

majoring in Romanian, because I want to teach Romanian to non-native speakers]; *studiez antropologie și terenul meu de cercetare e aici în România* [I study anthropology and my research field is here in Romania].

- **Personal connection:** *Pentru socra mea și copiii* [for my mother-in-law and my children]; *I have Romanian friends and I need it for my work too occasionally; Because my boyfriend Romanian and I want to know his family better; Vreau să vorbesc cu familia soției mele* [I want to be able to speak with my wife's family]; *e o limbă romanică și vreau să călătoresc în România din nou* [it is a Romance language and I want to travel to Romania again]; *Părinții vin din România* [my parents are from Romania]; *It's interesting and my ancestors lived in Romania, so I want to be able to understand the written records.*
- **Personal reasons and passion:** *Pentru că vreau să înțeleg bine oamenii, oriunde aș merge să nu fie jenă* [Because I want to understand people well, wherever I go there should be no embarrassment]; *I wanted to discover a new language as I was tired of English; Imi place foarte mult* [I like it very much]; *I will use in future; mă bucură pe mine* [it brings me joy]; *Out of curiosity; E o limbă interesantă* [it is an interesting language]; *am vrut să studiez o limbă balcanică* [I wanted to learn a Balkan language]; *I love romanian folklore and I want to understand, maybe I would like to study in Romania; I am interested in Romanian classical music.*

When asked whether they watch reels produced by nonnative Romanian speakers, almost half of our respondents answered positively (49.4%) (see Figure 3 below). This shows that following content online in RL2 has become a popular trend.

Urmăresc reel-uri/video-uri produse de vorbitori nonnativi de română în limba română I watch reels produced by nonnative Romanian speakers
81 responses

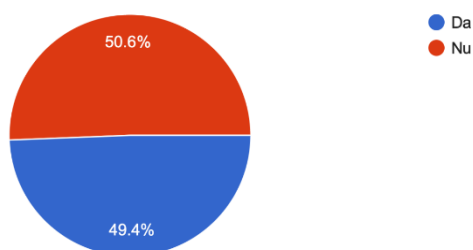


Figure 3. Reels produced by RL2 speakers

Many of our respondents are also in contact with RL2 speakers (61.7%) and with Romanian native speakers (81.5%) (see Figure 4 below).

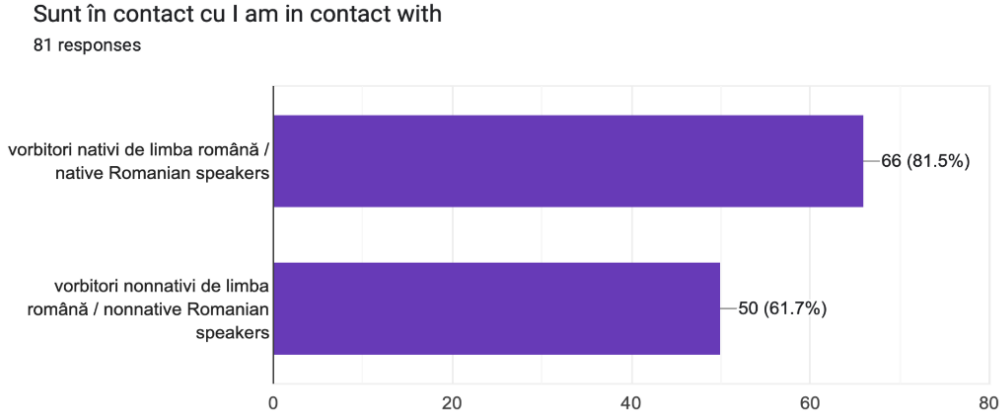


Figure 4. Contact with RL2 speakers and native speakers

RL2 Examples

Influencers under Scrutiny

The influencers selected for this study exemplify the multilingual and translanguaging practices found in the online space. While these influencers share a common purpose, that of attracting followers using efficient self-branding techniques and storytelling, they vary significantly in several aspects, including nationalities and backgrounds, proficiency levels of RL2, the format and the topics of their reels, affective dimension, and communicative strategies. Edsta (133 tsd. followers) is an American photographer and cameraman based in New York. Originally from Romania, he moved to the United States as a child and speaks Romanian as a second language. He describes himself as ‘New York’s favorite Romanian 🎥 • 🇷🇴 • 🗣️ I ♥ NY & i ♥ Romania’. Most of his reels feature him teaching Romanian words and phrases while strolling through the streets of New York or presenting Romanian food and promoting Romanian restaurants and traditions. In these reels, he often merges English with Romanian, offering literal translations of clichés and idiomatic expressions in English before presenting the Romanian equivalent. Primal Gourmet (1.5 mil. followers), whose real name is Ronny Lvovski, is a self-taught chef, food photographer, stylist, recipe blogger, and coffee lover residing in Canada. He says about himself that he makes food for the

Internet. Married to a Romanian woman, he frequently visits his in-laws. His social media reels feature recipes and anecdotes of his trips to the market in Braşov or leisurely walks with his wife. He produces English content in which he includes some Romanian words or even short sentences. Lifeofisiah19 (8777 followers) is an African photographer residing in Romania. Many of his reels feature extensive narratives and insights into the cultural and culinary differences between African and Romanian traditions. Although he speaks Romanian as a foreign language, having lived in Romania since 2006, he has become proficient. His reels are typically detailed, and he rarely employs code-switching. While his initial Instagram reels were in English, he eventually transitioned to Romanian. Zm95z (29.9 tsd. followers) is an Iraqi barber living in Romania who creates reels that highlight everyday activities. His Instagram description is: 'zain kamil. My country 🇮🇶 Iraq. I live 🇷🇴 Romania. I'm a barber ✂️ كوافير 🧔🏾 🧔🏾'. His content frequently features (self-)irony and sarcasm. He shares his posts in both Arabic and Romanian, demonstrating fluency in Romanian, albeit with a distinct accent, and he does not engage in code-switching. Southy (74.7 tsd. followers) is an English singer and songwriter currently in a relationship with a Romanian woman. He has limited proficiency in Romanian, and his videos mix Romanian and English. He initially created content that followed a specific theme, exploiting Romanian clichés and stereotypes. In his latest videos, he presents Romanian cuisine and products while also releasing songs in a blend of Romanian and English.

Analysis of Reels and Emic Perspectives

The analysis that follows will be bipartite; first, we will analyse the five reels that were chosen for this study and we will examine their specificity. Next, we will examine the respondents' emic perspectives on these five reels. This will provide a broad viewpoint on the generated RL2 content.

The reel *Weird things Romanian say (Part 2)* shows Edsta walking on the streets of New York and speaking English while introducing a variety of Romanian idiomatic expressions. He breaks down each expression word by word before revealing the full Romanian expression. This constitutes a discursive strategy that allows Edsta to present the nuances of the Romanian language. The typical opening line 'As a Romanian'/'A Romanian' followed by a negative sentence in the present simple tense establishes his identity and affiliation to the Romanian community. Edsta's style of presentation aims to foster understanding and appreciation for the Romanian language. See below the transcript of the reel:

A Romanian doesn't just say 'never' to something. He says: 'when the pig flies', 'când zboară porcul'. As a Romanian you don't fool yourself. 'You get drunk with cold water', 'te îmbeți cu apă rece'. As a Romanian I don't say: 'I don't care about something'. I say: 'it hurts in my b*tt', 'mă doare-n f*nd.' As a Romanian I don't have unusual ideas, 'I have a curly mind', 'am mintea creță'. In Romania we don't say: 'I'm cool'. We say: 'I'm concrete'. 'Sunt beton'. (He stops a guy on the street who says: *beton*.) (Referring to the guy) He's beton. What's your name? Roberto Monticello. Remember: *betoon*. A Romanian didn't confuse you. 'He turned your head into a calendar.' 'Ți-a făcut capul calendar'. A Romanian isn't nervous or fidgety. 'He has a carrot in his b*tt.' 'Are un morcov în f*nd'. As a Romanian, I don't say 'cause I want to, I say: 'cause that's what my muscles want', 'așa vor mușchii mei'.

The respondents expressed a variety of opinions about Edsta's reel promoting Romanian idiomatic expressions. Many found the concept engaging, fun, and informative, expressing appreciation for the way in which it highlights cultural peculiarities of the Romanian language while making learning accessible, especially for non-native speakers and younger audiences: *Firstly, the fast-paced output style attracts the audience more effectively, and secondly, by showing how to replace the high-frequency expressions in daily life in Romanian, the video content is more practical and accessible to non-native Romanian speakers; I think it is great and catches your attention. If you are interested in languages, like I am, this kind of content is really entertaining and useful for my language learning as well.* Some mentioned its potential to attract interest in learning Romanian and to promote the language in general: *I think that's a fun way to promote the language, and maybe because of that, many nonnative speakers could have the idea to learn Romanian.* Some respondents note that understanding of the Romanian language is enhanced by the incorporation of subtitles: *I think this is a good idea and it could help Hungarians to understand some things in Romanian language. I think the subtitles are a good idea too in Romanian language or English.* However, some respondents stated that this reel benefits only intermediate learners rather than beginners: *Foarte interesant, dar greu pentru incepatori* [Very interesting, but hard for beginners]; *Mi-a capturat atenția, dar asta poate fi de mai mult folos pentru cei care deja nu sunt începători în limba, și se poate că va ține în minte aceste propoziții interesante* [It caught my attention, but this may be of more use to those who are already not beginners in the language, and may keep in mind these interesting sentences]. Others expressed indifference towards social media trends or doubted that such content would lead to substantial language learning outcomes. Overall, responses ranged from positive viewpoints showing enthusiasm about the creativity and humor of the reel to negative viewpoints showing skepticism about its long-term educational value.

The reel *Come with me to the local farmers market in Braşov, Romania* shows primal_gourmet at the local farmers market in Braşov, Romania. The reel immerses the audiences into Romanian culture by highlighting traditional produce such as "covrig" (a type of pretzel), "telemea" (a cheese). Primal_gourmet is speaking English while narrating what he is doing and he is also engaging directly with the vendors, using basic Romanian structures and vocabulary. This makes it relatable for the audiences interested in language acquisition. By sharing personal reactions ("Mmmmmm" while eating) and expressing enjoyment ("Incredible! I love Romania"), he creates a friendly and approachable persona that resonates with the audiences. Overall, this reel shows an exploration of Braşov's culinary offerings while also functioning as a practical guide for those interested in experiencing daily life in Romania or learning some basic phrases in Romanian. See below the transcript of the reel:

Come with me to the local farmers market in Braşov, Romania. We can get some incredible fresh produce and practice the very little Romanian that I know. First stop: a little covrig. Bună dimineaţa! Un covrig cu floare de soare. [Good morning! A pretzel with sunflowers] Mmmmmm (while eating it). Bună ziua! Da-mi vă rog trei bucăţi de roşii, mai tari, vă rog. O bucată de ceapă vă rog. O jumate de kilogram de castraveţi, două bucăţi de mărar şi două de pătrunjel. Atât! Mulţumim mult! Vărbioară, una. La revedere! Aste e telemea? Daţi-mi, vă rog, 200 de grame, vă rog. Urdă dulce. [Hello! Give me three pieces of tomatoes, please. Harder one, please. One onion, please. One pound of cucumber, two dill and two parsley. That's all! Thank you very much. A piece of steak. Goodbye. Is that cheese? Give me 200 grams, please. Sweet cheese]. I need a little espresso break. Mulţumesc! [Thank you!] Now we move on to the fruit section. Una de asta. [One of these] Let's get some cherries. O jumate de kilogram. [Half a kilo] Last stop is the watermelon. 6 kilograme, mai dulce. Se poate proba? [6 kilos, sweeter. Can I try it?]. Incredible! I love Romania.

The respondents provided varied opinions to the Instagram reel created by influencer primal_gourmet. Many respondents appreciated his effort to speak Romanian and considered his approach engaging and relatable: *I like this video much more, it is more dynamic and presents a real life situation. I think it is a good example of a multilingual-themed reel and his discourse is just the way it needs to be.; The fact that it also uses English besides Romanian helps a lot for me to connect with the content. I really like this one.* Respondents also state that he communicates clearly. Moreover, respondents consider that the influencer shows respect for local culture: *His discourse with Romanians is filled with respect. I think he is really looking forward to learning a lot more Romanian if he*

likes the language that much.; I think he's basically fun to watch. He seems to really be enjoying his experience with Romanian culture.; Very good he is trying to respect the locals and order in their language. Some notice his good pronunciation and his ability to navigate everyday situations in Romania. Some respondents expressed surprise at his fluency given his claim of limited knowledge: *I'm impressed I wasn't expecting him to speak that good. He looks fluent even though he said he would use the little Romanian he knew.* In opposition to the reel produced by Edsta, our respondents pointed out that while this reel is enjoyable and useful for beginners, it may not be as effective for advanced learners: *As a total beginner, I find it useful and interesting, because I will want to go to the markets in Romania. I cannot speak on the quality of his pronunciation or vocabulary, though.; I think it is somewhat easy to achieve this level of discourse and understandable if you are a beginner.; I think he just gave some hint how easy it is to practice the language.* There were also comments which highlighted the overall entertainment value of the content over teaching the Romanian language: *In my opinion, his video is more about Romanian daily living than it is about learning the language. However, it might help the audience feel more connected to Romania.* Last but not least, the reel showcases daily life in Romania: *POV-type videos are very trendy and if the influencer is known, it is a powerful means to get Romanian culture known by more people.*

In the reel *Nu poți face sarmale fără orez* [You cannot make cabbage rolls without rice] Isiah shares in a humorous manner a story about him being mocked by a female friend about his desire for a traditional family despite not having the means to establish one, as he is a poor student. He reflects on his upbringing in a household with traditional gender roles, which has influenced him to seek similar values. His female friend emphasises that he wants a "housewife," but he doesn't own a house. Isiah reacts to this comment by comparing his situation to the desire of making traditional Romanian sarmale without essential ingredients like rice. He interacts with the audiences by asking them to post a comment with the Romanian word for 'roast'. This fosters interaction and relatability. See below the transcript of the reel:

Unul dintre cele mai mari roasturi care le-am primit vreodată. Nu știu care-i cuvântu' exact pentru roast în română. Da', dacă știți, puneți în comentariu, vă rog. În fine, a fost faptul că eu fiind crescut într-o familie tradițională în care mama și tata au roluri tradiționale, e normal ca eu să gravitez către o familie tradițională. În fine, și eu când vorbesc cu prietenii, cam asta este punctul meu de vedere. Și o prietenă de-a mea a spus unei alte prietene de-a mea acest lucru despre mine. Ceva în ideea că Isiah vrea femeie de casă, dar el n-are casă. (Uhhhhuuuhuuu!) Emotional damage. Dar a spus în engleză și-n engleză sună și mai bine. Bine că Isiah vrea un

housewife, but he has no house. What did I do to you? You woke up and chose violence. Sunt un student sărac, la facultate. Cum ar trebui să-mi permit o casă? Dar cam are dreptate. E ca și cum zici: Vreau să fac sarmale, dar tu n-ai orez. Cum sărăcia crezi că o să faci chestia asta?

[One of the greatest roasts I've ever received. I don't know the exact word for 'roast' in English. But, if you do, put it in the comments, please. Anyway, it was the fact that I was raised in a traditional family where mom and dad have traditional roles, it's only natural that I would gravitate towards a traditional family. Anyway, and when I talk to friends, that's kind of my point of view. And a friend of mine told another friend of mine this about me. Something along the lines that Isiah wants a housewife, but he doesn't own a house. But she said it in English and in English it sounds even better. [...]. I'm a poor college student. How am I supposed to afford a house? But she's kind of right. It's like you're saying: "I want to make cabbage rolls, but you don't have any rice. How on Earth do you think you're gonna do that?"]

Many respondents found his humor engaging and appreciate his ability to mix Romanian and English expressions: *Își expune logic și plastic punctul de vedere, îmbinând expresii engleze și române într-un mod haios și potrivit. Îmi place că are curaj să vorbească despre așteptări și diferențe sociale.* [He makes her point logically and plastically, combining English and Romanian expressions in a funny and appropriate way. I like that he has the courage to talk about social expectations and differences] *Este adevărat ce spune și distractiv* [it's true what he says and entertaining]. Respondents consider that he creates a relatable narrative that reflects social expectations and references to Romanian culture: *Funny to see people from all over the world have Romanian references; This one is also great. It uses memes that most people are familiar with;* Some praised his fluency in Romanian: *I think he is native speaker; Nici nu se pare ca nu e roman.* [One cannot even tell he is not a native speaker]. A few considered that this reel lacks originality and appreciated it as being less appealing due to its broad target audience. Additionally, some respondents noted minor errors but acknowledged their relatability to everyday speech among Romanians: *Vorbește foarte fluent și pronunția lui este foarte bună. Face vreo greșeală (o prietenă de-a mea, în loc de o prietenă de-ale mele), dar chiar și românii vorbesc așa* [He speaks very fluently and his pronunciation is very good. He makes the odd mistake, but even natives speak like that]; *Vorbeste repede, este elocvent dar nu neapărat corect din punct de vedere gramatical* [Fast-talking, eloquent but not necessarily grammatically correct]. Overall, there was a consensus on the entertaining quality of Isiah's storytelling style and the potential barriers posed by his language pace for certain nonnative speakers in the audience.

The reel *Cel mai bun sfat din lume* [The best advice in the world], zm95z offers humorous advice to girls about relationships. He suggests that they should date chubby guys like him instead of those preoccupied by their looks. He states that fit men are often strict with their diets and can get hangry, while chubby guys enjoy good food, always make jokes, and are more relaxed. See below the transcript of the reel:

Fetelor, vă dau un sfat. Asta îi cel mai important: Cine vrea face relație cu un băiat să face relație cu un băiat grăsuț ca mine. Nu faci relație cu un băiat are mușchi. De ce? Pentru că băiat are mușchi tot timpul cu dieta și să fie nervos și nu mănâncă asta și asta nu e bun. Băiat grăsuț ca mine, nu! Mănâncă tot mâncare bun. Și tot timpul râzi și glumești. Nu o să fie nervos. Mănâncă șaormărica, ciorbica. Și băiat are mușchi mănâncă tot timpul mâncare de la grătar și mănâncă mai puțin, mai mare, protina, mergi la sală. Ca mine, așa, vorbim, glumim. Crede-mă, asta-i cel mai sfat important de la tot fete. Eu, șmecher, și știu! Te pup!

[Girls, a word of advice. Here's the most important one: Whoever wants to date a guy should date a chubby guy like me. You don't date a guy with muscles. Why not? Because a boy with muscles will all the time be dieting and being hangry and not eating this and that's no good. A chubby boy like me! He eats all good food. And you're always laughing and joking. He won't get irritated. He'll eat the soup, he'll eat the swharma. A boy obsessed with muscles, he always eats grilled food and eats less, and goes to the gym. A boy like me, like this, we talk, we joke. Trust me, that's the most important advice for all the girls. I am smart and I know this! Kiss!]

Our respondents considered the reel funny and appreciated the influencer's humour and self-irony. Some appreciated his good pronunciation and pace: *He's ridiculous but funny. I think he's half-joking and half-sincere. Plus he's got a point — you wouldn't want to be with a guy who's constantly just thinking about when he'll work out next.; Are unele caracteristici tipice limbii române (anumite cuvinte, diminutivele, formula de a-și lua la revedere) și este drăguț cum vorbește despre relații cu umor și autoironie. [His discourse has some typical Romanian features (certain words, diminutives, the goodbye formula) and it's cute how he talks about relationships with humor and self-irony].* Others noted that he has a noticeable foreign accent. Several respondents mentioned difficulty in fully understanding him due to grammatical mistakes, suggesting that subtitles could enhance comprehension: *It was quite funny, using captions might help though.; I can notice loads of mistakes but I can not decide if it is "for real" or for fun since the topic and the vibe of the video is to induce laughter.; I don't understand him also, they need to put English subtitles;.* A few respondents were indifferent or even bored with the content, although they acknowledged

its humorous nature: *I can notice loads of mistakes but I can not decide if it is "for real" or for fun since the topic and the vibe of the video is to induce laughter.* Overall, there was a mix of positive reactions regarding his delivery and style, alongside some critiques about clarity and language proficiency.

The reel *Meeting my tată socru* [father-in-law] *for the first time* shows Southy preparing to meet his father-in-law for the first time. He prays and sings while looking out the window. When his father-in-law arrives, Southy enumerates the traditional foods and drinks brought by his father-in-law. The reel captures a warm familial moment marked by laughter and cultural traditions. See below the transcription of the reel:

Today is the day. I get to meet my tata socru [father-in-law] *face to face for the first time. He's bringing mici, pălincă, vin, bere* [skinless sausages, brandy, wine, beer]. (On his knees praying) *Înger, îngerășul meu!* [Angel, my little angel - a Romanian prayer meant for kids] *Tată socru* [father-in-law] (singing and looking out the window). *Tati!* [Dad] *He's here. Salut, tati!* [Hi, Dad!] *How much stuff did he bring? Woooooow! Is that țuică? Pălincă* [brandy]. *Noroc, tati!* [Cheers, Dad!] (Father-in-law explaining) *Nu e tare rău, dar e plăcută. Arde pe urmă în jos.* [It is not so strong, it is smooth. It burns your throat] *Uuuuu!*

When asked what they think of Southy's idea to promote Romanian culture, clichés and cuisine using a hybrid discourse (English and Romanian in the same sentence), the main 4 options selected by our respondents were funny, a good way of promoting the language and the culture, original, it makes Romania and Romanian more appealing (see Figure 5 below).

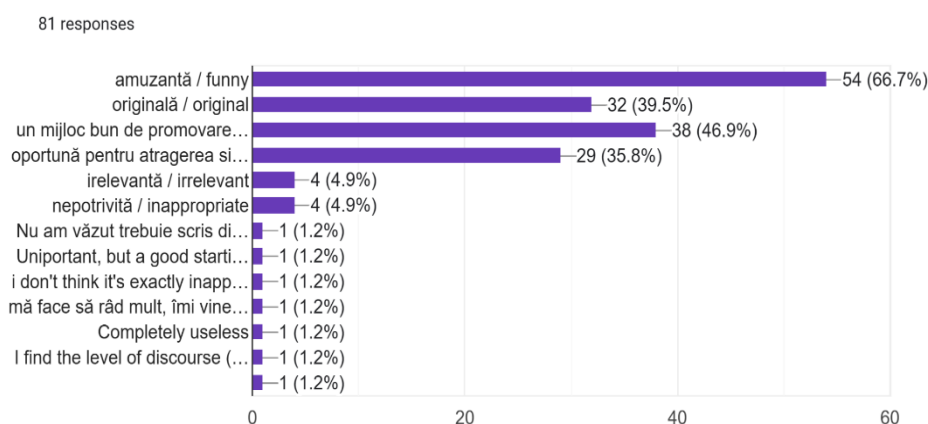


Figure 5. Reactions to Southy's Reel

After analyzing our respondents' attitudes towards the content produced by the 5 influencers selected for this study, we asked our respondents to answer two yes/no questions. The first question concerns the connection between hearing other nonnatives and our respondents' motivation to improve Romanian (see figure 6 below). The result shows that the vast majority of our respondents are motivated by this fact (86.4%).

Utilizarea românei de către nonnativi mă motivează și pe mine să învăț mai mult. / Hearing other nonnatives speaking Romanian motivates me to improve my level.

81 responses

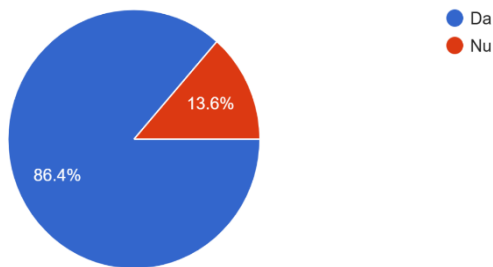


Figure 6. RL2 spoken by nonnatives motivation

The second question targeted the assumption that Romanian might help these influencers to create a personal brand and 77.8% of our respondents answered positively (see figure 7 below).

Credeți că limba română ca limbă străină îi ajută pe acești influenceri să își construiască un brand personal original? / Do you think Romanian enables these influencers to create a brand?

81 responses

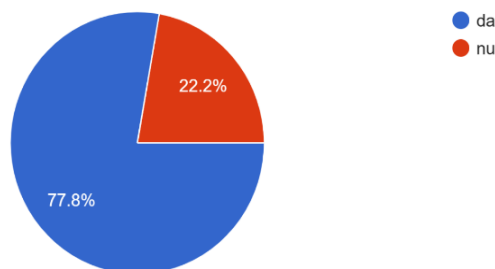


Figure 7. Perception of RL2 and Brand Construction

When asked to reflect on the benefits of knowing the Romanian language, we noticed that the highest score is registered for personal advantages (81,5%). Our respondents also declared having professional advantages (60.5%), and many of our respondents declared having a passion for learning the language which prevails over any kind of benefit.

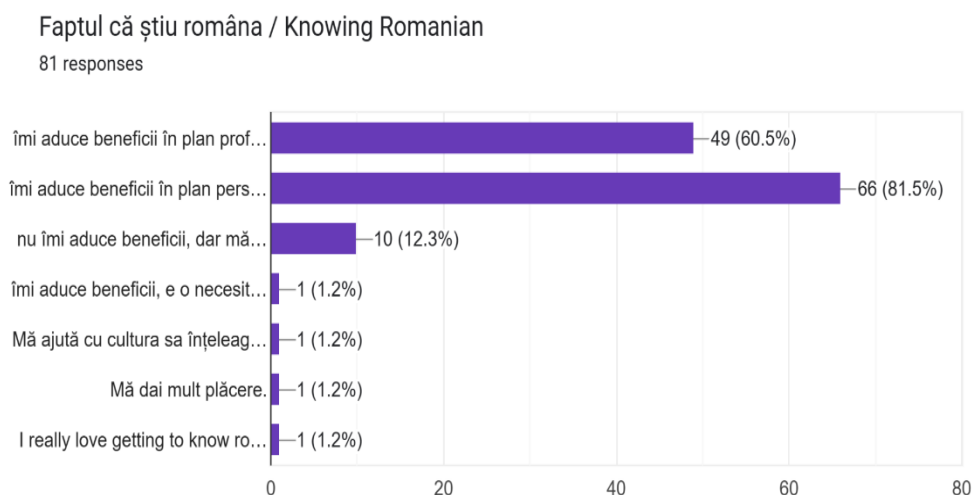


Figure 8. Benefits of Knowing RL2

Our respondents expressed emotional and professional connections to the Romanian language. Many of them view Romanian as a gateway to a better life in Romania, helping them integrate socially and professionally. For some, it represents a new beginning and a significant part of their daily lives, while others see it as a beautiful and musical language that enriches their cultural experiences. Despite the challenges of learning Romanian because of its complex grammar, respondents appreciate its unique sonority. Some respondents have a strong emotional attachment to the language because it connects them to their heritage or loved ones. Others find joy in the learning process itself, viewing it as a personal challenge or a way to stand out among peers. Overall, the Romanian language is seen as a valuable tool for communication, cultural exploration, and personal growth (see Figure 9 below).



Figure 9. RL2 Meaning

Final remarks

This study shows that RL2 speakers produce discourses which are inherently translingual. This aligns with our first hypothesis, demonstrating that RL2 speakers often navigate multiple languages and resources, blending them in their interactions. The translingual nature of their discourse highlights the adaptability of RL2 speakers in various linguistic contexts, reinforcing the idea that multilingualism is a defining characteristic of this community. Furthermore, our research shows that RL2, as a LWULT language, gains popularity in the superdiverse space of online communities. This validates our second and third hypotheses. The content created in this environment is not only linguistically diverse but also strategically curated to appeal to niche communities. These communities, comprising both nonnative and native speakers, engage with RL2 content positively. This fosters a sense of belonging and identity among its users, showcasing the dynamic and inclusive nature of the RL2 online community.

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INTERNET SOURCES

Reel 1. edsta, *Weird things Romanian say (Part 2)*, at:
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C4tHXHVxjOn/?igsh=MWZhdjZobXowcGVyOA%3D%3D>

Published: March 19, 2024

Likes: 32,452

Reel 2. primal_gourmet, *Come with me to the local farmers market in Braşov, Romania*, at:
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C82KhTZo-UA/?igsh=MTQwYTF5aWUwOTJkZQ%3D%3D>

Published: June 30, 2024

Likes: 60,014

Reel 3. lifeofisiah19, *Nu poţi face sarmale fără orez*, at:
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C48cQWvoJK5/?igsh=MWdmMm9yYzdsNHZrZA==>

Published: March 25, 2024

Likes: 1,709

Reel 4. Zm95z, *Cel mai bun sfat din lume*, at:
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C7FDYxkiOPh/?igsh=anA4aGliZ3dvZGtr>

Published: May 17, 2024

Likes: 2,665

Reel 5. Southy, *Meeting my tată socru [father-in-law] for the first time*, at:
<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C2fipoAIQSH/?igsh=MXVwYjluY3lqcWRrcg%3D%3D>

Published: January 24, 2024

Likes: 25,558

EXPLORING PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION THROUGH INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT AMONG FRENCH-SPEAKING MEDICAL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT. *Exploring Perceptions of Academic and Social Integration through Intercultural Competence Development among French-speaking Medical Students.* This study investigates the social and academic integration of international French-speaking students at “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj-Napoca, focusing on the development of intercultural competence (IC) through a variety of activities. Drawing on theories of intercultural competence, the study examines the role of university services, cultural activities, and socialization in fostering integration. The study applies surveys to assess pre-arrival and during stay perceptions, exploring the influence of these perceptions on social and academic integration. Through a qualitative survey and post-coding analysis, the research explores how advertising posters activities for Romanian as a Second Language classes reflect and shape students’ perceptions of the city and university. Findings suggest that while academic integration is relatively successful, social integration and the development of IC remain challenging. Posters primarily emphasize cultural and social aspects but often fail to reflect

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the reality of students' experiences. Survey results reveal that while there is a desire for socialization and integration, opportunities for meaningful interaction with domestic students are limited. The research concludes that enhancing IC requires more targeted approaches in both academic and social contexts, with a call for greater collaboration between academic staff and student services to create opportunities for deeper intercultural engagement and integration.

Keywords: *intercultural competence, social integration, academic integration, advertising posters, international students*

REZUMAT. Explorarea percepțiilor de integrare academică și socială prin dezvoltarea competenței interculturale în rândul studenților francofoni la medicină. Acest studiu investighează integrarea socială și academică a studenților internaționali francofoni la Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie „Iuliu Hațieganu” din Cluj-Napoca, concentrându-se pe dezvoltarea competenței interculturale (CI) printr-o varietate de activități. Bazându-se pe teoriile competenței interculturale, studiul examinează rolul serviciilor universitare, al activităților culturale și al socializării în promovarea integrării. În studiu s-au realizat sondaje pentru a evalua percepțiile dinainte de sosire și percepțiile *in situ*, explorând influența acestor percepții asupra integrării sociale și academice. Prin intermediul unui sondaj calitativ și al unei analize de post-codare, cercetarea explorează modul în care activitățile de creare de postere publicitare pentru cursurile de limba română ca limbă străină reflectă și modelează percepțiile studenților despre oraș și universitate. Constatările sugerează că, în timp ce integrarea academică este relativ reușită, integrarea socială și dezvoltarea CI rămân o provocare. Afișele pun accentul în primul rând pe aspectele culturale și sociale, dar adesea nu reușesc să reflecte realitatea experiențelor studenților. Rezultatele sondajului arată că, deși există o dorință de socializare și integrare, oportunitățile de interacțiune semnificativă cu studenții din țară sunt limitate. Cercetarea arată că îmbunătățirea CI necesită abordări mai specifice atât în context academic, cât și în context social, cu un apel la o mai strânsă colaborare între cadrele didactice universitare și serviciile destinate studenților pentru a crea posibilități de angajament și integrare interculturală mai semnificativă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *competență interculturală, integrare socială, integrare academică, postere publicitare, studenți internaționali*

Introduction

In the 2023-2024 academic year, Romania's medical universities enrolled over 17,000 international students at all study levels. “Iuliu Hațieganu” University of Medicine and Pharmacy (IHUMF) in Cluj-Napoca hosts more than 3,000 international students from 60 countries, with 75% from the European Union.

Foreign students account for 42% of the total student body². During the pre-clinical years, Romanian language courses are included in the curriculum to help students communicate with Romanian patients. This requires not only a B1 proficiency in Romanian for Specific Purposes (RSP) but also strong intercultural skills to understand and respect patients' socio-cultural backgrounds, as well as to integrate socially and academically into Romanian society.

As Ursa and Mărcean point out, "although it is not entirely new, the intercultural competence is not for the moment a part of the curriculum of European medical schools as a separate discipline, as is the case in the United States. [...] On the other hand, the European language policies assume and deconstruct interculturality in various activities and recommend it in the process of learning foreign languages" (2016, 224). The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR/CV 2020) subordinates intercultural competence (IC) to plurilingual and pluricultural competence, and, to the best of my knowledge, IC is not yet a separate discipline in European medical universities, or other universities, unlike in the United States. However, European language policies encourage interculturality through foreign language learning. Thus, Romanian as a second language (RSL)³ teachers should incorporate tasks that develop IC, as Byram et al. argue: "teachers who deal with matters of language and communication within and between groups of people are particularly responsible for intercultural competence" (Byram et al 2014, 33)(DICE). If teachers are familiar with the principles of IC development, they can easily integrate IC tasks alongside language exercises. In this context, Byram and colleagues demonstrate that "teaching activities that facilitate linguistic and cultural communication and that can be applied to specialised contexts, including of learning Romanian by future doctors" (2014, 37-52). These teaching strategies promote both linguistic and cultural communication, including those applicable to medical students learning Romanian.

Ursa and Mărcean illustrate, "forming and managing the IC which can cope with the cultural challenges that are encountered by foreign medical students in Romanian hospitals" (2016, 222-224) and propose activities to help foreign medical students navigate cultural challenges in Romanian hospitals or informal settings. While these activities can assess knowledge, a key question remains: how can we assess attitudes, values, and beliefs, or measure the development of IC in terms of social and academic integration? If direct measurement is challenging, can we observe and analyse the factors influencing IC development? How do

² <https://umfcluj.ro/universitate/despre-noi/universitatea-cifre/>

³ To respect the language of this study, I will use the term *second language*, in the tradition of English-speaking specialized literature, as distinct from Romanian specialized literature, which prefers the term *foreign language*.

international students perceive their new environment, and how can teaching methods be adapted to support their IC development? To address these questions, I propose an approach based on four interrelated perspectives: the development of IC through intercultural education and accompaniment (IA), the specific needs of migrant students, poster advertising, and the analysis of targeted questionnaires.

Developing intercultural competence and intercultural education

The Council of Europe has emphasized the importance of the intercultural component, highlighting its essential role alongside language skills. According to Professor Michael Byram and his collaborators, IC is

a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action which enables one, either singly or together with others, to: understand and respect people who are perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself; respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such people; establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; understand oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural difference (DICE, 16-17).

Intercultural education, whether informal, non-formal, or formal, seeks to develop IC in learners of all ages, focusing on principles related to attitudes, knowledge, and action (DICE, 27). Byram et al. identify five key cognitive operations — experience, comparison, analysis, reflection, and action — which lead to desired outcomes when methods encourage student participation. The pedagogical approaches include experiential learning, project-based learning, and cooperative learning (DICE, 37-39). An intercultural encounter, as Byram et al. describe, is “an encounter with another person (or group of people) who is perceived to have different cultural affiliations from oneself” (DICE, 16), and young adults, who are more likely to seek such interactions, can continually enrich their IC. DICE provides valuable theories and examples of IC but does not offer specific descriptors for teaching and assessing IC. CEFR/CV includes IC and interculturality across various categories, such as facilitating communication in pluricultural spaces and mediating intercultural exchanges (CEFR/CV 2020, 114, 116, 117-122, 123, 124). These descriptors, especially regarding pluricultural repertoire, are derived from studies like DICE, Candelier et al.'s *Framework of reference for pluralistic approaches to languages and cultures* (Candeliers et al. 2012) (FREPA), and Beacco et al.'s *Guide for the Development and Implementation of Curricula for Plurilingual and Intercultural Education* (Beacco et al. 2016)(GPIE).

GPIE defines plurilingualism and IC as “the ability to use a plural repertoire of linguistic and cultural resources to meet communication needs or interact with other people and enrich that repertoire while doing so [...], the ability to experience otherness and cultural diversity, to analyse that experience and to derive benefit from it” (GPIE, 10) and therefore enabling individuals to “establish cognitive and affective links between past and new experiences of otherness, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of one’s own cultural group and environment” (10). Reflexivity, or metacognition in educational sciences, not relating to any specific academic subject, implies a distancing process from the knowledge and skills applied, in the form of a certain awareness, not only language-related, but also culture and interculturality-related, and involves developing “open, considered and critical attitudes to enable learners to appreciate in a positive manner and manage successfully all forms of contact with otherness” (40).

The context of plurality and otherness is the purpose of plurilingual and intercultural communication in FREPA. FREPA highlights the importance of plurilingual/pluricultural and intercultural communication, where participants need the competence to adapt and engage with “that which is other, different” (FREPA, 12). Communication contexts, shaped by many variables, require specific competences and resources and FREPA theory establishes a strong differentiation of competences and resources: competences are “units of a certain complexity, implicating the whole of the individual and linked to socially relevant tasks in the context of which they are activated; in these situations they signify the mobilisation of different resources which may be internal (coming under knowledge, skills or attitudes) or external (the use of a dictionary, resorting to a mediator)” (FREPA, 11). While competences cannot be taught directly, resources can be, as they are independent of specific tasks and situations. I would argue that teaching and learning knowledge and skills can be applied to CI, but attitudes can only be shaped, guided.

FREPA outlines two global competences and an intermediate zone, which encompass plurilingual and intercultural communication across languages and cultures. The first global competence involves “managing linguistic and cultural communication in a context of otherness” (FREPA, 22), covering conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, and adaptability. The second global competence focuses on “the construction and broadening of a plural linguistic and cultural repertoire” (22), emphasizing personal development and systematic learning.

The intermediate zone, central to this study, fits within both global competences, and includes four key competences: decentring (viewing things relatively, mobilisation of attitudes, skills and knowledge), making sense of unfamiliar linguistic/cultural features resources described by *can* and refusing

to accept failure), distancing (critical approach, critical *awareness*), and recognizing both the other and otherness in what is different and similar (skills and attitudes (FREPA, 23). These competences span both global competences and reflect stages of IC development. Resources for these competences are categorized into knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Knowledge descriptors centre on “to know,” attitudes focus on personal factors (e.g., awareness, curiosity, acceptance) and the descriptors cover “attention to,” “sensitivity to,” “being aware,” “curiosity about,” “acceptance of,” “positive acceptance,” etc., and skills are described using “can” (FREPA, 24-59). FREPA serves as a useful framework for planning activities aimed at developing these resources.

I state that the activities proposed by DICE and GPIE can be applied in the classroom with the aim of triggering, shaping and developing CI, but we must consider the learner holistically, beyond mere activity participation. There is a risk that the attitudes, behaviors, and skills observed in interactions—such as doctor-patient dialogue simulations or informal exchanges—might simply be memorized responses, lacking deeper awareness and genuine application. In such cases, students might display an IC constructed specifically for the moment, tailored to fit the context of the RSL course (e.g., an RSL exercise, doctor-patient dialogue training, or an exam). This does not necessarily mean that the student has genuinely developed their IC. In the realm of IC, communication with others—particularly in contexts involving difference or “otherness”—cannot occur without personal development. Young adults, especially those in higher education, are generally more inclined to pursue new experiences and engage with diverse individuals. Yet, for this to happen, they must be both willing and provided with the opportunity to do so, regardless of their language proficiency level. Our French-speaking students fall into which category? A recent study suggests that many aspects of IC remain underdeveloped in some contexts:

Although the stereotypes about Romania are positive, the society itself is overly schematic, and there is no general intention of intercultural knowledge. Gains such as adaptability, self-awareness, and a strengthened sense of identity are evident, but IC and overcoming superficial representations are lacking, which are essential for empathy with the adopting society (Ursa, 2017, 334) ⁴.

⁴ “Deși stereotipurile despre România sunt pozitive, chiar entuziaste, societatea în sine este schematizată excesiv și nu există o intenție generală de cunoaștere interculturală. Cu toate acestea, există câștiguri de tipul adaptabilității, o autocunoaștere mai bună, un sentiment identitar întărit, cunoștințe factuale etc. Ce rămâne însă pe dinafară este competența interculturală și traversarea reprezentărilor superficiale, acțiune esențială în câștigarea empatiei față de societatea adoptatoare.” (Ursa 2017, 334). My translation.

Repositioning IC and Intercultural Accompaniment (IA)

In university teaching of RSL and RSP, developing IC is crucial for students' adaptation to their new societal context. While cross-cultural activities targeting knowledge and skills are somewhat effective (Mărcean and Ursa, 2016), forming and developing attitudes remains challenging. Planning activities based on global competences, as outlined in FREPA and DICE, requires teacher training and objective assessment methods. However, French-speaking students often perceive language merely as a tool, IC development remaining minimal. As Mărcean and Ursa (2016) note: "The image of the student who comes for educational purposes to Romania and learns the language for social interaction is unrealistic. Their context may remain family and friends in their home country, accessible instantly via personal gadgets" (33) ⁵.

Given the absence of a dedicated discipline for IC, alternative strategies must be considered. Such an approach may come from *liquid intercultural theory* and *intercultural accompaniment*.

Fred Dervin (2017) calls for a re-examination of interculturality, questioning traditional views that focus on comparisons and judgments based on culture. He suggests replacing "competence" with "dynamics," emphasizing the fluid, co-constructed nature of intercultural encounters. Intercultural dynamics should move beyond exclusive references to culture, religion, or geographical origin, avoiding the risk of focusing solely on differences. Dervin acknowledges the complexity of interculturality and the persistence of problematic attitudes like stereotypes and racism, despite efforts to reject them: "I'm aware that certain things are not/no longer acceptable (stereotypes, racism, xenophobia, ethnocentrism) and yet, from time to time, I do fall under their clutches" (Dervin, 2017, 9) ⁶. Some descriptors, such as getting rid of stereotypes, no longer make sense. He also critiques the goal of "conflict avoidance" in intercultural education, which he sees as unrealistic. Conflict is a natural part of life and learning, and efforts to eliminate it create artificial experiences. Dervin argues that everyone possesses intercultural competences, which are drawn from individual experiences of diversity, allowing IC to be applied differently depending on the person. IC is co-constructed with individuals—who are complex and unique—rather than cultures, meaning that

⁵ „Imaginea studentului care vine cu scop educativ în România și învață limba obligat de contextul și nevoile de interacționare socială este anacronică și nerealistă. Contextul lui poate rămâne familia și prietenii din țara de origine, la care studentul are acces permanent și instantaneu, prin mulțimea de gadgeturi personale” (Mărcean, and Ursa 2016, 33). My translation.

⁶ « Je suis conscient que certaines choses ne sont pas/plus acceptables (les stéréotypes, le racisme, la xénophobie, l'éthnocentrisme) et pourtant, de temps en temps, je tombe sous leurs griffes » (Dervin 2017, 9). My translation.

similarities should be emphasized over differences. National culture still plays a significant role, often leading to binary thinking (e.g., “me/us” vs. “you/them”) and static comparisons (lists of “national” values or cultural codes) ⁷. However, without incorporating the broader cognitive operations defined by DICE, such comparisons hinder genuine IC development.

Dervin defines the purpose of an intercultural encounter as: “(1) becoming aware of each person’s diversity, (2) learning to live with that diversity, (3) learning to analyse situations that prevent us from living with it, (4) living better with others, with less illusion and pretence” (Dervin, 2011, 125) ⁸. Dervin’s definition of IC is much broader than those already mentioned:

[...] it means being aware of our position as *simplexists* oscillating between simplification and complexification, and of that of others; (2) having the ability to recognise, impose, negotiate and present/defend our plural identities as well as those of others; (3) allowing everyone to feel more or less at ease in our interactions with them. This means taking the time to talk to the Other and listen to us. It also means accepting failure (Dervin 2017, 30-31) ⁹.

In this context, developing IC means the teacher or trainer does not dictate what learners should think or do but provides tools to help them think and act independently (Dervin, 2017, 28). If a strategy for successful intercultural communication cannot be defined, if we cannot identify a strategy for successful intercultural communication, if we cannot program interculturalism, the positioning as helper, trainer, or companion in developing IC can be found in intercultural IA, which follows the model proposed by Dervin. In IA, the learner is accompanied and guided towards becoming aware of his own (inter)cultural imaginary worlds, is helped to question the influence of the imaginary worlds of others (institutions,

⁷ The danger of ethnocentrism is also underlined by the GPIE and can be mitigated by the cross-cutting dimension of reflexivity: “The aim is to soften the sorts of ego- and ethnocentric attitudes that can arise from contacts with the unknown. The expected reactions are ones of astonishment: the discovery that standards and values considered to be “natural” are not shared by other groups can easily arouse feelings of surprise or incomprehension, leading to rejection” (GPIE, 40).

⁸ « (1) prendre conscience des diversités de chacun, (2) apprendre à pouvoir vivre de ces diversités, (3) apprendre à analyser les situations qui empêchent de les vivre, (4) mieux vivre avec l’autre, et cela moins dans l’illusion et la façade » (Dervin 2011, 125). My translation.

⁹ « (1) c’est être conscient de notre position de *simplexiste* oscillant entre la simplification et la complexification, et de celle des autres; (2) avoir la capacité de reconnaître, imposer, négocier et présenter/défendre nos identités plurielles ainsi que celle des autres; (3) permettre à chacun de se sentir plus ou moins à l’aise dans nos interactions avec eux. Cela nécessite donc de prendre le temps de parler à l’Autre et de s’écouter soi-même. C’est aussi accepter l’échec [...] » (Dervin 2017, 30-31). My translation.

trainings, advertising, friends, family, workplace, and so on), to weigh up the pros and cons of these worlds, to combine or modify them and, in turn, to help others to rethink their imaginary worlds (Dervin 2016, 107).

The IA method, developed by NovaTris pedagogical engineers, is based on six theoretical foundations: a fluid approach to interculturality, the capability approach, experiential learning, the awareness approach, the mirror effect, and the accompanying stance (Neamț 2022, 265). The goal is to guide learners from a “self” to a “transformed self,” beginning with encounters with the Other, through reflection, experience, and verbalization (Neamț 2022, 267-268). IC cannot be directly taught, but it can be guided through experiences with alterity, helping learners build their own intercultural competences. This approach promotes learner autonomy, enabling individuals to engage confidently and understandingly in intercultural contexts. The pedagogical tools developed by NovaTris are available online and target specific IC components, such as attitudes, values, communication skills, and reflection-based skills (Neamț 2022, 271). These tools align with descriptors from FREPA and can be integrated into activities identified by DICE, allowing for targeted development of IC.

Therefore, we have two main approaches to developing IC for French-speaking students. The first is integrating IC into the teaching of RSL through target-language activities, following principles and cognitive operations outlined by European language policies. However, as noted by Ursa (2017), this approach may result in minimal or inexistent IC development. The second approach focuses on experience-based and reflection-based activities, guiding students to develop IC at their own pace, as IC development cannot be forced. This can primarily occur in the contact language of the group, in our case French, but may also include RSL activities depending on language proficiency levels. I argue that these approaches complement each other rather than being mutually exclusive. As an RSL teacher, I adopt a dual role of teaching both language and IC, aiming to initiate IC development from the beginning, even with beginner-level students, since “once interculturality is developed, language skills are accelerated and become more substantial” (Ursa 2017, 334) ¹⁰.

Assessing Intercultural Competence

The question of whether intercultural competence can be assessed is widely debated. GPIE acknowledges the need for assessments and reference frameworks to define skills associated with a plurilingual and intercultural

¹⁰ „Odată câștigată această interculturalitate, evoluția competențelor lingvistice ar fi mai rapidă și mai consistentă” (Ursa 2017, 334). My translation.

mode of operation (GPIE 2016, 69). FREPA is one such framework, though it is not yet widely accepted, and we are still in the early stages of developing assessment methods. While knowledge and skills (ability to observe, analyse or compare cultural facts), can be assessed through tests or tasks GPIE warns that this is based on overly simplified cultural entities, such as nation-states, which intercultural education aims to challenge (GPIE 2016, 70). One early solution to this challenge was the creation of the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Byram et al. 2009), which emphasizes observation and real experience but is not suitable for summative assessment. GPIE recommends more informal, formative assessments, where teachers continuously assess learners' progress to provide guidance (GPIE 2016, 70). From my perspective, the key focus here should be on "guidance."

As intercultural relationships are built through interaction with the Other, evaluations must also be multidimensional, including the perspectives of both parties. Like GPIE, Dervin advocates for formative assessment through self-assessment, co-assessment, and group assessment, rejecting quantitative summative evaluation. Since IC development is a lifelong process, Dervin suggests evaluations should address the ethical, ideological, relational, and representational aspects of intercultural encounters. In our academic context, where there is no specific course dedicated to IC, this ideal is challenging to implement. However, intercultural accompaniment may provide a more feasible approach. This method supports learners in asking questions about concepts like intercultural competence, stereotypes, identity, and culture.

Student Migration, Needs, and Integration

An understanding of international student typologies can shed light on the motivations and needs that influence the development of IC and guide classroom activities. Student mobility is influenced by social and economic position, which in turn determines the type of training sought. Those in less favourable positions typically pursue local education, while those with more resources may have access to prestigious institutions or international programs (Garneau 2007, 14). Long-term mobility, particularly for full academic programs, is often statistically defined as international migration (King and Raghuram 2013). For medical students, migration is typically long-term, voluntary, and driven by intergovernmental and institutional agreements, culminating in a diploma and possibly permanent relocation (Ioniță and Vlad 2022). Garneau's insights align with migration determinants identified by Harfi and Mathieu, such as the quality of education in the home country, access to host country institutions, cost of living, recognition of diplomas, language learning opportunities, and the presence of presence and accompanying networks, especially student associations (Harfi

and Mathieu 2006, 36). Once abroad, international students often gravitate towards communities with cultural similarities, providing a sense of belonging in a foreign environment, since “the student can feel at home - or at least in a more familiar environment - and among peers with the fact of being a ‘foreigner’ as a common feature” (Pleyers and Guillaume, 2009)¹¹. These “community bubbles” are a response to the initial shock of encountering cultural difference (75), although, in today’s digitally connected world, I argue that the traditional notion of culture shock may no longer apply, especially given the cultural proximity of IHUMF French-speaking students (see further analysis of the questionnaire responses). Technology, especially communication with family and friends, plays a crucial role in emotional support during the adaptation process (Peng 2016). Repeated exposure to the host country’s language and social environments fosters not only language skills but also intercultural competence. However, while socialization can help develop IC, empathy, and plurilingualism, it can also lead to feelings of anxiety and discomfort, limiting the depth of identity transformation in intercultural education (Guichon 2020, 163).

The integration of international students is academic, social, and personal. Social integration is defined by Berthaud as “a process of socialisation into the university environment, based on social interactions, combining quantitative aspects (involvement) and qualitative aspects (perception), relating to the peer group (other students) and comprising three dimensions (structural, functional and subjective)” (Berthaud 2019, 4)¹². Academic integration, on the other hand, is “the student’s academic performance, their level of intellectual development and the image they have of a positive experience in terms of intellectual development” (Sauvé et al., 2006)¹³.

International students often lack the social and cultural capital of domestic students. The Student Development Theory analyses how academic services can improve the academic and social integration of international students. Despite the availability of academic services, studies show these remain insufficient: “services related to the student living experience (e.g. accommodations, cultural and social activities) and comfort (e.g. student employment/living expenses, security) are also needed to improve the international student experience”

¹¹ « L’étudiant peut se sentir chez lui – ou en tout cas dans un milieu plus familier – et entre pairs avec le fait d’être ‘étranger’ pour trait commun » (Pleyers and Guillaume 2009, 75). My translation.

¹² « un processus de socialisation au milieu universitaire, reposant sur les interactions sociales, mêlant des aspects quantitatifs (l’implication) et qualitatifs (la perception), se rapportant au groupe de pairs (les autres étudiants) et comprenant trois dimensions (structurale, fonctionnelle et subjective) » (Berthaud 2019, 4). My translation.

¹³ « la performance académique de l’étudiant, son niveau de développement intellectuel et l’image qu’il a de vivre une expérience positive sur le plan du développement intellectuel » (Sauvé et al., 2006). My translation.

(Ballo et al. 2019, 18). Formal and informal interactions between international students, academic staff, and domestic students regarding academic, linguistic, and social issues should improve integration and, in turn, enhance the development of IC.

For international students at medical universities, including IHUMF, choosing Romania may be motivated by economic factors, familial connections, linguistic proximity (Ioniță and Vlad 2022), and easier access to medical studies (Endrizzi 2010). IHUMF positively addresses these factors, alongside cultural proximity and the presence of numerous student associations and the French Institute. Moreover, Hirsch (2016) argues that students' academic and social integration directly influences their commitment to the institution and degree completion. This is especially true for academic integration, as demonstrated by Pop and Lotrean's study on Romanian and international graduates at IHUMF: "Intrinsic motivation is the primary factor driving student engagement in research, while institutional factors, such as educational, financial, and community influences, also have a substantial impact on research involvement" (Pop and Lotrean 2024, 15). Their study highlights time constraints as a significant barrier for international students, who face additional pressures adapting to new educational systems and learning a new language (15). I would argue that learning Romanian does not significantly hinder scientific investigation, since medical research is conducted mainly in English or French, but it impacts learning in general. A key difference noted by the study that university structures and services should address is the "research culture differences between Romanian and international students" (18), and I consider that it would have also an impact on developing IC.

Community bubbles exist, particularly for French-speaking students at IHUMF (Mărcean and Ursa 2016), where intercultural competence is often lacking: "although they are a minority in Cluj-Napoca, they do not feel marginalized, as long as the ontological and behavioural relationship is with the French space of origin or with the peer group that shares their identity and behavioural values"¹⁴ (Ursa 2017, 343). Their interactions are mostly with academic staff or for basic needs, not fostering deeper personal relationships. However, by staying connected to their cultural community and engaging in relevant activities, students can participate in meaningful intercultural exchanges that validate their identity (Guichon 2020). This is exemplified by the *Heritage Cultures and Languages Student Club*, started in 2025 by RSL teachers at IHUMF, which encourages self-reflection on identity.

¹⁴ „deși sunt o minoritate în Cluj, nu se simt marginali, atâta timp cât raportul ontologic și comportamental se face cu spațiul francez de origine sau la grupul de colegi care le împărtășesc valorile identitare și comportamentale” (Ursa 2017, 343). My translation.

Perez-Encinas and Rodriguez-Pomeda (2018) identify four stages in the international student lifecycle. The pre-arrival stage involves gathering information to make informed decisions. The arrival stage focuses on orientation, integration, and non-academic services (Perez-Encina and Rodriguez-Pomeda 2008, 21). IHUMF supports this with Orientation Week and services complemented by student organizations. The during stay stage emphasizes academic support, health, well-being, and Romanian language learning, in addition to extracurricular intercultural activities. The final stage, re-integration into the home country, addresses reverse culture shock, though many students return home frequently, limiting this phase. To identify and analyse the presence and change in knowledge, attitudes and imaginary worlds, associated to academic and social integration, and intercultural competence I conducted two activities: creating advertising posters and completing a double survey.

The advertising poster

The advertising poster activity, though not new in RSL teaching, allows for analysis beyond linguistic competence. Students (2-3 per group) created outdoor advertising posters, choosing between promoting Cluj-Napoca (six posters) or the University (seven posters). They defined the target audience (French-speaking countries), the poster's purpose (attracting French-speaking tourists and students), and the content. The task was non-compulsory but rewarded with course participation points. The first analysis focused on the slogan, wording, and iconography, related to identities and imaginary worlds. In the second stage, I focused on identifying the scope (creating awareness, shaping perceptions), functions (informing, persuading, reminding, building brand identity), and appeal (emotional, rational, humorous, celebrity) (Nicola and Dan 2009). These elements provide insight into the resources activated in developing students' IC. The final stage involves analysing the questionnaires administered after distributing the posters.

Instruments for Data Collection

This study is based on a qualitative, intensive survey with a small population, aiming to deepen the understanding of IC. Though the sample is not statistically representative, the responses provide meaningful insights into IC development. A conventional, non-random sampling was applied to two groups from the first year, second semester, Faculty of General Medicine, French section, (34 students total), through an exploratory survey (Şandor 2011, 116-124).

Two types of surveys were used by the means of questionnaires, designed by predefining goals and perceptions (Bhandari 2023): the first aimed to assess perceptions of the urban space and social integration (Qc for the city) and academic integration (Qu for the university) pre-arrival and during stay. Each group completed one of these questionnaires, which contained 12 questions, including two closed-ended, one open-ended conditioned on the previous answer (filter question), five open-ended and four mixed. Although not a quantitative analysis, I used mixed Linkert-type closed-ended questions and open-ended final question as a follow-up, using the classical “other” option. The 34 students did not respond individually but reformed the initial groups and responded as groups. The second questionnaire (Qi) focused on development of social and academic integration in the host country, and the evaluation of stereotypes. Qi included 16 questions: four closed-ended demographic questions, six mixed, two filter questions, and three open-ended questions. Special attention was paid to open-ended questions, which encourage more detailed, open responses, especially on sensitive topics (Rouder et al. 2021). Thematic analysis, using post-coding, was applied for qualitative analysis (Şandor 2011, 111). The focus will be mainly on Qc and Qu. Qi was answered by 23 students. Qc and Qu were self-administered via Microsoft Forms, in the presence of the teacher, and anonymously. Q1 was exclusively self-administrated via Microsoft Forms. Answers to all questionnaires were given between December 20204 and January 2025. Posters were handled in during January 2024.

Interpreting the IHUMF Advertising Posters

I post-coded and grouped discourse topics into four categories and counted the occurrences: *university structures and services* (USS, 9), *academic quality* (AQ, 7), *city life and culture* (CC, 4), and *socio-academic integration* (SAI, 3). USS includes campus facilities, technologies, sport areas, cafeteria with special students’ menu, language of studies, Romanian language classes, and international student presence (e.g., Erasmus and other). AQ includes study quality, diploma recognition, Shanghai ranking, renowned academic staff, competitiveness, and CV advantages. These findings align with migration determinants identified by Harfi and Mathieu (2016). CC focuses on life quality, dynamic city life, restaurants, history, intercultural encounters, cultural immersion, and a welcoming community. SAI covers academic staff availability, good class ambiance, family/acquaintance presence at IHUMF, student associations, and integration opportunities, such as sports and social activities. These arguments, especially those in CC and SAI, seem to emphasize intercultural competence and integration, presenting students as connoisseurs about the new culture, in line with advertising discourse strategies.

However, interpretations of the questionnaires may provide a different view of the realities behind CC and SAI.

As expected, the slogans¹⁵ are aligned with the AQ discourse theme, and were probably created afterwards: 1. “Innovate. Heal. Inspire. Start your journey to save lives”, 2. “Become a doctor in Cluj-Napoca”, 3. “UMF is the best university in Romania”, 4. “Discover medical excellence at UMF Cluj-Napoca! Open Doors Day”, 5. “Come and study at UMF in Romania. A healthy body in a healthy mind. Combine sport with medical studies”.

Iconographic factors include high-quality internet images (4) and personal photographs (3), mostly from campus or university, with a few images of the city and festivals (3). Given the advertising topic, I expected the scope of the posters to create awareness and communicate product benefits. The function was to inform and persuade, and the appeals were rational. The posters introduce a product to potential customers who may not have been aware of it, but most do not communicate unique features or benefits, with a few exceptions that include CC and SAI. The informing and persuading functions are fully met, and the advertising appeals are rational, except for the emotional appeal embedded in SAI, referencing the support of bubble communities.

Interpreting the Findings of Qu

I analysed Qu mainly for changes in knowledge and attitudes from the pre-arrival to the during stay stage and how the posters’ representations matched students’ perceptions. Since the posters mostly covered factual information, I did not expect major changes.

The focus of both questionnaires is the same, differing only in their focus—city vs. university. Q1 traces taking accountability of the choice, is it made to please the teacher or to get a benefit or is it really the topic they have something to say about. Q2 tracks the shared perception of the group: they all agree, without debate, or have gone through debates that mirror the negotiation of imaginary worlds, with *yes*, *no*, *we reached an agreement* or *other* options. Q3 (“Was the information you used already known to you before arriving in Cluj?”) measures pre-arrival knowledge, from complete, partially complete, absent or other. Q4 (“Does the image you had formed of the city/university before arriving match that of your posters?”) identifies correspondence between poster perceptions of the academic and urban environment with real perceptions after arrival, with the possibilities *yes*, *partially*, *not really*, *other*. Q5 (“If not, what has changed in your perception of the city/university after arrival?”) identifies factors of real

¹⁵ One poster has no slogan, and another is conceived as an advertising leaflet.

perceptions through open-ended responses. Q6 establishes changes in perception at group level, with *yes*, *no*, *we reached an agreement* or *other* options. Q7 determines the sociometric factors of the target population. Q8 identifies the reasons of the strategies applied and acts like a two-sided mirror, reflecting sides of their own identities. Q9 (“Do you think your poster could change your target audience’s perception of this Romanian city/on the studies in Romania?”) aims to relate to the change of perceptions in the origin society, again with a two-sided mirror effect. Answers can be *yes*, *a little*, *yes*, *a lot*, *maybe*, *no* and *other*. Q10 and Q11 analyse their perception on influence of space placement in the origin community. Q12 (“Has the creation of these posters had any effect on the way you perceive the city/the university?”) evaluates the effect of this specific activity on the stability or change in their own perceptions.

For this study, I focus on Q3, Q4, Q5, Q9, and Q12. A special mention is deserved by one answer to Q10 and Q11: *Everywhere and I have the impression that the whole of France has negative preconceptions about Romania*. This is the only occurrence of a reference to cultural perception in any of the respondents to Qu.

Q3, Q4, Q5, Q9, and Q12 are interrelated and must be seen as corroborated, since the answers to each must relate with each other. They explore changes in knowledge and attitudes, reflecting students’ perceptions. Posters mainly cover university-related data, which students are generally well-informed about before arriving (Q3: 67% partial, 33% complete). Most answers to Q4 (56%) show stable perceptions, while 44% indicate partial change, mainly concerning city life (Q5). Inconsistencies were linked to one USS: the spread of classrooms across campuses. Responses to Q9 (67% *yes*, *a little*) reflect minor shifts in perceptions of their home community, relating to the university facts but not CC or SAI. Q12 shows minimal change in perceptions during their stay —factual information was confirmed, with only two mentions of discovering new university projects or cultural services.

Interpreting the city advertising posters

I post-coded and grouped discourse topics into eight categories, counting occurrences. *Cultural activities* (CA) (12) appear in 6 of 7 posters, covering theatre, history, architecture, museums, art, and traditional events. The word “culture” appears four times, but it remains a vague concept. *Public spaces and attractions* (PSA) (10) also appear in 6 posters, including Central Park, Ethnographic Park, Botanical Garden, Union Square, and the Salt Mine of Turda, a different city. This is likely based on online research. *Entertainment* (E) (7) focuses exclusively on concerts and festivals (music, food, sport, cinema), most of which occur in summer when students are absent. *University-related* (U) (4) highlights the

town's appeal as a student hub, including Erasmus and university rankings. *Going out* (G), *occupation* (O), *accessibility* (A), and *cultural diversity* (CD) (1 each) cover bars, restaurants, IT jobs, airport connections and local transport. The cultural diversity reference is tied to the trilingual plaque at the city limit, focusing on coexistence of majorities and minorities. However, it's unclear if this points to multiculturalism or interculturalism, which the slogan may clarify.

Iconographic factors mainly feature high-quality online pictures (5), with one poster using sketches and icons. No personal photographs are used, but the images align with discourse topics: Catholic Cathedral and Union Square appear 8 times, while parks, festivals (Untold and Color Run), Cluj Arena Stadium, Orthodox Cathedral and universities appear less frequently (twice). All other images only appear once (Opera and Theatre, Mine Salt of Turda, traditional food, central street). The *Mărțișor*, part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage, is used once. PSA dominates the imagery (18), with CA (3), E (2), and U (1) lagging behind, suggesting a stronger focus on public spaces. Slogans supported the discourse topics, from selective to almost all of them: 1. „Come to Cluj! Feel the passion, explore the adventure! Cluj-Napoca, where dreams come true”, 2. “Discover the life of Cluj! From culture to scenery and partying, you will find happiness!”, 3. “Cluj-Napoca: the beating heart of Transylvania!”, 4. “Cluj is waiting for you!”, 5. “You already love Cluj!” and 6. “Welcome to Cluj-Napoca. Come and visit the most beautiful city in Romania!” 1 endorses U, E, CA, 2 focuses on PSA (and E), 3 on CA and PSA, 4 covers E, G, U, and PSA sport, 5 brings PSA, CA, O, E, A, U together. 6 is the only one with a cultural reference, but the image shows poor infrastructure, contradicting the slogan. Moreover, the general impression is of dissonance between the slogan and the image, rather in an ironic way. The advertising identity was mainly attributed to a tourism agency (4), with one reference to a student association and the Tourist Information Centre. The posters aim to raise awareness, building brand identity based on students' perceptions of what might attract their target audience, drawn from their own identities. Unlike the university posters, they communicate product benefits. The main function is to inform and persuade, with rational and emotional appeals.

In conclusion, if I corroborate all the information, posters reveal once again the connoisseur stance, and a majority of PSA, CA and E discourse topics endorsed by slogans and images convey socialisation, social integration, a certain degree of belonging. However, advertising often idealizes integration, conveying the representation of another identity and its real impact on student perceptions will be assessed through the survey.

Interpreting the questions of Qc

I approached Qc from the perspective of change in knowledge and attitudes related to pre-arrival and during stay stages, and the correspondence between the world represented in the poster and the students' representations of the host city. I will discuss Q3, Q4, Q5, Q9, and Q12. Unlike the factual knowledge from Qu, Q3 shows a lack of specific information pre-arrival (67% partially, 33% none). The activity developed new knowledge. Correspondence between prior knowledge and poster knowledge is minimal (50% saw no correspondence, 50% saw partial correspondence), as the lack of pre-arrival information was compensated by their research and 8 months spent in the city after arrival (Q4). New knowledge and perceptions were mostly positive (Q5), with improvements in their views on cultural activities, student life and number of students, life quality, cultural diversity, safety, and cleanliness. The only exception was a negative perception related to pollution, sidewalks, and mentalities. This group also responded negatively to Q9 and Q12, suggesting no intercultural development. I cannot but ask myself if this group of respondents was the creator of the number 6 advertising poster. Q9 responses (33% yes, 33% maybe) show a shift in perception. The poster activity helped discover socialization and festival opportunities, improving social integration. Pre-arrival perception, related to their origin community, mainly the young target public of the posters, and mirroring their own can be changed. The change in their perception as a result of the poster activity must be detailed: „selling the city” created the sensation of belonging (social integration), perception was already better during stay, but their research discovered new activities (socialization possibilities) and festivals (entertainment), perception changed for the better, from negative to very positive, during stay (social integration).

Data shows that pre-arrival and during-stay perceptions changed, but the poster activity had little impact. Social integration and socialization were achieved naturally during stay, which somewhat contradicts, albeit on a smaller scale, previous studies (Ursa 2017). Nevertheless, I must stress that there isn't any clear indication in the answers to any of the 12 questions that points towards integration or socialisation within the host society. It can be within the host society, ideally, but it can as well within the bubble communities. Or bubble communities are the most constant reference points in terms of shared attitudes, values, and behaviours, as well as socialization patterns. Are we witnessing such a drastic change after only 9 years¹⁶? The answers to my third questionnaire (Qi)

¹⁶ The study I am referring to was conducted in 2016 and focused exclusively on French students. However, Qc was carried out with French speakers, not all of whom are French, which may have made the group in Qc more open to communication.

targets not only the perception and evaluation of stereotypes but also the development of social and academic integration.

Selective interpretation of Qi

This survey will be discussed in another study, but I do find it necessary to give a preview in response to the question above. The answer is no, in terms of real integration and socialization. Qi answers show a change in perception, mainly in deconstructing stereotypes, partly through the poster activity, but also highlight the need for socialization and integration with domestic students and Romanians. Less than half of the students have Romanian friends (39.13%), and more than half (60.86%) have none or just a few. However, 100% of the latter want Romanian friends. The main reason for not having Romanian friends, crucial mediators for socialisation, integration, RSL development and above all, for intercultural development, is the lack of opportunity to meet them: "I haven't had the opportunity to meet them." International and domestic students do not share classes or buildings in the first years. I conclude that cultural activities and entertainment unfold within bubble communities (colleagues, associations). Qi results differ from 2016 findings, showing increased desire for socialization, integration, and IC development, while Qc results reflect the desired image of one of the (inter)cultural worlds.

Conclusions

While academic integration appears to be successful, social integration and the development of intercultural competence remain significant challenges. If the methods and strategies used in the RSL course are not effectively fostering IC as intended, and if academic integration, student commitment to the university are closely tied to social integration and personal development, it suggests that something in the current approach may not be working. If social integration is proven to be part of the students' needs and desires, there are no courses dedicated to intercultural accompaniment. This raises the question: are we doing enough to develop IC in our students? It might be time for academic staff and university services to come together and find a more effective solution.

In the line of Derwin, intercultural competence is not just a matter of allowing different cultures to interact. It involves understanding how individuals with multiple identities engage with others who have equally complex identities, and it focuses on enriching the experience for all participants. Developing intercultural competence cannot be achieved through academic integration and RSL classes alone.

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NOTAS SOBRE LA ENSEÑANZA DEL RUMANO EN ESPAÑA

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ABSTRACT. *Notes on Teaching Romanian in Spain.* The methodology of language teaching has opened up to third and additional languages, multilingualism and plurilingualism, while paying more attention to the students' linguistic profile. As it has been observed, learning a new language involves languages already known in addition to the mother tongue, as well as students' language awareness. Romanian teachers in Spain must take into account that it is studied after several other languages. We present some didactic strategies correlated with both the positive and the negative influences that the previously acquired languages may have upon learning Romanian.

Keywords: *Romanian as a foreign language, language teaching, third language and additional language, cross-linguistic influences on language acquisition, language awareness, multilingualism/plurilingualism, applied linguistics.*

REZUMAT. *Note privind predarea limbii române în Spania.* Metodologia predării limbilor s-a deschis către limba a treia, limbile suplimentare, plurilingvism și multilingvism, în timp ce acordă o mai mare atenție profilului cursanților. După cum s-a observat, în însușirea unei noi limbi pot interveni limbile deja cunoscute pe lângă cea maternă, dar și conștiința lingvistică. În Spania, predarea românei trebuie să țină cont că aceasta este studiată după diverse alte limbi. Prezentăm câteva strategii didactice corelate cu influența pozitivă sau negativă pe care limbile însușite anterior o pot avea în învățarea românei.

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Cuvinte-cheie: *româna ca limbă străină, predarea limbilor străine, limba a treia și limbă suplimentară, influențe interlingvistice în învățarea limbilor, conștiință lingvistică, multilingvism/plurilingvism, lingvistică aplicată.*

1. Introducción

El rumano se aprende en España después de haberse adquirido el castellano y varias otras lenguas extranjeras, a menudo también regionales y cooficiales. El docente debe tener en cuenta esta situación, para adaptarse al perfil lingüístico de los destinatarios. Presentamos aquí el enfoque específico que hemos aplicado con este fin en el ámbito universitario español, considerando tanto la influencia positiva como la negativa que los idiomas previamente adquiridos puedan tener en el aprendizaje del rumano y, en paralelo, la conciencia lingüística de los alumnos acerca del rumano. Aplicaremos este enfoque al nivel A1 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas (Council of Europe 2001, 2020, Platon *et al.* 2014).

El trabajo se estructura de la siguiente manera: en la sección 2 sintetizamos ciertos avances metodológicos relevantes en la enseñanza de idiomas, en la sección 3 exponemos nuestro enfoque para los cursos de rumano destinados a hispanohablantes, con ejemplos concretos para su aplicación y, finalmente, en la sección 4 expresamos unas consideraciones de tipo conclusivo.

2. La enseñanza de idiomas. Algunas perspectivas y observaciones

En consonancia con los cambios que se producen en la sociedad actual, la enseñanza de idiomas se ha extendido a terceras lenguas, lenguas adicionales, multilingüismo y plurilingüismo (Cenoz and Genesee 1998, De Angelis 2007, Ringbom 2007, Jessner 2008b, Aronin and Hufeisen 2009, Cabrelli Amaro and Iverson 2018, Hammarberg 2018, Pinto and Alexandre 2021, D'Angelo 2023). En paralelo, desde la investigación se han propuesto varios modelos para la adquisición de una tercera lengua. A diferencia de los monolingües, se ha comprobado que los bilingües o multilingües tienen un conocimiento diferente de su L1 y L2, un tipo distinto de conciencia lingüística y otro sistema de procesamiento del lenguaje. Las lenguas que se conocen han demostrado ya sus beneficios para el aprendizaje de una nueva; se ha comprobado que puede ser la L2 y no la L1 la lengua que desempeña el papel de puente o de apoyo en el desarrollo de la L3 (Jessner 2008b). Vamos a exponer con más detalle estas observaciones, que son muy relevantes para nuestro posicionamiento metodológico.

Según el modelo dinámico del multilingüismo (Herdina and Jessner 2002, Jessner 2008a), la competencia multilingüe que se desarrolla en el aprendizaje de nuevos idiomas incluye una conciencia metalingüística: un conjunto de destrezas o habilidades derivadas de sus conocimientos lingüísticos y metacognitivos previos. La conciencia metalingüística es un factor clave, con efectos catalizadores o aceleradores, en la adquisición de una nueva lengua, especialmente si esta última está relacionada tipológicamente con las anteriores.

El modelo de procesamiento multilingüe (Meißner 2004) asume que los idiomas extranjeros previamente aprendidos desarrollan destrezas receptivas útiles para otros idiomas con que guardan relación tipológica. Al ser más próxima a la nueva lengua meta, una lengua no materna ya conocida asume el papel de puente y funciona como una especie de matriz con la que se comparan y contrastan las estructuras y el léxico que se van incorporando. El modelo está estrechamente vinculado con la intercomprensión.

Propuesta inicialmente para las lenguas románicas (Teyssier 2004, entre otros), la intercomprensión ha sido una muy fructífera línea de investigación, en proyectos de envergadura: *EuRom4*, *EuroComRom*, *Galatea*, *Galanet*, *GalaPro*, *Miriadi*. Se hace necesario señalar ahora el método de los siete “tamices” (Meißner *et al.* 2004), que consiste en una sucesión de conocimientos preliminares útiles para entender un nuevo idioma románico: vocabulario internacional; vocabulario panrománico; correspondencias fonéticas y gráficas; convenciones gramaticales y de pronunciación; tipos sintácticos fundamentales; elementos morfosintácticos; prefijos y sufijos/sufijoides greco-latinos.

Los estudios sobre la adquisición de idiomas han puesto de manifiesto la importancia de la conciencia lingüística (en inglés, *language awareness*), entendida de varias maneras, en relación con la función y la relevancia que tienen: el conocimiento explícito de los distintos aspectos de la lengua que se va a aprender (conciencia lingüística propiamente dicha), la comprensión de aspectos relevantes de la cultura en la que se desenvuelve la lengua meta (conciencia cultural), además el conocimiento y la comprensión de la propia naturaleza del aprendizaje de lenguas (conciencia del aprendizaje de lenguas). Así, la lengua extranjera se percibe: como sistema lingüístico, como un mediador cultural, teniendo en cuenta su peso cultural, y como logro cognitivo, si consideramos los mecanismos, estrategias y procedimientos que se activan en su adquisición (Edmondson 2009).

Por otra parte, la adopción – en la didáctica de las lenguas – de una perspectiva basada en el usuario de L2 tiene fuertes implicaciones. Así, los objetivos externos de la enseñanza de idiomas deben estar relacionados con el usuario de la L2 y no con el hablante nativo. Y más precisamente, los alumnos tienen que ser preparados en los usos específicos de L2, incluso destrezas bilingües como

la traducción y el cambio de códigos. Los métodos de enseñanza deben emplear estas destrezas en relación no solo con el aprendizaje, sino también con los objetivos finales del alumno, como parte de su conducta final. Otra implicación es la necesidad de destacar el valor de la L1 en el aula y su uso en circunstancias como transmitir instrucciones sobre las tareas, traducir y comprobar la comprensión, dar *feedback* a los alumnos, mantener la disciplina o explicar la gramática (Cook 2002). Consideramos que estas propuestas se validan en la didáctica de terceras lenguas y lenguas adicionales; resaltaríamos aquí la incorporación de la reflexión gramatical explícita.

La enseñanza de idiomas se guía cada vez más por los corpus, tanto de manera directa, en la definición de actividades para las clases, como indirecta, en la elaboración de los programas y de las obras de referencia: gramáticas y diccionarios. Römer (2008) y Flowerdew (2009) sintetizan los usos didácticos de los corpus.

Todavía no se han impuesto frente a los corpus de hablantes nativos, pero van ganando terreno los corpus de aprendices de idiomas (Granger, Gilquin, and Meunier 2015). Hasta la fecha la investigación sobre estos últimos se ha centrado en la elaboración de materiales y pruebas o la evaluación, dejando en un segundo plano las implicaciones y las aplicaciones para la pedagogía de la lengua (Götz and Granger 2024).

Respondiendo a una necesidad urgente en la enseñanza del rumano como lengua extranjera (Arieşan and Vasiu 2016, Mîrzea-Vasile 2017, Varga 2022), los principales corpus de aprendizaje construidos en Rumanía con fines didácticos y de dimensión más amplia son muy recientes: dos analógicos, impresos (CORLS y Constantinescu/Stoica) más otro digital (LECOR). El CORLS (*Corpus Oral de Limba Română ca Limbă Străină*), de unas 70.000 palabras, contiene transcripciones de muestras orales producidas por 172 estudiantes de A1 (Vasiu 2020). Constantinescu and Stoica (2020) han compilado un corpus de aproximadamente 460 muestras producidas por 61 alumnos (380 escritas, de nivel A1-B2, y 79 transcripciones de textos orales, de nivel A2 o B1), con un total de unas 125.000 palabras. El LECOR suma más de 500.000 palabras y reúne 3.604 documentos, casi el 80% escritos y el resto orales, que van del nivel A1 al nivel B2, excepto unos cuantos de nivel C1. Creado para utilizarse igualmente como corpus sincrónico/transversal y como corpus diacrónico/longitudinal, LECOR está provisto de metadatos detallados, lematizado y anotado automáticamente a nivel morfosintáctico y sintáctico, así como anotado manualmente para la detección de errores. Se trata de un corpus de libre acceso, a través de la interfaz del motor noSketch (<http://lecor.unibuc.ro/crystal/#open>), disponible en cuatro variantes: los textos de los alumnos, con correcciones en la misma fila; los textos de los alumnos, con correcciones en la fila inferior; solo los textos de los estudiantes, con errores;

solo los textos corregidos. Las cuatro variantes del corpus y la interfaz de consulta permiten búsquedas variadas (Barbu *et al.* 2023; *Learner Corpus of Romanian (LECOR). Collection, Annotation and Applications; The LECOR Guide*).

Dada la novedad de estos recursos, su explotación para la didáctica del rumano lengua extranjera está todavía en fase incipiente (Bocoş 2017, Constantinescu and Stoica 2020, Corbeanu and Dincă 2020, Vasiu 2020, Cojocaru 2021, Cristescu 2023, Mîrzea Vasile and Preda Cincora 2023, Neagu and Mîrzea Vasile 2024, Mîrzea Vasile and Vasileanu 2024).

Previamente a la aparición de los corpus de aprendizaje mencionados, hemos propuesto como alternativa – con los mismos fines didácticos y en línea con la tendencia de explotar Internet a modo de corpus – el uso de la comunicación mediada por ordenador (en inglés, *computer-mediated communication*) en situaciones de contacto, esta última entendida: 1) como periferia de un dominio lingüístico (en particular, del rumano); 2) como modalidad empleada en una situación de contacto lingüístico; 3) como comunicación electrónica; 4) como contexto para reflexionar e intercambiar información sobre las lenguas en contacto. Específicamente hemos ilustrado la enseñanza del rumano a los hablantes nativos de español, italiano, francés o portugués con la ayuda de la comunicación digital producida en el ámbito de las comunidades étnicas de lengua rumana en España, Italia, Francia y Portugal, aprovechando tanto los testimonios lingüísticos, como socio- y epilingüísticos que esta comunicación contiene (Nica 2018).

3. Planteamiento didáctico. Ejemplos

Para la enseñanza del rumano en el ámbito universitario español, en particular para alumnos de Filología, hemos adoptado un enfoque – acorde con los desarrollos metodológicos señalados en la sección 2 – que propicia el aprendizaje en permanente colaboración con los conocimientos lingüísticos previos². Pretendemos así facilitar la adquisición y prevenir las interferencias con los idiomas ya dominados, a la vez que reforzar el sentimiento de familiaridad de los estudiantes con el rumano e implicarlos, de manera activa, en el proceso didáctico.

Nuestra atención se centra en las dificultades que plantea el estudio del rumano en general y especialmente para los hispanohablantes, según las hemos ido observando durante la docencia en universidades de España y fueron confirmadas en el análisis de los corpus de aprendizaje (Vasiu 2020)³ o reflejadas

² Hemos presentado algunas ideas en trabajos nuestros previos (Nica 2019, 2020, Nica and Teletin 2019), de los que tomamos contados ejemplos.

³ Los principales corpus de aprendizaje desarrollados hasta ahora en Rumanía (cf. la sección 2) tienen más bien un papel orientativo para la enseñanza del rumano en ámbito hispánico, dada

indirectamente en la producción digital de los rumanos asentados en España (cf. la sección 2).

Partimos del repertorio lingüístico habitual entre el alumnado universitario español: castellano, a menudo una lengua regional (catalán, gallego, vasco) y además lenguas extranjeras, principalmente inglés, con frecuencia francés o alemán, posiblemente italiano, portugués, latín, etc. Teniendo en cuenta este repertorio, procuramos trabajar sobre una base lingüística ampliamente compartida por los alumnos, dando siempre prioridad a las lenguas más conocidas; según sea conveniente, usamos solo el español y el inglés o más lenguas. Aunque el dominio de los idiomas es variable, a menudo unas nociones básicas son suficientes para nuestros fines. Nos sirven igualmente elementos de cultura general relacionados con determinadas zonas – nombres propios, productos, etc. – que implican aspectos puntuales de lenguas variadas.

Las estrategias didácticas concretas que empleamos cambian en función de lo que se enseñe y también para alternar las actividades en clase: la comparación del rumano con el español u otros idiomas, resaltando similitudes y divergencias, así como la referencia a la etimología de vocablos rumanos o españoles, a variedades del español y al lenguaje científico español o a la cultura general, etc. Nuestro posicionamiento utiliza resultados de diversas disciplinas lingüísticas: romanística, historia y gramática histórica del rumano, el español y otras lenguas románicas, contactos lingüísticos, sociolingüística, gramática contrastiva, etc. Si bien recurrimos a elementos de intercomprensión, nuestro objetivo es transmitir conocimientos sobre el sistema lingüístico rumano en su conjunto y formar competencias tanto receptivas como productivas. Además, salimos del ámbito románico al que pertenece el rumano, usando sobre todo el inglés.

En base a lo anterior, exponemos soluciones para la prevención o la superación de algunos problemas que encuentran los españoles en el aprendizaje del rumano. La información que incorporamos suele ser ampliamente consabida, por lo que prescindimos de referencias bibliográficas⁴. Para ejemplos de actividades y ejercicios, remitimos a trabajos nuestros previos (Nica 2019, 2020, Nica and Teletin 2019).

Para los hispanohablantes, como para otros extranjeros, uno de los escollos a superar es la distinción entre las vocales /a/, /ə/ y /i/, igual que su correspondencia gráfica <a>, <ă>, <â>/<î>. Hemos procurado, en este caso, reducir el problema: /a/ existe en español (por ejemplo, la preposición *a*), la vocal central de apertura media /ə/ es familiar para los alumnos dado que se

la escasa presencia de los hablantes nativos de español: dos en el corpus Constantinescu/Stoica, cinco en CORLS y cuatro en LECOR, casi todos de América Latina.

⁴ Para las transcripciones fonéticas, a continuación usamos la notación IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet).

encuentra en inglés (algo más abierta, la “schwa”, por ejemplo, en el artículo indefinido *a*) y en catalán oriental (la así llamada “vocal neutra”, que es la pronunciación de la <a> o la <e> átonas, por ejemplo, <a> en *una cosa*, también <e> en *escola*), y queda como algo nuevo por aprender solo la vocal central alta /i/, si no se conoce el portugués europeo (en el que es la pronunciación de <e> al final de *neve*). La pronunciación de /i/ se puede introducir como imitación del sonido que se emite al expresar el asco o al hacer un esfuerzo físico intenso, por ejemplo, levantando un peso. Estas vocales centrales se fijan mejor si se introducen en series de iteración (*măř* ‘manzana’ – *păř* ‘peral’ – *văř* ‘primo’ con la vocal /ə/, *căine* ‘perro’ – *măine* ‘mañana’ – *păine* ‘pan’ con el diptongo /i:/) y de contraste (*var* ‘cal’ – *văř* ‘primo’ – *vâr* ‘meto’, *cântăm* ‘cantamos’ – *cântam* ‘cantábamos’). Además, se hace necesario advertir sobre el valor distinto de las letras rumanas <â>, <î> – la representación del fonema /i/ – con respecto al acento circunflejo del francés, usado igualmente en las demás vocales (<ê>, <ô>, <û>), que indica una elisión en la evolución de los étimos latinos (fr. *âne* < lat. *asinus*; fr. *île* < lat. *i(n)sula*), marca una determinada pronunciación (*grâce* /gʁas/, *fête* /fet/, *hôpital* /ɔpital/) o diferencia homónimos (*sur* ‘seguro’ vs. *sûr* ‘sobre’, *cru* ‘crudo’ vs. *crû* ‘crecido’), entre otros.

La pronunciación rumana diferente de la española se entiende con facilidad cuando se contrastan palabras equivalentes de forma muy similar en las dos lenguas. En particular, esto ayuda a aprender las unidades fonológicas inexistentes en español, como los diptongos /ɛa/ y /ɔa/, dado que el español solo cuenta con los hiatos /e.a/ y /o.a/: rum. *teătru* (/ɛa/) vs. esp. *teatro* (/e.a/), rum. *oază* (/ɔa/) vs. esp. *oasis* (/o.a/). Sin embargo, el hecho que en español se pronuncien los dos diptongos en situaciones de sinalefa, por ejemplo, *pollo a la plancha* (/ɔa/) o *vete a tu casa* (/ɛa/), constituye un apoyo para su asimilación.

Las coincidencias con otros idiomas, casuales o no, propician la correcta adquisición de los fonemas del rumano. Así, la fricativa glotal /h/, escrita <h>, se introduce de manera sencilla recurriendo al saludo inglés *hi* ‘hola’ /hai/, con pronuncia parecida a la interjección rumana *hai* ‘vamos’ /hai/, o bien al nombre inglés *hotel* ‘hotel’ /həʊtel/, con el equivalente rumano *hotel* /ho’tel/. Sin embargo, en ciertos contextos (*aăa* ‘ajá’, *monarh* ‘monarca’), su alófono se acerca a la fricativa velar /x/ del español *jamón*.

Es igualmente necesario insistir en los dígrafos <ce> /tʃe/, <ci> /tʃi/, <ge> /dʒe/, <gi> /dʒi/ y los trígrafos <che> /ke/, <chi> /ki/, <ghe> /ge/, <ghi> /gi/, puesto que en otros idiomas, español incluido, estos grafemas se pronuncian de manera distinta o bien su correspondiente fonético en rumano tiene una representación gráfica diversa. Concretamente, el español usa las correspondencias grafía – pronunciación <ce> /θe/ (o /se/, según la zona), <ci> /θi/ (o /si/, según la zona), <ge> /xe/, <gi> /xi/, <che> /tʃe/, <chi> /tʃi/, <gue> /ge/, <gui> /gi/, <que>

/ke/, <qui> /ki/, pero no posee <ghe> y <ghi>. Los grafemas del rumano se pueden asimilar con el apoyo del italiano, que sirvió de modelo al primero para la grafía moderna con alfabeto latino adoptada en el siglo XIX. Aunque el italiano no sea dominado por los alumnos, es fácil recurrir a nombres propios famosos relacionados con Italia, habitualmente menos adaptados al español que los nombres de productos típicos: *Versace*, *Dolce & Gabanna*, *Lamborghini*, *Lancia*, *Francesco Petrarca*, *Marcello Mastroianni*, *de Medici*, *Leonardo da Vinci*, *Luciano Pavarotti*, *Giacomo Puccini*, *Cinecittà*, *Caravaggio*, *Borgia*, *Giovanni Boccaccio*, *Giuseppe Verdi*, *Giotto*, *Giorgio de Chirico*, *Filippo Brunelleschi*, *Niccolò Machiavelli*, *Dante Alighieri*, etc. Hacemos así uso de los conocimientos lingüísticos implícitos en la cultura general.⁵

En la morfosintaxis, una de las cuestiones complejas al nivel A1 es la categoría del número en los nombres sustantivos. De nuevo, el italiano aligera su enseñanza, al estar más cerca del rumano en este aspecto: mientras que en español el plural es sigmático, en rumano e italiano es vocálico (rum. *student* – *studenti*, it. *studente* – *studenti* vs. esp. *estudiante* – *estudiantes*; rum. *casă* – *case*, it. *casa* – *case* vs. esp. *casa* – *casas*; rum. *limbă* – *limbi*, it. *lingua* – *lingue* vs. esp. *lengua* – *lenguas*). Sin embargo, frente al italiano, hay que resaltar la posible realización morfofonológica distinta de las desinencias como variantes contextuales, especialmente para la <i> final: it. *lupo* – *lupi* (con la /i/ vocálica) ‘lobo – lobos’ vs. rum. *lup* – *lupi* (con la /i/ corta, asilábica /ĩ/ o solo una palatalización de la consonante previa, /pʲ/) ‘lobo – lobos’, *leu* – *lei* (con la /i/ semivocálica /i̯/) ‘león – leones’, *metru* – *metri* (con la /i/ vocálica) ‘metro – metros’, *indice* – *indici* (con la -i representando solo un timbre palatal, /tʃʲ/) ‘índice – índices’. Las alternancias consonánticas en la raíz entre singular y plural tampoco son siempre las mismas que en italiano: rum. *amic* – *amici* (/k/ – /tʃ/), it. *amico* – *amici* (/k/ – /tʃ/) ‘amigo – amigos’, pero rum. *turc* – *turci* (/k/ – /tʃ/) vs. it. *turco* – *turchi* (/k/ – /k/) ‘turco – turcos’; rum. *coleg* – *colegi* (/g/ – /dʒ/) vs. it. *collega* – *colleghe* (/g/ – /g/) ‘colega – colegas (masc.)’; rum. *student* – *studenti* (/t/ – /tsʲ/) vs. it. *studente* – *studenti* (/t/ – /t/) ‘estudiante – estudiantes (masc.)’. Desde esta perspectiva tipológica, sirve igualmente el inglés, para ilustrar las alternancias de vocales o consonantes que ocurren en rumano en el paso del singular al plural: ing. *man* – *men* (/æ/ – /e/) ‘hombre – hombres’, *woman* – *women* (/ʊ/, /ə/ – /ɪ/, /ɪ/) ‘mujer – mujeres’, *mouse* – *mice* (/aʊ/ – /aɪ/) ‘ratón – ratones’, *cat* – *cats* (/t/ – /ts/) ‘gato – gatos’, *bid* – *bids* (/d/ – /dz/) ‘apuesta – apuestas’, *knife* – *knives* (/f/ – /vz/) ‘cuchillo – cuchillos’, rum. *fată* – *fete* (/a/ – /e/) ‘chica – chicas’, *noapte* – *nopti* (/ɔa/ – /o/) ‘noche – noches’, *student* – *studenti* (/t/ – /tsʲ/), *ghid* – *ghizi* (/d/ – /zi/),

⁵ Damsescu (2013) estudia más en detalle las dificultades que la grafía rumana presenta para los españoles.

así como plurales irregulares: ing. *child* – *children* ‘niño – niños’, rum. *cap* – *capete* ‘cabeza – cabezas’.

La referencia a otras lenguas es útil y además necesaria para la introducción del artículo indefinido. Por una parte, en singular la forma *un* del masculino y el neutro es la misma que en español e italiano, mientras que en plural hay una forma única, como en inglés (*some*) y francés (*des*), aunque distinta (*niște* < lat. *nescio quid*, ‘no sé qué’). Por otra parte, la forma *o* del singular femenino se debe distinguir del port. *o* /u/, que es artículo definido para el mismo género y el mismo número.

El artículo definido plantea dificultades, ante todo por su posición enclítica, característica única entre las lenguas románicas. Sin embargo, para las formas (rum. m./n.sg. *-(u)l*, f.sg. *-(u)a*, m.pl. *-i*, f./n.pl. *-le*) se pueden aprovechar sus equivalentes italianos (it. m.sg. *il*, *lo*, *l’*, f.sg. *la*, *l’*, m.pl. *i*, *gli*, f.pl. *le*). El uso del artículo definido es en general igual que en otras lenguas románicas, pero presenta una especificidad: su omisión por defecto, si bien con excepciones, en los grupos preposicionales: rum. *a fi în parc* (literalmente “estar en parque”), *a merge la piață* (literalmente “ir a mercado”). En este caso funciona la analogía con ejemplos – habitualmente colocaciones o fraseologismos – del español, el francés o el italiano, en que el artículo tampoco aparece: esp. *estar en Ø casa*, *ir a Ø pie*, *viajar en Ø tren*, fr. *aller à Ø pied*, *voyager en Ø train*, it. *essere in/a Ø casa*, *andare a Ø piedi*, *viaggiare in Ø treno*.

A diferencia de lo que ocurre en otras lenguas románicas, en rumano *la* es preposición y requiere especial atención. De hecho, se debe insistir en las distintas preposiciones de movimiento. Así, la preposición española *a* no tiene como único equivalente a la rumana *la* y muchas veces, sobre todo en colocaciones, el correspondiente rumano es *în*; el italiano puede ayudar, aunque solo en parte: rum. *a merge în America/Spania/Sicilia* – it. *andare in America/Spagna/Sicilia*, frente al esp. *ir a America/Italia/Sicilia*.

La ampliación de la base de comparación entre español y rumano con elementos de variación permite encontrar más similitudes entre las dos lenguas. Así, los adverbios latinoamericanos *nomás* (con su variante *no más* de España) y *dizque* (< *dice* + *que*) son más próximos en plan formal a los equivalentes rumanos *numai* (< *nu* + *mai* “no + más”) y *cică* (< (*se zi*)ce + *că* (“se di)ce + que”) respectivamente, al tener etimología paralela.

El apoyo en otros idiomas facilita asimismo la introducción de determinadas construcciones. Si en español la construcción existencial es *hay*, con el verbo *haber* e invariable, en rumano su estructura es similar al inglés (sg. *there is* – pl. *there are*) y al italiano (sg. *c’è* – pl. *ci sono*), con el verbo ‘ser’, pero sin el expletivo, y formas distintas para el sujeto singular y plural: rum. sg. *este/e*, pl. *sunt*.

A nivel léxico, muchas unidades pertenecen al vocabulario internacional y hace falta subrayar su forma particular en rumano. Por ejemplo, en las palabras entradas del francés, el acento puede diferir con respecto al castellano: rum. *academie* vs. esp. *academia*, rum. *pijamaa* vs. esp. *pijama*, rum. *telefon* vs. esp. *telefono*, rum. *taxi* vs. esp. *taxi*.

En ocasiones se puede sacar provecho del lenguaje científico español, especialmente cuando se trata de vocablos rumanos procedentes del latín o del griego: esp. *auscultar* ‘escuchar los ruidos producidos en los órganos internos’ (< lat. *auscultāre*) – rum. *a asculta* ‘escuchar’ (< lat. *auscultāre*); esp. *prosopografía* ‘descripción del aspecto exterior de una persona’ (< gr. πρόσωπον / *prósōpon* ‘rostro, cara’ y *-grafía*) – rum. *prosop* ‘toalla’ (< ngr. πρόσωπον ‘para la cara’ / *προσώπις* ‘toalla’).

La etimología resulta ser muy útil en la enseñanza del vocabulario, posiblemente con ciertas especificaciones. Muchas unidades léxicas de origen francés o inglés se han adaptado a las reglas fonético-gráficas del rumano y son más próximas a la forma sonora del étimo: rum. *mașină* /ma.ʃi.nə/ ‘coche, máquina’ (< fr. *machine* /ma.ʃin/), rum. *hol* /hol/ ‘vestíbulo’ (< ing. *hall* /hɔ:l/). A menudo, los lexemas rumanos de origen latino son menos transparentes para un hispanohablante debido a varias razones. Así, las leyes fonéticas que han activado sobre el étimo latino fueron distintas en rumano que en las demás lenguas románicas: rum. *cer* vs. esp. *cielo* < lat. *caelum*. Algunas palabras heredadas del latín han sufrido además un cambio semántico singular: rum. *bătrân* ‘anciano’ < lat. *veteranus*; la etimología ayuda a recordar tanto la forma, como el significado. Por otra parte, las reformas ortográficas sucesivas han disminuido el papel del criterio etimológico en la grafía del rumano: a diferencia de la forma antigua *rîu*, la forma actual *râu* se ha alejado del étimo latino *rivus* y del cognado español *río*.

El español también presenta rasgos específicos o menos frecuentes entre las lenguas europeas. Por ejemplo, en la organización de los momentos del día, el español delimita un intervalo entre la medianoche y el alba (‘madrugada’), mientras que no introduce uno entre la tarde y la noche:

esp. {*madrugada, alba, mañana, mediodía, tarde, noche, medianoche*}.

En cambio, la estructura de este microcampo léxico-semántico en rumano:

rum. {*zori, dimineată, amiază, după-amiază, seară, noapte, miezul nopții*}

es familiar a los alumnos a través de idiomas como inglés, francés o italiano:

ing. {*dawn, morning, noon, afternoon, evening, night, midnight*}

fr. {*aube, matin, midi, après-midi, soir, nuit, minuit*}

it. {*alba, mattino/mattina, mezzogiorno, pomeriggio, sera, notte, mezzanotte*}.

De esta manera, en paralelo se simplifica la asimilación de los saludos:

rum. *Bună dimineața, Bună ziua, Bună seara, Noapte bună,*

más próximos en rumano a estas lenguas:

fr. *Bonjour, Bon après-midi, Bonsoir, Bonne nuit,*
fr. *Good morning, Good afternoon, Good evening, Good night,*
it. *Buongiorno, Buon pomeriggio, Buona sera, Buona notte,*
que al español:
esp. *Buenos días, Buenas tardes, Buenas noches.*

4. Consideraciones finales

De acuerdo con las tendencias actuales en la enseñanza de idiomas, el trabajo ofrece pautas sobre nuestro enfoque en la didáctica del rumano como lengua extranjera mediante el uso intensivo de los conocimientos lingüísticos que los alumnos ya tienen. Se pretende así facilitar el aprendizaje, prevenir los potenciales errores e incrementar la motivación de los estudiantes. Ilustramos – al nivel A1 del Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las lenguas – distintas estrategias para la aplicación de este enfoque, dirigidas a hispanohablantes y ajustadas a sus necesidades específicas. En los ejemplos aportados para la fonética y la fonología, la morfosintaxis, el léxico y la semántica, usamos lenguas como inglés, francés, italiano, catalán y portugués.

La metodología propuesta parece encontrar confirmación en la práctica, en universidades españolas, mediante la aprobación por parte de los estudiantes, de manera espontánea o como *feedback* solicitado por el profesor, y mediante los progresos observados en el aprendizaje. Aun así, queda por demostrar su utilidad por vía experimental.

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STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING AND READING SKILLS IN ROMANIAN AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT. *Strategies for Developing Listening and Reading Skills in Romanian as a Second Language for Primary School.* The present study aims to provide an insight into how, with the help of specific strategies, reading and listening skills in Romanian as a non-native language can be improved for primary school pupils belonging to Romanian minorities. The use of strategies for comprehending written/oral texts and acquiring or improving the skills necessary to handle such a communication context represents a directly proportional relationship, starting from the early levels of education. As pupils' strategic awareness increases, their ability to listen/read in the target language improves. Applying and practising these strategies on a voluntary basis can also help teachers to design strategy-based lessons, thereby encouraging learner autonomy and increasing the likelihood of success. This paper first defines listening/reading strategies, discusses different types of strategies, and clarifies why they are important and what role they play in L2 listening/reading. Secondly, it presents relevant research studies on L2 listening that support the above and identifies areas that require further research. Thirdly, it presents ideas on how listening strategies can be implemented in the classroom.

Keywords: *listening, reading, strategies, acquisition, comprehension, metacognitive, primary school*

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REZUMAT. *Strategii de dezvoltare a competențelor de ascultare și citire în limba română ca a doua limbă pentru elevii din ciclul primar.* Studiul de față își propune să ofere o perspectivă asupra modului în care, cu ajutorul unor strategii specifice, le pot fi îmbunătățite abilitățile de citire și ascultare în româna ca limbă nematernă elevilor de ciclu primar aparținând minorităților din România. Utilizarea strategiilor de receptare a textului scris/oral și dobândirea sau îmbunătățirea abilităților necesare pentru a face față unui astfel de context de comunicare reprezintă un raport direct proporțional, încă de la ciclul primar. Cu cât crește gradul de conștientizare strategică a elevilor, cu atât se perfecționează abilitatea de a asculta/de a citi în limba-țintă. Aplicarea și exersarea acestor strategii în mod voluntar îi poate ajuta și pe profesori să conceapă lecții bazate pe strategie, încurajând, astfel, autonomia elevilor și sporind șansa de reușită. Lucrarea de față definește, mai întâi, strategiile de ascultare/citire, discută diferite tipuri de strategii și clarifică de ce sunt importante și ce rol joacă în ascultarea/citirea în L2. În al doilea rând, prezintă studii relevante de cercetare privind ascultarea L2 care susțin cele de mai sus și identifică domeniile care necesită cercetări suplimentare. În al treilea rând, prezintă idei cu privire la modul în care strategiile de ascultare pot fi implementate în sala de clasă.

Cuvinte-cheie: *ascultare, citire, strategii, achiziție, înțelegere, metacognitiv, ciclul primar*

1. Preamble

The European project entitled “Competence and efficiency in teaching Romanian to pupils belonging to national minorities in Romania” (2014 - 2020) was a welcome opportunity for me (as expert trainer) to get acquainted with the mysteries of teaching Romanian as a non-native language to Romanian minorities. The central objective of this national project was to provide teachers with a practical teaching model. In addition to many other aspects, we realized the major need to provide specific strategies to improve the reception of written or oral texts among primary school children².

In order to justify the importance of using reading and listening strategies, we should start from the fact that there is a strong link between the use of strategies and the improvement of listening/reading skills (Dimassi 2016), as they help learners to become more self-directed in their problem-solving efforts and more autonomous in their choice of learning methods.

² To examine a model of a teaching scenario centred on strategies in the pre-reading stage, please consult the appendix at the end of this study. This model is not comprehensive but rather a segment of a more complex scenario, which was provided as a resource for the educators who participated in the training throughout the entire project.

Listening strategies in a foreign (or non-native) language can be defined as the ways in which listeners manage real-time interactions with a spoken text in order to achieve comprehension (Dat and Bao 2016, 1). That is why explicitly teaching and practising these strategies will visibly improve the learner's journey and, of course, provide a high motivational factor to cope with possible obstacles they may face when challenged with a text.

Furthermore, the teacher (as mediator of the learning act) must consider the strategies with which his or her learners are already familiar. This involves the use of questionnaires for the learner to self-monitor when solving a listening/reading task or, more simply, asking questions focusing on how to comprehend efficiently an oral or a written text.

2. Reading strategies

2.1. The usefulness of reading strategies

Our whole plea can start with the question that we must have all asked ourselves: *Is the guidance provided by the teacher necessary for acquiring these reading strategies, or do they develop unconsciously and independently of it?*

The fact that some pupils fail to make progress in their reading comprehension skills, regardless of the time available and despite continuous practice, has been attributed to the lack of appropriate teaching methods and strategies (Pintrich 2002) designed to gradually yet visibly enhance this ability. Research over the last two or three decades, both in psychology and educational sciences, has emphasized the importance of making learners aware that the purpose of reading is comprehension – not merely completing a reading task as quickly as possible, especially when they have no interest in the text. In other words, having a “reading project” and intrinsic motivation for reading are fundamental conditions for developing the ability to comprehend written messages. Therefore, it is recommended that, from primary school onward, pupils be made aware that learning to read and write is not solely about mastering formal skills but, more importantly, about acquiring effective reading strategies that facilitate comprehension as efficiently as possible (Platon, Sonea, & Tărașu 2015, p. 59).

2.2. Single strategy or multiple strategies?

Another question to ask next is: *Which approach do you think is the most effective to text comprehension: applying a single strategy or applying several strategies simultaneously?*

Reutzel, Smith, and Fawson (2005) conducted a study to find the answer to this question, applying the two approaches to different groups of learners, based on the same *input*. In the end, by analysing the results, it turned out that the level of knowledge acquired with the multiple-strategy approach surpassed that of a single approach, indicating that it might be more useful to combine the reading strategies in order to obtain satisfactory results.

Comprehension is an integrative process which activates, at the same time, prior knowledge, decoding the text at the literal level, understanding the text at the semantic level and the inferences we make mentally (consciously or unconsciously). Modelling text comprehension must consider comprehension during, before and after reading. Thus, according to Walpole and McKenna, to ensure the adequate comprehension of a text, the teacher: must have a clear understanding of the cognitive processes involved in the strategy to be implemented, must adopt the appropriate strategies to ensure comprehension of a given text and must explain the text comprehension strategy to students in the most accessible way possible. (Walpole and McKenna 2007, 106-108).

2.3. Types of reading strategies

Activating prior knowledge

The human brain, faced with a new communication situation, acts and reacts by accessing the scenarios and the mental schemes available to it. Prior knowledge plays an important role by associating what is already stored in the long-term memory with the new knowledge. Previous experience and the knowledge we bring to a new text contribute to our understanding and interpretation of the text. With each new set of stored knowledge, the mental scaffolding is reconfigured and reset (Moreillon 2007, 19-20). Thus, with each reading experience, the system of operations and mental scheme is trained, as well.

What do I know?	What do I want to know?	What have I learnt?

Figure 1. KWL Chart (simple version)

(Re)actualizing and enriching the mental schema necessary for understanding a text is best done in the pre-reading stage, and the handiest way is the KWL Table (*I know, I want to know, I have learnt*), in its simple version (Figure 1) or in its developed version (Figure 2).

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What do I know?	What do I want to know?	What have I learnt?	What questions do I have?

Figure 2. KWL Chart (developed version)

Therefore, the activity of learning and, implicitly, that of comprehension after reading is based on what we already know, and pupils need to be aware of this “secret” of the cognitive processes involved. Moreover, in all three stages of reading, the reader can establish any of three types of connection: *text-individual*, *text-text*, and *text-surrounding world* (Keene and Zimmerman 1997).

Using sensory imaging

Inherently related to the previous strategy, appealing to sensory images stored in our long-term memory facilitates the understanding and interpretation of a text. To optimize this strategy, it is useful to use graphical schemes such as the one below (Figure 3):

Sensory images in the text				
Hearing	Olfactory	Tactile	Taste	Visual

Figure 3. Graphical schemes for sensory imaging

Using questions

The questions cover all three stages of the reading activity (pre-reading, actual reading, post-reading). They make the pupil realize that the meaning of a text is constructed in his or her own mind and that it is not to be found in the text itself. Perceived from the point of view of the targeted content, questions can be approached from two perspectives (Figure 4):

<i>Maria went to visit her friend Alina. When she got there, it was 7:00 PM. They played, they had fun... It was not until 9:00 PM that Maria left for home. Mum was waiting for her, terrified.</i>		
Approach	Define	Example
✓ base-top (bottom-up or spoon-fed)	It starts with simple, strictly text-based questions and eventually moves to questions that require inferences.	Teacher: <i>When did Maria reach Alina?</i> Pupil: <i>At 7:00 PM.</i> Teacher: <i>When did Maria go back to her house?</i> Pupil: <i>At 9:00 PM.</i> Teacher: <i>So, how long did Maria stay at Alina's?</i> Pupil: <i>Two hours.</i>

✓ top-base (top-down)	It starts with inferences and works down to simple, text-based questions that form the basis for the initial questions.	<p>Teacher: <i>How long did Maria stay with Alina?</i> Pupil: <i>Not stated in the text.</i> Professor: <i>That's right, you don't say. But let's think, when did Maria reach Alina?</i> Pupil: <i>At 7:00 PM.</i> Teacher: <i>And when did Maria go back to her house?</i> Pupil: <i>At 9:00 PM.</i> Teacher: <i>So, even if we are not told this detail, can we understand how many hours Maria spent with Alina?</i> Pupil: <i>Yes, two hours.</i></p>
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Figure 4. *Base-top and top-based approaches for using question*
(Walpole and McKenna 2007, 112)

Using predictions and inferences

Closely related to the previous strategy and more than necessary in stimulating interest in a particular text to be read is reading aloud an interesting passage or discussing keywords. A simple way to explain the terms *prediction* and *inference* is to use cards which the pupils must place in such a way that they follow the logical thread of a possible action in the text.

Therefore, we present inferences in each of the three moments of the reading (Figure 5), because, starting from them, we will be able to: place the information in a different context from that mentioned in the text; realize different interpretations; discover links between the text and personal experiences or other texts we have read; use new information to modify our own initial predictions; analyse and compare characters in the text and their relationships; summarize the text; infer the author's theme and message (Willis 2008, 135).

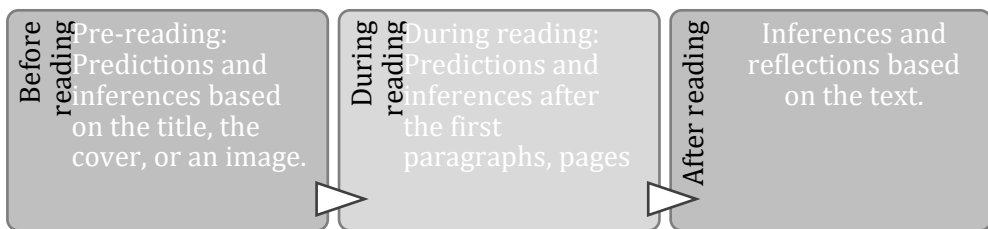


Figure 5. *Inferences and predictions in each of the three moments of the reading*
(Platon, Sonea, Tărașu 2015, 61)

Inferences, depending on the elements that serve as raw material, can be of different types:

- *syntactic (textual)*: re-establishing the semantic content of pronouns, adverbs of space/time/mode, through the relationship among terms at the syntactic level;

- *semantic (textual)*: establishing the meaning of a particular term according to the context in which it appears;

- *complex (extratextual)*: starting from the information explicitly provided by the text, these inferences are enriched (consciously or not) by activating prior knowledge about the world/other texts.

Exercise:

Based on the text below, draw inferences at the syntactic level.

Maria was invited to Alina's birthday party. She wondered if she would like a kite. She went to her room and shook her piggy bank. Not a sound was heard.

Possible answer: At the syntactic level, the structure and use of pronouns (*She wondered if she would like a kite., She went to her room and shook her piggy bank.*) indicate that Maria was considering buying a kite as a gift for Alina but realized she had no money after shaking her piggy bank.

Figure 6. Practical activity for practicing syntactic inference

Extracting main ideas

Determining the main ideas of a text may be the most valuable strategy a 21st-century reader can develop. Especially in this age of technologization, when access to information is extremely easy in all areas, it is necessary for teachers to guide pupils in developing their ability to identify the main ideas of a text.

The main ideas of a text are always dependent on the purpose of reading. Therefore, Judi Moreillon (2007, 97) considers that although the extraction of the main idea of a text is standardized in the classical educational system, there is rarely a single main idea. For example, for a fictional text, the characters, plot and theme of the text will be important. However, if we look at the same text from the perspective of an architect, the main ideas will be made up of elements related to the setting. Educators need to demonstrate to pupils that, depending on the purpose of the reading, the reader's attention shifts significantly.

Moreillon (2007, 98-99) offers a set of questions that can help pupils establish the main ideas: *Why am I reading?* (purpose of reading), *What new things have we learnt?*, *What do I want to remember from this text?*, *What will I do with the information I have learnt from this text?*, *What was the author or illustrator's purpose in writing/illustrating this text?*

Synthesizing information

Whilst we cannot know for sure what the world will look like and what the values of the society will be in the years to come, we do know that our learners' daily lives will involve accessing, evaluating and utilizing information. Unlike summarizing, which is simply a presentation of the facts in the text without making judgements about them, synthesizing goes one step further. It is true that it starts from the main ideas selected by the reader, but through the process of selection, the reader analyses the information acquired and filters it through his or her own interpretation (Figure 8).

While it is possible to synthesize information from a single text, the most common application of this strategy involves juxtaposing and synthesizing information from multiple sources, on which the reader makes value judgements.

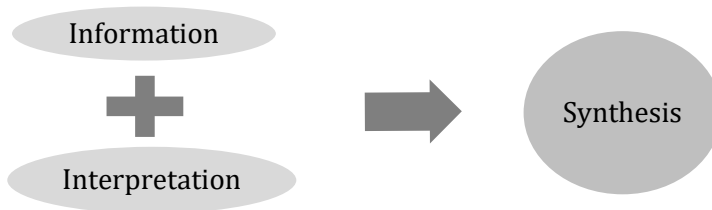


Figure 8. The components that form the basis of synthesis
(Moreillon 2007, 136)

Mapping the story

Many written texts have a typical structure. Once the outline of a particular text has been learnt, comprehension will be improved. Depending on the type of the targeted text, in this reading strategy pupils are taught to focus their attention on:

- temporal/spatial framework, characters, problem-resolution-outcome relationship, reactions and theme, in order to help them understand, memorize and respond to the story (Boulineau *et alii* 2004); the usefulness of this strategy is mainly limited to fictional texts, on which the following “x-ray” can be made (Figure 9):

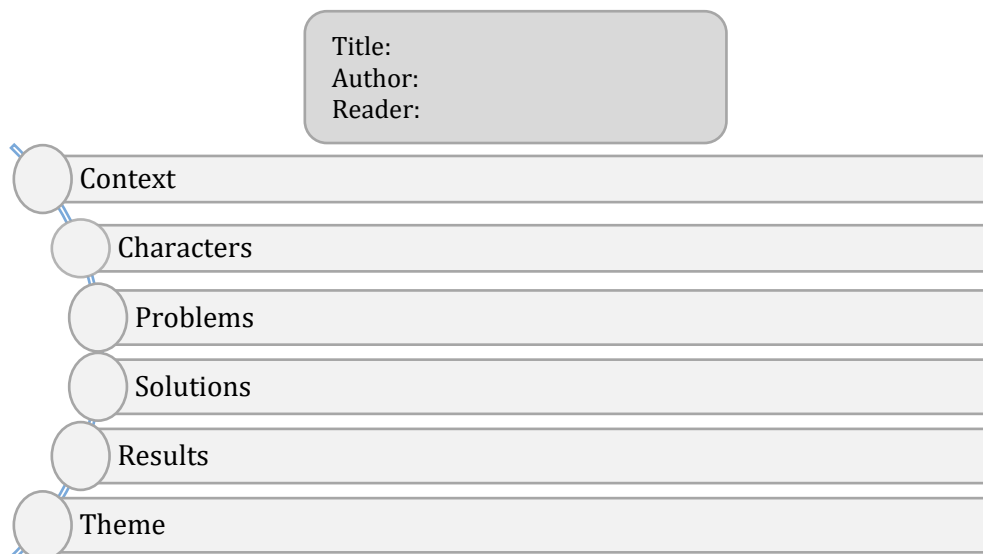


Figure 9. Map of a story (Walpole and McKenna 2007, 117)

- recognition of comparative-contrastive structures, descriptions, chronological sequences, explanations, definitions, examples and problem-solution relationships; this type of strategy is very useful for pupils with high decoding and fluency skills but who have problems with comprehension of expository texts; suggested graphic organizers include Venn diagram, a simple two-column table, a table of statements or key words that signal comparisons: *both, compared to, as compared with, same as, unlike*, etc. This type of strategy focuses not so much on the initial learning of each individual concept, but rather on how we understand a text that compares two concepts.

3. Specific strategies for oral reception

3.1. Different approaches to listening

Listening, i.e. receiving an oral message in another language, can often be a difficult task, but we can make it easier by applying several strategies that optimize the comprehension process and the L2-language competence development. While the traditional model of listening has viewed the listening activity strictly from the perspective of understanding the spoken text (listening as comprehension), relatively recent views (Richards 2008, 3) give it a primary

status as a key dynamic factor in the further development of L2-language competence (listening as acquisition), yet not overlooking the importance of the first component.

By comparing the two approaches, both the differences in vision and in its actual application can easily be seen in the diagram below (Figure 10). In the transfer from comprehension to acquisition, the text is given the status not only as a “carrier of meaning”, but more importantly as a model of communication that the L2 speakers can make their own.

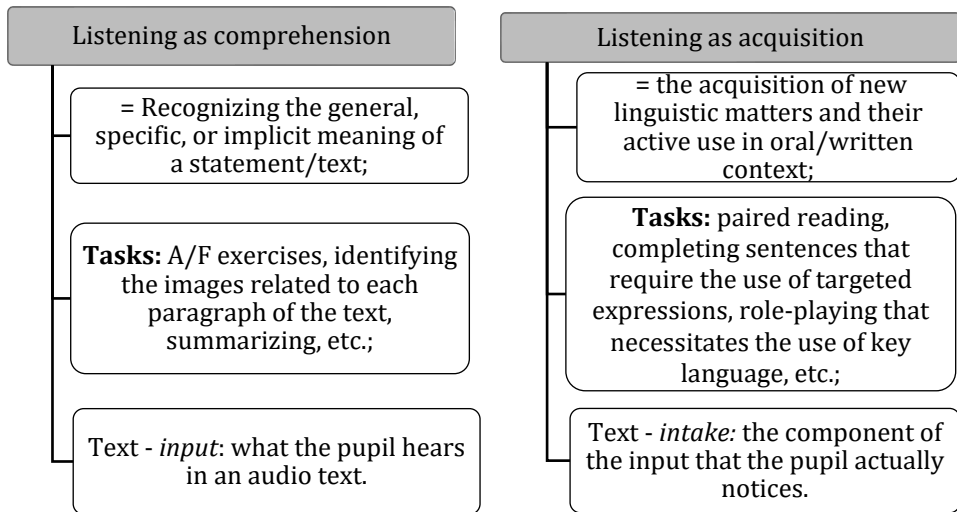


Figure 10. Differences between listening as comprehension and listening as acquisition (Richards 2008, 16-17; Van Patten 1993, 436)

3.2. *Types of listening strategies*

Over the years, a few different listening strategies have been used, each with its own vision. Below there is a list (which is not intended to be exhaustive) of the main strategies that have proved their worth over time.

Activating prior knowledge

The main purpose of pre-listening exercises is to activate prior knowledge and awaken pupils' interests and use them, as a foothold, in acquiring new knowledge, which, in fact, describes the *top-down* approach (see Sonea, Sacaliş 2020). The role of the teacher in this strategy is to help/guide pupils in applying this knowledge and their interests in order to become effective listeners.

This type of strategy can only be implemented orally (through general questions such as: *What means of transport do you use?*, *Do you live a healthy life or not? Why?*, etc.), through images to generate a *brainstorming* session, through a short quotation anticipating the topic and generating a debate among the learners, etc.

Naturally, the effectiveness of this strategy does not negate the obvious usefulness of some *basic-top* work tasks, which focus on unravelling, in advance, the meaning of new words or lexical/syntactic structures that pupils might need in understanding the *text* to be rendered.

Predictions

Most of the time, prediction formulation is applied in the pre-listening stage, but it also proves to be effective during listening. Thus, depending on the stage at which this strategy is adopted and the targeted content, predictions can be of two types:

- *global*: anticipating the gist of a text or general content before hearing it, by predicting the title, images accompanying the text, etc.: "I can understand this statement because I already know a bit about *camels* and, even if the teacher won't say anything more than the title, I can already guess what he/she will talk about!";

- *local*: anticipating details throughout the text: "Because in the first part of the text we heard the word *wing*, they will probably go on to talk about its role for a bird. This will also help me to better understand what it's about!".

For example, a customer-waiter dialogue might be preceded by a set of images, accompanied by general questions such as: *Where are the people and what are they doing?*, *How do they feel?*, *What are they discussing?*, etc. Once those possible answers are outlined, the general idea of the text can be very easily perceived. At the same time, these questions should be selected in such a way as to focus attention on what we are interested in during the lesson.

Inferences

The problem for any beginner of a foreign language is that speakers do not always say exactly what they mean. In other words, important aspects of meaning are sometimes implied rather than stated. Pupils need to learn to listen "between the lines" in order to realize what is really being said behind the text (Figure 11).

Example:

We use the following dialogue:

Maria: *We're going out after school. Do you want to come?*

Alin: *Maybe. Where are you going?*

Maria: *To Pizza King.*

Alin: *Pizza? I love pizza.*

Based on this dialogue, we can ask: *"Is Alin planning to go with Maria and her friends for a pizza?"*. Once the answer is in the affirmative, make it clear that their intuition was based solely on a logical relationship, not actually expressed in writing: *"If Alin loves pizza, he will most likely go too."*

Figure 11. How we make pupils aware of the importance of setting the purpose of reading (Brown 2006, 6)

To this strategy is added, inherently, paraverbal language (volume and intonation of voice, rhythm of speech, etc.) and non-verbal language (body language – in the case of texts read by the teacher –, or those with visual support), which also facilitate comprehension and influence the “guessing” of meaning.

Setting the purpose of the reading

In the past, for the after-listening stage, audio materials frequently relied on a series of (often local) comprehension questions – *What time does the train leave? How much does the ticket cost? How many members are in the family?*, etc. –, which simply listed a series of sterile answers, whereas the core of the text was reduced to understanding certain details, more or less relevant in real life.

This approach to listening has proved to be ineffective, as learners, not knowing in advance the purpose for which they are listening and the points on which they need to focus their attention, cannot successfully complete the tasks. In other words, if they know why they are listening, learners will find it easier to concentrate on the text. Much the same is true in real life, where the purpose, the context and the aim of receiving certain content information guide the listener, unconsciously (most of the time), towards the most faithful message comprehension. Once these points have been made, we can move on to another strategy, which follows from the previous one.

Contextualization

The most succinct definition of this strategy is precisely the frequent retort of our learners: *"I don't know exactly what X means, but I have guessed the meaning of the word!"*. Whether they are aware of it or not, the fact that already known terms build the understanding of other terms is a first strategy that learners can apply regardless of the type of text (oral or written).

On this strategy, Larry Vandergrift and Christine Goh (2012, 282) mention the following types of contextualization:

- *linguistic*: when we can relate a word that we have heard to another situation in which the same word has been used: "I don't know the exact meaning, but I have seen the same word on some doors: *No Entry*.";

- *schematic*: when we relate a textual cue to a fact that we have in the long-term memory: "I don't understand exactly what it means *he got scared*, but in general, if a child hears a strange sound at night, he gets scared. Maybe that's the meaning!".

Co-operation

Working in teams/pairs can often make it easier to understand an audio text. In addition, with this strategy, both comprehension and use of the targeted vocabulary is ensured, as well as more effective learning/memorizing through negotiation of meaning.

The role of the learner/teacher, when a learner asks for clarification on a text can, not infrequently, be taken over by another learner. Pooling knowledge, clarifying the task they have to fulfil, or checking a certain contextual meaning that a term may acquire are just some of the activities where pair-/team- work proves to be extremely useful.

Example:

Listen to a dialogue in the shop and write on the shopping list at least 5 items that the customer needs. At the end, *compare your list with your colleague's list*. How many different items do you and your colleague have in total?

Figure 12. Example of a collaborative task

In analysing different transcripts of such dialogues between pupils to carry out a common task in class, J. Cross observed that their metacognitive knowledge increased significantly as a result of the interaction, which resulted in a better individual engagement (Cross 2010, 285).

Reorganization

Vandergrift & Goh (2012, 292-283) provide a detailed perspective on content reorganization as a strategy by which the learner is taught to reorganize the information heard in order to understand and store it in the long-/short-term memory, but also to retrieve it at any time, if the communicative situation

requires it: *summarizing* (making a written or just mental summary of what is presented in the text), *repetition* (simply repeating the word itself or, even more effectively, using it in a listening exercise), *clustering* (selecting groups of words/statements that have common features), *note-taking* (writing down key words/words to memorize a particular sequence of ideas).

Metacognitive strategies

This set of strategies is directly related to the following question: “Does the learner focus mainly on the content of a listened text, or does he or she also think about how to listen to it?”.

Metacognitive strategies (Vandergrift and Goh 2012, 278-279) are those mental processes (at first unconscious, then gradually becoming conscious) through which a learner is taught to approach and manage listening activities, thus actively involving him/her in their own learning process: *planning* (determining the goals of an exercise and how they can be achieved), *focusing attention and, by implication, hearing* on specific aspects that the task is aimed at: “I pay special attention to temporal elements!”, *self-monitoring* (checking one’s own learning progress as one goes along: “I didn’t hear very clearly... *Bird’s wi... (bird’s wing)*, so I’ll have to pay more attention when I listen to the text again!”), *self-assessment* (identifying problems, checking the effectiveness of the chosen strategy and substituting it if it did not serve the task effectively: “Did I guess the meaning of the word correctly? I need to pay more attention to idea X”), etc.

Analysing the effectiveness of the awareness and application of strategies among a group of pupils (11–12-year-olds), Goh and Yusnita (2006) found, at the end of the metacognitive instruction period, that pupils gained a deeper understanding of listening and its demands, increased confidence in completing the listening task, and received higher scores on listening tests, especially among the poorest pupils. The immediate conclusion was that metacognitive instruction has a direct impact on the listening performance.

4. Conclusions

Based on recent research by D. Bao and C. Guan (2019), in order to streamline reading/listening to a text, the teacher should consider the following recommendations: *evaluating learners’ existing strategies* (before introducing new strategies, teachers should identify which strategies learners already use and how they apply them; this analysis can be undertaken through questionnaires, interviews or observations during listening activities), *continuous and explicit*

practice of the strategies (to be effective, listening strategies need to be presented, explained and practised over a long period of time, not just occasionally), *use of an integrated approach* (strategies should be taught together, so that learners can combine different techniques to improve comprehension/acquisition), *diversification of audio materials* (exposure to different accents, speaking speeds and text types – conversations, interviews, news, podcasts – help learners to develop their malleability in the process of listening to a text).

The strategies are clearly a way to ease the “burden” of listening, and they should be consciously taught in the classroom. Although their number is continuously increasing, an effective approach would be to select a limited number of strategies and teach them repeatedly. Therefore, teachers can help students develop the skill of working with strategies by making them aware of these methods each time they encounter an audio or written text.

Appendix – A Learning Sequence Based on Reading Strategies³

Before introducing the lesson topic, by utilizing predictions based on a series of images, and with the support of a brainstorming session, students can effortlessly deduce the subject matter they are about to explore.

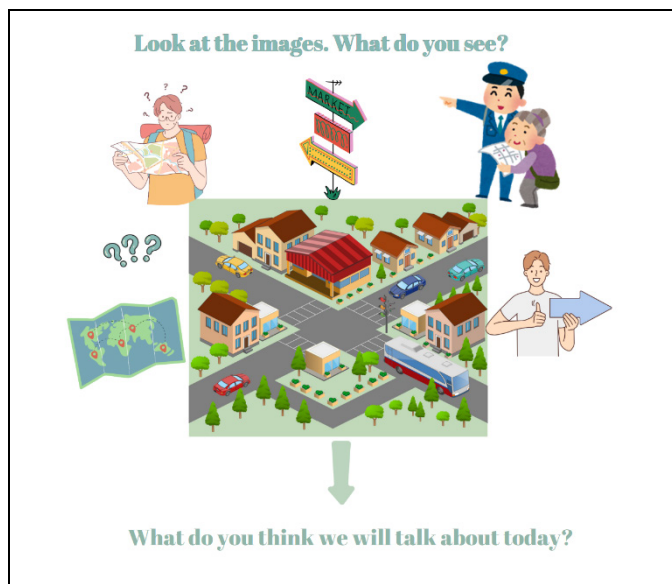


Figure 13. Pre-reading stage – using prediction and brainstorming

³ The images and graphics featured in the accompanying figures have been designed using the Canva platform.

Once the necessary vocabulary for comprehending the forthcoming text has been practiced in advance, a series of guiding questions are provided. Furthermore, with the help of an additional set of images, students' attention is carefully directed toward the key aspects we intend to focus on in the process of understanding the target text.

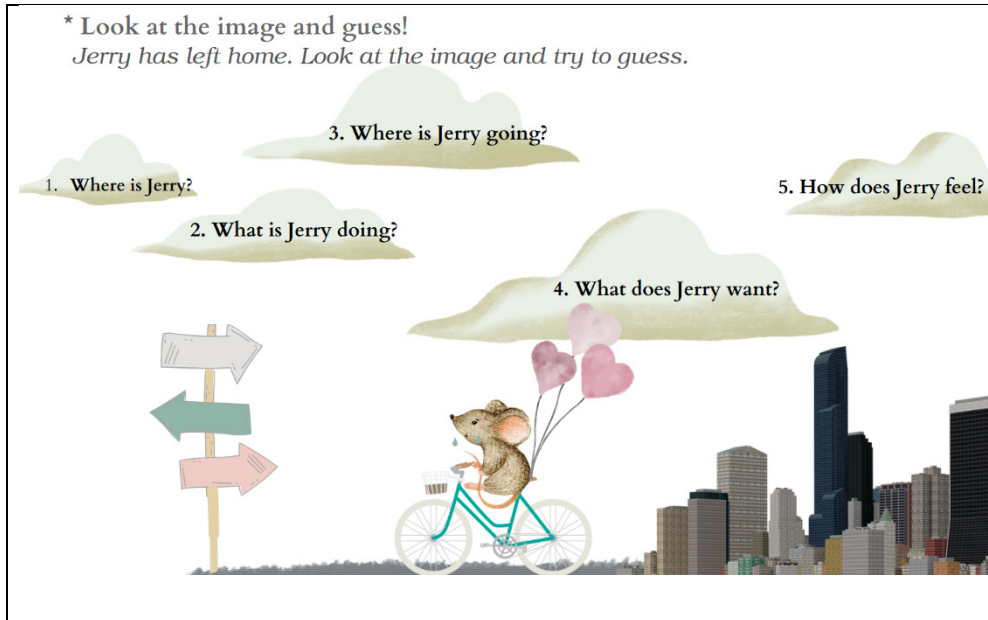


Figure 14. Pre-reading stage – applying prediction and brainstorming within the context of the target text.

Once the context in which the target text will be situated is established, the actual reading phase begins. During this stage, students are provided with orientation instructions to navigate the city, using a map as a tool. They are tasked with organizing these instructions in the correct order to guide Tom in reaching Merry. This process not only helps to reinforce the understanding of spatial directions but also encourages students to apply their reading comprehension skills in a practical, real-world scenario.

The use of strategies enhances comprehension, stimulates active engagement, and helps students develop critical thinking skills. By applying these strategies, students can better retain information, make connections, and improve their ability to process and understand complex texts or audio materials in real-life situations. Ultimately, these strategies contribute to more effective communication and long-term learning.

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING AND READING SKILLS IN ROMANIAN
AS A SECOND LANGUAGE FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

3. Work in pairs! Look at the map and arrange the sentences.

Help Jerry find Marry. He needs to get from point A to point B. Arrange the expressions from the table in order (write the appropriate number in the boxes, following the model).



Cross the street at the zebra crossing and you will reach the white houses.

When you get to the fire station, you must head to the parking area.

Now turn right and go to the corner of the street, where the big intersection is.

Cross the street again and pass by the hospital. Stay on the sidewalk!

You have reached the last zebra crossing.

Turn left, towards the supermarket.

1 You are in the supermarket's parking area.

You have reached your destination.

Figure 15. Reading stage

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PLURILINGUALISM AND ASSESSMENT. ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT. *Plurilingualism and Assessment. Romanian as a Foreign and Heritage Language.* The study presents the revision process of two rating grids for the examinations provided through Babeş-Bolyai University – Romanian Cultural Institute Consortium for Testing Romanian as a Foreign Language. It focuses on how plurilingual competence was addressed as part of the revision. The first case presents revisions to the grid for written production, level A1. The revision process was corpus-based and started from the analysis of 352 texts produced in live exams. Reordering the grid criteria prioritised the criterion of efficacy (task fulfilment). In this study we focus on the criterion of accuracy, which operationalised the use of foreign (i.e., from an additional language) words by plurilingual test takers in their written production. This led to the addition of a new descriptor to the assessment instrument. The second case presents the revision process of the rating grid for spoken production, level B1, with a focus on the criterion of accuracy. The grid descriptor operationalising phonological control changed in order to reflect the influence of other languages on pronunciation, rhythm, accent, stress, and intonation. Intelligibility replaced the idealised native speaker as a reference point, in accordance with the new perspective reflected in the phonological control grid of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion*

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Volume (CEFR CV). The study presents how the adaptation of this grid was influenced by the significant number of test takers with Romanian as heritage language. These processes of rating-grid revision are considered a first step into what needs to be a robust effort to adapt language assessment to the plurilingual reality of speakers.

Keywords: *plurilingualism, plurilingual competence, heritage language, assessment, rating grid*

REZUMAT. *Plurilingvism și evaluare. Româna ca limbă străină și ca limbă moștenită.* Studiul prezintă procesul de revizuire a două grile de evaluare pentru examenele organizate de către Consorțiul Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai – Institutul Cultural Român pentru Testarea Românei ca Limbă Străină și se axează asupra modului în care competența plurilingvă a fost inclusă în procesul de revizuire. Primul caz prezintă revizuirea grilei pentru producții scrise, nivelul A1. Procesul de revizuire s-a bazat pe analiza unui corpus de 352 de texte produse ca parte a unor sesiuni de examinare. Una dintre consecințe a fost reordonarea criteriilor incluse în grilă, cu prioritizarea criteriului eficienței (îndeplinirea sarcinii). În acest studiu ne concentrăm asupra criteriului acurateței. Acesta include, în forma sa actuală, un nou descriptor care operaționalizează utilizarea de cuvinte din alte limbi în producțiile scrise ale candidaților. Al doilea caz prezintă procesul de revizuire a grilei de evaluare pentru producțiile orale, nivelul B1, cu accent asupra criteriului acurateței. Descriptorul care operaționalizează controlul fonologic în cadrul grilei a fost schimbat pentru a reflecta influența altor limbi asupra producției candidatului în ceea ce privește pronunția, ritmul, accentul și intonația. Inteligibilitatea a înlocuit modelul unui vorbitor nativ idealizat ca punct de referință, în acord cu noua perspectivă reflectată în grila pentru controlul fonologic din *Cadrul European Comun de Referință pentru Limbi: Învățare, Predare, Evaluare. Volumul Companion*. Studiul prezintă modul în care adaptarea acestei grile a fost influențată de numărul semnificativ de candidați care au româna ca limbă moștenită. Aceste procese de revizuire a grilelor de evaluare sunt considerate un prim pas pentru ceea ce ar trebui să fie un efort amplu de abordare a realității plurilingve a vorbitorilor în procesul de evaluare lingvistică.

Cuvinte-cheie: *plurilingvism, competență plurilingvă, limbă moștenită, evaluare, grilă de evaluare*

1. The plurilingual speaker in a multilingual context

1.1. The social and political context

The phenomenon of intense migration that we see nowadays around the globe (<https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024>) combined with historical minority communities and the geopolitical legacy of

colonisation paints a very diverse multilingual portrait of humanity today². Moreover, current global trends indicate that the mobility of populations is rising³. While the reasons for leaving one's homeland are highly varied, the challenges that migrants and refugees face in the new countries are broadly similar, albeit varying in degree. Language is one of the most important forces impacting the migrants' and refugees' future from an educational, professional and personal point of view (International Organisation for Migration 2024, 91, 180, 184; Little 2016, 1; Rocca, Hamnes Carlsen, Deygers 2018, 7). While the ever-increasing mobility of people across the world generates unprecedented linguistic demands, the urgent solutions differ substantially in effectiveness and accessibility.

Educational organisations and institutions face increasing diversity in the linguistic education of children and adults, with multilingual classes and groups becoming more common. Adults need, as well, to prepare for integrating professionally into new language communities. The result is increasing numbers of pluricultural and plurilingual learners.

Language learners/users will naturally have one, if not more, languages (which may include 'dialects') that they may call 'home languages', because they used them during their formative years. Throughout their life they will find themselves using language, in the broadest sense, as well as different languages, in varied contexts with many other users at different levels of competence, and they will acquire new language to bridge communicative gaps that exist between themselves and others. These interactions mean the language user becomes a plurilingual, pluricontextual language learner, and sites the acquisition of language very much within a socio-cognitive understanding (ALTE 2020, 9).

Romanian has progressively become part of the multilingual reality in Europe, especially in the 35 years since the political changes in our country at the end of 1989. As with other communities in Diaspora, the effort of Romanian migrants is generally directed not only to learning the language of the host country but also to preserving their Romanian, whether it is their L1 or heritage language.

² We will adopt in this study the distinction between *multilingualism* and *plurilingualism* as it is presented in *CEFR* and *CEFR CV*: "The CEFR distinguishes between multilingualism (the coexistence of different languages at the social or individual level) and plurilingualism (the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner)" (Council of Europe 2020, 30).

³ See the *Global Trends Report* issued by UNHCR in 2022 (<https://www.unhcr.org/global-trends-report-2022>) and the *Global Risks Report 2024* (https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2024.pdf) issued by the World Economic Forum, among other documents.

1.2. Plurilingual competence

Languages are normally described as *products*⁴, in isolation from each other, objectified in grammar books and in dictionaries. In addition, dialects are presented discretely in the effort to define and differentiate variants of the same language. This analytical approach can provide useful tools for language learning and assessment. When used as part of a teaching strategy, one needs to consider the multilingual and plurilingual reality of the language learner and speaker. Eugenio Coseriu clearly distinguishes between the discrete description of dialects and the linguistic competence of a language speaker whose knowledge of various dialects is *integrated* rather than separated (*Figure 1*).

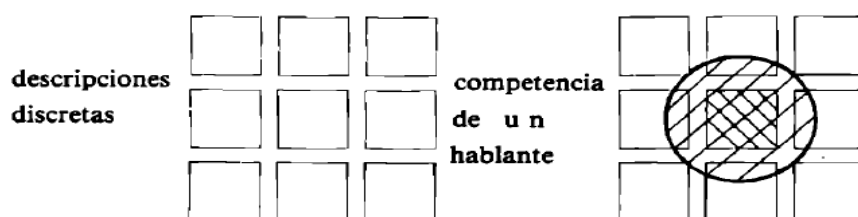


Figure 1. The speaker's integrated knowledge of dialects⁵
(Coseriu 1988/1992, 176)

In the same manner, different languages are often co-present and integrated in the linguistic competence of a speaker⁶. Moreover, according to David Crystal, three quarters of the global population live in a multilingual

⁴ According to the tripartite distinction Eugenio Coseriu makes at the level of language between *energeia* (activity), *dínamis* (competence) and *érgon* (product) (Coseriu 1988/1992, 88).

⁵ On the left of the page (first drawing): discrete descriptions; on the right of the page (second drawing): the competence of a speaker (my translation).

⁶ „En el hablante no hay un estar uno junto a otro, sino más bien un estar uno encima de otro. /.../ La descripción separada de los sistemas de la lengua no puede, además, delimitar lo que los hablantes de otros dialectos saben del dialect descrito. Si el dialect que ocupa el centro en nuestro esquema (here *Figure 1*) es el dialect principal del hablante, puede suponerse en el caso normal que también sabe algunas cosas de los otros dialectos, tal como se indica mediante el sombreado.” [In the speaker there is not a state next to each other, but rather a state on top of each other. /.../ Moreover, the separate description of the language systems cannot delimitate what the speakers of other dialects know about the dialect which is described. If the dialect which occupies the centre in our figure (here *Figure 1*) is the main dialect of the speaker, it can be assumed, in a normal case that he/she also knows some things about the other dialects, as indicated in the shaded area. – my translation] (Coseriu 1988/1992, 176).

world (Crystal in Seed 2020, 5) in which speakers employ their competence in multiple languages and dialects in myriad ways. Consequently, in terms of language use, what we usually encounter is the *plurilingual speaker in a multilingual context*. This reality needs to reflect more in the language learning process, in its teaching and assessment instruments.

CEFR CV defines plurilingual competence (based on CEFR 2001, Section 1.3) as involving the ability to call flexibly upon an interrelated, uneven, plurilingual repertoire to:

switch from one language or dialect (or variety) to another; express oneself in one language (or dialect, or variety) and understand a person speaking another; call upon the knowledge of a number of languages (or dialects, or varieties) to make sense of a text; recognise words from a common international store in a new guise; mediate between individuals with no common language or dialect, or variety), even if possessing only a slight knowledge oneself; bring the whole of one's linguistic equipment into play, experimenting with alternative forms of expression; exploits paralinguistics (mime, gesture, facial expression, etc.). (Council of Europe 2020, 30)⁷.

2. Plurilingualism and language learning

The reality of a plurilingual speaker in a multilingual context has been addressed as part of the process of language learning and assessment. According to Gorter and Cenoz (2017, 231) a shift can be observed “away from an emphasis on separating languages to approaches that more closely suit daily practices of multilinguals. This concerns a shift from language isolation policies in language teaching and assessment towards more holistic approaches that consider language-as-resource and promote the use of the whole linguistic repertoire.” Another reality of language learning to which language teachers and assessors need to respond is that the people learning the language are found in an abundance of contexts, not just inside but increasingly outside the classroom. “We know that much language learning takes place informally – listening to music, playing games and watching films, using the internet and communicating electronically, and increasingly in our multilingual cities in the diverse street. How will educators respond to this reality, treating it not as a diversion but as a major source of knowledge and incorporating what learners bring with them from their outside world...?” (King 2018, 33).

⁷ For other terms used as alternatives to plurilingualism, with possible slight differentiations in meaning (e.g. *individual multilingualism*, *individual bilingualism*, *code-switching*, *translanguaging*) see Seed 2020, 7.

A pivot in education policy towards multilingualism and plurilingualism can be noticed in the USA and in Europe. An early approach is found in Ruiz (1984), who, in relation to the educational context of language learning in the USA, distinguishes between the orientations of *language-as-problem*, *language-as-right* and *language-as-resource*. Through a document entitled *Raise the Bar: Pathways to Multilingualism*, the U.S. Department of Education promotes equitable access to English learning, improved access to quality bilingual education, and the development of a diverse, bilingual and multilingual workforce of educators (<https://www.ed.gov/about/ed-initiatives/raise-bar/raise-the-bar-pathways-to-multilingualism>). At the same time, students are directly encouraged to learn new languages and to continue using their mother tongue/ L1/ heritage language through programmes like the *Seal of Biliteracy*. The Seal of Biliteracy is “an award given by a school, district or state in recognition of students who have studied and attained proficiency in two or more languages by high school graduation” (<https://sealofbiliteracy.org/>), a programme which “encourages students to pursue biliteracy, honors the skills our students attain, and can be evidence of skills that are attractive to future employers and college admission offices” (<https://sealofbiliteracy.org/>).

At the same time, concrete language-learning programmes promote plurilingualism in a wealth of multilingual contexts. For example, there are projects through which teachers are helped “to move informedly towards plurilingual education” (Esteve, Fernández, Martín-Peris & Atienza 2015, 1). Such a project was developed in collaboration with schools in Barcelona to help Spanish teachers teaching additional languages “move in a principled way towards plurilingual education” (Esteve, Fernández, Martín-Peris & Atienza 2015, 2). Another project, called TEMPLATE and developed across ten European countries, investigated “the integration of technology and plurilingual-inspired pedagogies in terms of awareness, use and training needs” (Boggio-López and Ruiz-Madrid 2024, 1). An increasing number of studies present concrete teaching practices leveraging plurilingualism (Pearce 2024; Grommes P. and Adelheid Hu (eds.) 2014; Piccardo E., Germain-Rutherford A. and Geoff Lawrence (eds.) 2022; Little D., Leung C. and Piet Van Avermaet (eds.) (2014) and a multitude of possible curriculum scenarios are presented in Coste, Moore and Zarate (2009).

It is interesting to see how the direct teaching method that keeps L1 and L2 apart in teaching and assessment, long considered unquestionable in so many contexts in modern education, is now seen as the “traditional view.” (Gorter and Cenoz 2017, 235) It “has affected many generations of students and teachers,” being “taken for granted as the foundation-stones of language teaching.” (Cook 2001, 404) We prefer to interpret this evolution in Adamson’s terms: It is not just another “fashion” in language-teaching methodology, nor a

new or renewed method “inherently superior to another,” but rather a search for which methods are “more appropriate than others in a particular context” (Adamson 2004, 605).

3. Plurilingual assessment. Two case studies

Is there a multilingual/plurilingual turn in assessment, too? While we see numerous studies investigating multilingualism and plurilingualism in SLA, language policy, teaching practices, and pedagogy, a significant shift in the realm of assessment is not yet evident. Seed (2020, 8) notices that “very little attention has been paid to plurilingualism in the field of assessment.” Cenoz (2023, xi) states that “plurilingual/multilingual assessment has not received enough attention.” Melo-Pfeifer and Ollivier (2023, 2) show that “the assessment of plurilingual learners has drawn little attention in education policies.”

The type of assessment based on CEFR scales is generally monolingually inclined, according to Beacco et al.: “learners are supposed to demonstrate, in one language at a time, their competence according to a given level within the CEFR scales. These standards are predominant, when in reality the interaction among plurilingual speakers is more complex” (Beacco et al. 2016, 69). In contrast with plurilingual teaching, the significantly less-advanced implementation of plurilingual assessment can be explained by the many obstacles such assessment might face in the real world of interlinguistic and intercultural education. In an assessment paper, should the input, rubrics, or both be offered in bilingual or plurilingual form? How can we implement plurilingual assessment in a multilingual classroom or exam in which the test-takers have diverse L1s unfamiliar to the assessors? In a routine assessment of one language, to what extent will the assessor accept the integration of elements from one or more other languages in the test takers’ responses? How should assessment instruments (e.g. scales, grids, checklists) be built in order to accommodate plurilingual responses? How should results of plurilingual assessment be reported to stakeholders? Easy and straightforward answers are not to be expected to such complex questions. However, the fact that they are expressed represents a step forward into addressing the new complex reality of language assessment in an increasingly plurilingual world.

In our language-testing organization (Babeş-Bolyai University-Romanian Cultural Institute Consortium for Testing Romanian as a Foreign Language) we are acutely aware that we need to accommodate plurilingual speakers and examinees. We confront the difficulty of finding solutions for all the questions above, that are but a small portion of burgeoning needs.

We will present two cases in which we tried to adapt our assessment process to the plurilingual reality of our candidates. Both employ changes to the assessment grid grounded in corpus-based analysis. The first is for A1 written responses. The second is for B1 spoken responses.

In the discussion to follow, ‘foreign words’ refers to words from one or more languages distinct from the language being tested, in this case, Romanian.

3.1. The rating grid for written responses. Level A1

3.1.1. The revision process

The first case study involves revision of the assessment instrument for written responses at level A1. It took place between 2016 and 2017, when the extant grid had been employed for fifteen consecutive assessment sessions. The main group of test-takers were students in the preparatory Romanian-language year⁸ at Babeş-Bolyai University. The raters were faculty teaching in that programme⁹. Feedback on the efficacy of the grid was collected from thirteen teachers. They found the instrument useful but in need of improvement. Specifically, some descriptors like *syntactic structures*, *lexical means* were found to be potentially confusing, and adverbs *sometimes*, *frequently* or *often* in descriptors like “They *sometimes* make orthography and punctuation mistakes.” were pointed out as insufficiently clear. The teachers also found that it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between bands because some descriptors were largely similar, even identical, from one band to the next. Teachers also encountered overlapping criteria, for example sentence length and complexity being categorized under ‘accuracy’ instead of ‘complexity.’

The initial design of the assessment grid had been based on the literature in the field and the experience of experts. In contrast, the revision was grounded in the analysis of a corpus of written responses to live exams. The corpus included 352 responses (16,190 words) from 126 examinees who had given express permission to use their anonymized product for research. The examinations had been administered in the Department of Romanian Language,

⁸ The preparatory year is a programme in which the students learn Romanian for the whole academic year and then they normally continue their studies in Romania. Some of them will study in Romanian, others might follow programmes in French or in English. All the examinations in the programme need to be passed for the student to receive the graduation certificate.

⁹ In order to reduce subjectivity and possible bias in rating, the procedure we applied was that of having students in one group assessed by teachers who taught a different group. This procedure was only applied for the end-of-course formal evaluation. During the semester, the teachers did formative assessment and gave adequate feedback to their own students, contributing to the continuous improvement of the teaching process and to the students’ steady progress.

Culture and Civilization, to students in the university's preparatory year of Romanian language learning. The tasks were of two types: written interaction (e-mail) and written production (description). For a balanced representation of the test-taking population, responses were selected¹⁰ according to criteria related to cut-off points, and to test takers' L1 and gender¹¹.

The criteria included in the original grid were maintained, as was the number of points allocated to each criterion in the overall component score. A significant change was made to the order in which the criteria were placed in the grid. The original order was:

COMPLEXITY	ACCURACY	TEXT ORGANIZATION	EFFICACY* (how well they can fulfil the task)
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The criteria were reordered as:

EFFICACY	COMPLEXITY	TEXT ORGANIZATION	ACCURACY
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Even if all the criteria continued to be weighted equally, the assessors were instructed that efficacy became the primary criterion according to which a written response would be judged. This decision was taken in order to avoid assessors' forming an initial opinion about the quality of the written production based on how 'red' the exam paper was, e.g., how many grammatical mistakes the test taker had made. Assessors were asked to shift their judgment towards efficacy. To that end, during the workshops for testing the new grid and for familiarisation with the instrument, the teachers were instructed to start by asking *whether* the task was fulfilled. This was to be determined according to the subpoints in the rubrics. Subsequently, by use of the other criteria, they were to decide *how well* the task was fulfilled.

While this revision process produced changes in the descriptors across the whole grid, in this study we will focus on *accuracy*, the criterion under which the assessment of the plurilingual aspect of the written responses was operationalised. In the original grid, the following key concepts were operationalised: grammar, vocabulary, orthography, and punctuation. The analysis of the test takers' responses led to orthography being subsumed to

¹⁰ According to McEnery and Hardy (2012, 2) "the corpus data we select to explore a research question must be well matched to the research question."

¹¹ More information on the production from the point of view of test takers' L1 and gender and on the application of the criterion related to cut off can be found in Vilcu, Arieșan & Vasîu, 2017.

grammar as part of a common descriptor¹². Moreover, grammar and vocabulary errors are now considered together due to the fact that many vocabulary mistakes were in words which also presented grammatical mistakes. Following analysis, a new descriptor proved necessary for operationalising the component of language transfer¹³.

3.1.2. Findings on language transfer

Table 1 includes examples from the written responses analysed in the process of grid revision that illustrate how foreign words, i.e., words from languages other than Romanian, were integrated in responses in the target language. The foreign words are italicized. Sentences were transcribed exactly as written by examinees. The middle column lists the L1 of the examinee and the right column translates the response into English. All names appearing in the sentences were replaced with the letter X.

Table 1. Samples from written responses containing words from other languages

Romanian	L1 of the author of the text	Translation in English
Lui X îi place juca <i>video game</i> .	Arabic	X likes to play video games.
Facultate este foarte bine și <i>pieceful</i> .	Hindi	The faculty is very good and peaceful.
Eu merg la restaurnt cu X și mănănc <i>soup</i> de pui.	Arabic	I go to the restaurant with X and I eat chicken soup.
El este <i>employe</i> de banca.	Arabic	He is a bank employee.
În cameră, pe masă este un fotbal și <i>basket</i> .	Chinese	In the room, on the table there is a football and a basket.
Îmi place camera de dormi pentru ca este foarte <i>comfortable</i> .	Arabic	I like the bedroom because it is very comfortable.
<i>Nel timpul</i> liber el joacă fotbal cu prieteni.	Albanian	In his free time, he plays football with his friends.
Școala meu <i>starteaza</i> în luni, dupa doua zile.	Armenian	My school starts on Monday, in two days.

¹² The number of mistakes related to word order, orthography and omitted words was very small. They were added to those concerning morphology and were all operationalized under the descriptor related to grammar (Vîlcu, Arieșan & Vasîu 2017, 115).

¹³ The notion of *language transfer* will cover in this study the application of linguistic features from one language to another (e.g. at the level of morphological features in L2 applied to words from L1 or another language) and also the use of lexical units from L1 in the texts written in L2. We chose to use this term rather than *code switching* because the knowledge of the languages which were combined was deeply disbalanced at the time in the language learning process when the texts we analysed were produced. The cases we found in the written production were of isolated words used to fill the gap when the corresponding words in the target language were not known rather than flexibly alternating between the languages.

Even if at level A1 transfer of isolated words is to be expected, we consider that the use of these words in written (rather than spoken) production is relevant and justifies the introduction of a new descriptor to operationalise it. First of all, we will consider the language from which the transfer was made. Most of the students contributing responses to this corpus have L1 languages that are very different from Romanian and other Romance languages, languages that students could rightfully predict that teachers and assessors would not know. Arabic is the L1 most represented in test takers. Other languages, like Greek, Turkmen, Hindi, Chinese, Japanese, etc., are well-represented. Many also spoke a widely-used language (mainly English and French). When they included foreign words in their written texts, those words were, in most cases, not from their L1, but from one of the more widely-used languages they spoke. In almost all cases this was English. This choice probably had two motivations. Students knew: 1) The chance was very slim that the assessor understood a word in their L1; 2) The chance was considerable that a written English or French word was very similar, even identical to the one in the target language (in this case, Romanian). This gave them a chance to make their message understood, even if it was not produced entirely in the target language.

An exception using a non-English word came from a student with Albanian as L1. This student used the Italian preposition *nel* instead of the Romanian *în* [in]. This choice seems to confirm the rationale for word transfer expressed above. The student supposed that the corresponding preposition in Albanian [në] would not be understandable to the Romanian teacher. However, instead of choosing the English word, they chose the Italian *nel*, which might be, in their understanding, closer to Romanian, given the numerous similarities in vocabulary they might have noticed between Italian and Romanian since starting to learn Romanian. It is interesting to notice that the word *time* is written in Italian, but with the Romanian definite article [*tempul*].

Adapting a word from a different language to the morphological system of the target language is a strategy that was applied by other students, as well. The last example in our table, the one coming from a student with Armenian as L1, shows the English verb *start* conjugated according to the Romanian verb paradigm that uses the suffix *-ez*.

The choices displayed in *Table 1* prove that this was part of a communicative strategy and a conscientious and stepwise process: first, the student decided to use a foreign word; second, the student selected the source language, being aware that the assessors would not know their L1 and that using a foreign word might increase the chances of making themselves understood. This shows a mature learner, well aware of the choices they have for overcoming obstacles when writing.

This can be contrasted with a similar situation in Seed & Holland (2020), in a study that shows how plurilingualism was considered when revising the Cambridge exams, with the learner's plurilingual competence seen as "a linguistic repair strategy in Cambridge exam papers, rather than seeing evidence of this as an error" (Seed & Holland 2020, 22). The example comes from the A2 level exam for children (A2 Flyers) where test takers needed to write a short story based on three related pictures. One response employed a word in L1 (Chinese): "One day, Sam and Mary play basketball. They are very happy. Suddenly, basketball in the ocean. One haitun help they catch the basketball" (Seed & Holland 2020, 23). "Haitun" is the transliteration of the Chinese word for 'dolphin'. Even though it is not an English word, it helps make the message complete. In accordance with the assessment criteria that prioritized comprehensibility over accuracy in spelling and grammar, the test taker was not penalized for using the transliteration of the Chinese word, as it was considered a repair strategy rather than a mistake.

In comparison with the child who used the Chinese word in Seed and Holland (2020), the university students in the Romanian written-language exam could make a more calculated choice of words. In making the message understandable and conveying the ideas that they wanted to represent, they chose the source language carefully. The students did not limit their use of foreign words to replacing a missing noun or verb for a concrete word or action. In two cases, the students used adjectives (peaceful, comfortable) in order to transmit their feelings and attitude, not merely to name an object or action required for the text.

3.1.3. The new descriptor operationalising language transfer

Our analysis showed that even some of the best responses at level A1 included foreign words, which inspired us to create a new descriptor in all bands of the assessment grid, including the highest one. This means that a test taker whose written production contains foreign words (in a limited proportion) can still obtain the maximum number of points. As stated before, the main criterion to be considered by the assessor is that of efficacy. If the test takers manage to fulfil the task and make their message understood, accuracy will only significantly degrade the overall score for written production in two cases: The mistakes lead to misunderstanding of the text or if their number is considerable in the fundamental elements for that level.

The fact that we analysed written responses, not oral is relevant to our second point: drawing on plurilingual ability is a compensating strategy. Unlike the oral exam, the written exam gave the students time to elaborate. In this

context, the use of foreign words can be considered the result of strategy and proves that the test takers employ their plurilingual competence and creativity to send their message successfully. We see this as a manifestation of a compensating strategy. Compensating is defined in CEFR CV as “a strategy for maintaining communication when one cannot think of the appropriate expression” (Council of Europe 2020, 69). The key concepts operationalized in the scale include the following: accompanying gestures to support language; deliberately using a “wrong” word/sign and qualifying it; defining the missing concept and paraphrase (circumlocution), and the extent to which such paraphrasing is evident (Council of Europe 2020, 69). The grid’s compensating descriptor for A1 relates exclusively to spoken production (“Can use gestures to support simple words/signs in expressing a need.”). This descriptor could be mirrored with one for written production, at least in local contexts of language learning and assessment, like ours: Can use a word in a different language than the target language of the text to bridge a gap in constructing in written production. This descriptor can be fed also from the CEFR CV scale *Building on plurilingual repertoire*. The descriptor for level A1 is formulated in the following terms: “Can use a very limited repertoire in *different languages* to conduct a very basic, concrete, everyday transaction with a collaborative interlocutor.” (Council of Europe 2020, 128)

The change that we made in the descriptors appreciates and values the test takers’ plurilingual repertoire instead of penalizing its use. With the old grid, the use of any foreign word was often simply tabulated as a mistake. Moreover, we acknowledge the use of a plurilingual repertoire as a strength shown by test takers of all levels. However, as demonstrated in Swain and Lapkin (2013, 110) the use of L1 as part of L2 learning diminishes as the learner progresses towards advanced levels. Two important findings are revealed by Swain and Lapkin: as L2 proficiency increases, L1 may be used for a wider variety of functions and there is less and less need to use the L1 as a cognitive tool; the L2 can stand alone (Swain and Lapkin 2013, 110). We see this, as well, as relevant to assessment and the changing modes in which L1 or another language are used as part of the written or oral responses in live exams.

The descriptors are mainly formulated in positive terms in the new grid, including the use of foreign words, redirecting the assessor towards appreciating the test taker’s ability to fulfil the task instead of hunting for language mistakes.

Table 2 below compares the descriptors in the highest band for criterion accuracy, with the new descriptor in italics.

Table 2. The descriptors in the highest band for the criterion of accuracy of written responses in the old and the new grid. Level A1

Old grid	New grid
They produce simple sentences and make mistakes which generally do not lead to misunderstanding.	The grammar and vocabulary mistakes affect less than one fourth of the words in the text and do not lead to misunderstanding.
They use elements of vocabulary specific to the level, with small inadvertences.	<i>Transfers from other languages are possible (about 2 occurrences in the text).</i>
They sometimes make mistakes of orthography and punctuation.	They generally use the punctuation correctly (3-4 mistakes possible in the text).

3.2. The rating grid for spoken responses. Level B1

In the midst of massive migration from Romania to the Occident, we see increasing numbers of second-generation migrants using Romanian in a multiplicity of contexts. They make use of Romanian for educational and professional purposes in their (or their parents') country of origin, as well as in their country of residence (Vîlcu 2023). In these conditions, the BBU-RCI Consortium for Testing Romanian as a Foreign Language is keen to help Romanian migrants and their descendants preserve their language¹⁴ by providing them with certificates of linguistic competence in Romanian. This is intended to demonstrate the concrete, lucrative benefits of mastering their heritage language.

The second case we present relates to the administration of examinations of Romanian as a foreign language, at multiple locations in Europe and the United States of America. Initially, from 2019 through 2021, BBU-RCI Consortium administered the examinations only at the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca. In the second part of 2021 we started administering them in multiple centres of examination (Bucharest and Madrid), later followed by Paris, Prague, Venice and several locations in the USA. Successful test takers obtain a certificate in their chosen level of proficiency. After we started providing these certificates, we realised that many candidates had Romanian as heritage language. More exactly, 84% of the candidates we have examined so far at the headquarters of the Romanian Cultural Institute in Madrid proved to be speakers of Romanian as a heritage language, in a wide range of mastery. In the USA the percentage of test takers with Romanian as a heritage language was 100%.

¹⁴ "Plurilingualism can in fact be considered from various perspectives: as a sociological or historical fact, as a personal characteristic or ambition, as an educational philosophy or approach, or – fundamentally – as the sociopolitical aim of preserving linguistic diversity. All these perspectives are increasingly common in Europe" (Council of Europe 2020, 31).

The exams evaluate proficiency in Romanian as a foreign language; the spoken component limits the use of another language by the test taker; and the issued certificate is for Romanian only (www.roexam.com).

These test sessions allowed us to assemble and analyse a corpus of spoken production. We were interested in understanding the modes in which test-taker performance could be influenced by having Romanian as a heritage language, and to ascertain its impact on assessment instruments and procedures. Our corpus consisted of 130 spoken responses (65 – spoken interaction, both with the examiner and with another candidate and 65 - spoken production) of candidates who registered to take the examinations at the levels B1, B2, C1 and C2.

The assessment grids for spoken and written production and interaction for levels B1 – C1 were revised between 2022 and 2023. Significant changes were implemented, including the organisation of the grids. As in the case of the grid for written production and interaction for level A1, discussed under 3.1, the order of the criteria was changed to prioritise task fulfilment. The original order was:

COMPLEXITY	ACCURACY	FLUENCY & COHERENCE	EFFICACY* (how well they can fulfil the task)
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The criteria were reordered as:

EFFICACY	COMPLEXITY	FLUENCY & COHERENCE	ACCURACY
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Our experience assessing numerous candidates with Romanian as a heritage language informed the revision of the assessment grid for spoken production and interaction for levels B1, B2 and C1.

This paper will discuss the new assessment grid for level B1 and the updating of the criterion of accuracy to reflect the influence of another language in the spoken discourse of the candidate.

The analysis of the corpus revealed specific, predominant elements in the discourse of the Romanian heritage candidates. We present two categories of elements, one that did not impact on the revision and one that did.

3.2.1. Elements that did not drive changes in the assessment instruments

For second-generation or later Diaspora candidates, their heritage language is often restricted to the familial environment or social circles dominated by fellow Diaspora members. Even in the case of first-generation

migrants, the heritage language might be limited to relatives and friends in their country of origin, while their main means of professional, social and sometimes educational communication develops at least in part in the language of the host country. In these conditions, it is not surprising that the active, daily vocabulary in the heritage language will be limited to a quotidian context, whereas the discussions related to profession or themes like services, access to education and health, media, culture, lifestyle, environment, etc. will be carried out largely in the language of the host country. In the oral evaluation, this becomes evident when test-takers proceed from the first section, interacting with the examiner, to the latter two sections where they interact with another test taker and create their oral responses. The interaction with the examiner is built around questions related to the candidate's personal experience (their education, hobbies, lifestyle, day-to-day activities, opinion on local matters, etc.). Consequently, the candidates discuss very familiar things. The discourse is usually fluent and little time is spent searching for words. Pauses are natural and hesitations can be overcome without help. However, when a topic of discussion beyond the narrow range of chat with family and friends occurs, changes can be noticed in the search for elements of vocabulary needed to build the discourse. At the same time, overuse of simple and repetitive linkers might be observed. Register is another aspect influenced by the context in which the candidate uses the tested language. The register they most frequently access with family and friends is the familiar one and it might be difficult to adapt to the type of interlocutor, type of discourse, or a task in which they more commonly use the language of their host country.

Although we observed these trends, they did not produce changes to the assessment instruments for oral production and interaction at this time. The instruments and procedures assessing vocabulary complexity, coherence, and register remained as designed, reflecting the discourse of speakers who learn the language without any previous connections.

3.2.2. Elements that drove changes in the assessment instruments

The corpus analysis revealed that many candidates had good or very good Romanian fluency, with good discourse management, and strategies for overcoming pauses and maintaining the momentum of dialogue and interaction. Although they had a clearly perceptible accent when speaking about education or their profession, their unusual stress patterns or accent did not usually degrade intelligibility.

We decided to reflect this in our spoken-production grid for multiple reasons. First, we realised that the presence of a non-native accent has a high incidence in candidates with Romanian as heritage language. It could be

identified to varying degree in more than 60% of corpus responses. It consequently becomes highly relevant in speaking assessment, and the raters needed both instruction and tools in order to judge it effectively. Addressing this with the Romanian-heritage candidates also helped us in assessing non-Romanian-heritage candidates with a significant accent.

We were concerned with the pronunciation standard raters customarily apply, sometimes unwittingly: “the idealized native speaker” (Council of Europe 2020, 131). By revising the assessment grid, and organising workshops to familiarise raters with its new form, we were able to question this standard and promote intelligibility as the primary criterion.

This brings us to the third motivation for changing our grid: aligning our assessment instrument with the new scale for phonological control in CEFR CV. It is explained in the Companion Volume that their initial phonology scale had been “the least successful of those calibrated in the original research behind the descriptors published in 2001” (Council of Europe 2020, 133). The key factor in the changes made in the CEFR CV was to prioritise intelligibility over the standard of the idealised native speaker:

In language teaching, the phonological control of an idealised native speaker has traditionally been seen as the target, with accent being seen as a marker of poor phonological control. The focus on accent and on accuracy instead of on intelligibility has been detrimental to the development of the teaching of pronunciation. Idealised models that ignore the retention of accent lack consideration for context, sociolinguistic aspects and learners’ needs. (Council of Europe 2020, 133).

The scale for phonological control in the CEFR CV is subdivided in three categories: overall phonological control, sound articulation and prosodic features. The following descriptors apply to level B1:

- Overall phonological control: Pronunciation is generally intelligible; intonation and stress at both utterance and word levels do not prevent understanding of the message. Accent is usually influenced by the other language(s) they speak.
- Sound articulation: Is generally intelligible throughout, despite regular mispronunciation of individual sounds and words they are less familiar with.
- Prosodic features: Can convey their message in an intelligible way in spite of a strong influence on stress, intonation and/or rhythm from the other language(s) they speak. (Council of Europe 2020, 134).

In light of our analytical findings with the corpus of responses of candidates with Romanian as heritage language, and of the evolution of the CEFR CV, we decided to create a new descriptor in the assessment grid for level B1, which was under revision at the time of this process. The key concepts operationalised in this descriptor were also applied at levels B2 and C1, which are beyond the scope of this paper. *Table 3*, below, compares the descriptors in the highest band for the criterion of accuracy, with the additional descriptor marked in italics.

Table 3. The descriptors in the highest band for the criterion of accuracy of spoken responses in the old and the new grid. Level B1

Old grid	New grid
They create mostly correct sentences and do not make mistakes which could affect the transmission of the message. They can correct part of the mistakes without help. They use the elements of vocabulary specific to the level adequately. They pronounce, in general, correctly and have an adequate intonation.	They use the grammar structures and elements of vocabulary specific to the level adequately. The grammar and lexical mistakes are reduced in number and do not affect the transmission of the message and the speaker can self-correct often without help. The pronunciation is in general correct and the intonation is adequate. <i>The rhythm and the accent can be influenced by other languages, but intelligibility will not be affected.</i>

4. Conclusions

We acknowledge that plurilingualism continues to be a challenge for specialists in language policy, language teaching and most of all in assessment. However, as teachers and testers we need to let our work be informed by the real-world speakers and language learners who rarely compartmentalise their linguistic competence or isolate their languages, and rather tailor their plurilingual repertoire to the communication situations they encounter.

Addressing plurilingualism in the field of assessment is a real challenge, especially in certification testing. The need for this kind of assessment will continue. At the same time, the influence of other languages in the examination in the main language cannot be dismissed as errors and penalised. Solutions need to be found that attune the process of assessment to the reality of the plurilingual speaker. The adaptation of assessment instruments and procedures and the training of the raters in this spirit are key to this process.

We presented in this study how, in testing progress in a language, we adapted assessment instruments and practices to accommodate the influence of one or more additional languages on written and spoken test responses. The changes were informed by the literature in the field, new evolutions in reference documents (mainly CEFR CV), and most of all, by analysis of the corpus of responses. The criterion of accuracy was retooled, making intelligibility the key concept. The assessment grids were remade to operationalise the use of words from other languages (for written production on level A1), and the influence of other languages on pronunciation, rhythm and accent (for spoken production on level B1).

We consider these changes to be the first steps in refining our assessment process, instruments and procedures. This is but the beginning: Adaptation needs to continue. Working with candidates with Romanian as a heritage language opened a new door in our understanding of the interrelationship between languages and brought our assessment process closer to the reality of the plurilingual speaker. Social, political and cultural evolution around the world shows us that plurilingual speakers in a multilingual context will only become more common in future, and our goal is to keep up with them.

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- <https://sealofbilitracy.org/>

THE DESIGN OF TEACHING MATERIALS FOR ONLINE INTERACTION ACTIVITIES WITH THE HELP OF CHATGPT: THE CASE OF ROMANIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT. *The Design of Teaching Materials for Online Interaction Activities with the Help of ChatGPT: The Case of Romanian as a Foreign Language.*

This study explores the role of ChatGPT, the most widely used current chatbot, in designing teaching materials for modern language instruction, with a focus on Romanian as a foreign language (RFL). The research aims to assess the usefulness and capabilities of this AI tool from the perspective of the teacher as

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a curriculum designer. The linguistic activity under analysis—online interaction—was only recently included in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), *Companion Volume* (2018), and involves a multimodal approach to communication. Within this framework, the study investigates how CEFR grids for online interaction can be effectively used to create didactic scenarios tailored to international learners of Romanian. By applying techniques such as the "funnel strategy" and "progressive-hint prompting", the research generated a series of B1-level instructional activities with the help of ChatGPT, simulating authentic online communication contexts (e.g., collaborating in a chat group to plan an event). The results show that, under teacher guidance, ChatGPT can be an effective partner in designing interactive, relevant, and motivating materials that enhance learners' ability to engage in real-life online interactions. The study highlights both the potential and the current limitations of AI-assisted material development, emphasizing the need for a critical and reflective approach to using such tools in language education.

Keywords: *artificial intelligence, ChatGPT, language teaching, material design, Romanian as a foreign language, online interaction, CEFRL*

REZUMAT. *Designul materialelor în activitatea de interacțiune online cu ajutorul lui ChatGPT. Cazul românei ca limbă străină.* Studiul investighează rolul pe care ChatGPT, cel mai utilizat chatbot actual, îl poate avea în proiectarea materialelor didactice pentru predarea limbilor moderne, cu accent pe româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Cercetarea își propune să evalueze utilitatea și competențele acestui instrument de inteligență artificială, din perspectiva profesorului ca autor de curriculum. Activitatea lingvistică analizată – interacțiunea online – este una relativ recent inclusă în *Cadrul European Comun de Referință pentru Limbi* (CECRL), *Companion Volume* (2018), și presupune o abordare multimodală a comunicării. În contextul respectiv, studiul explorează modul în care grilele CECRL pentru interacțiunea online pot fi valorificate în proiectarea de scenarii didactice relevante pentru cursanții internaționali care învață limba română. Prin aplicarea tehnicilor de tip „strategia pâlniei” și „progressive-hint prompting”, cercetarea a generat, cu ajutorul ChatGPT, o serie de activități didactice adaptate nivelului B1, care simulează situații autentice de comunicare online (de exemplu, colaborarea într-un grup de chat pentru organizarea unui eveniment). Rezultatele indică faptul că, sub ghidajul profesorului, ChatGPT poate deveni un partener eficient în elaborarea de materiale interactive, relevante și motivate pentru studenți, favorizând dezvoltarea competențelor de interacțiune online într-un mediu autentic. Studiul evidențiază atât potențialul, cât și limitele actuale ale implicării AI în proiectarea didactică, subliniind necesitatea unei utilizări critice și reflexive a acestui instrument.

Cuvinte-cheie: *inteligență artificială, ChatGPT, predarea limbilor străine, designul materialelor, româna ca limbă străină, interacțiune online, CECRL*

1. Introduction

One of the major challenges for foreign language teachers is to identify, adapt, and create curriculum content that aligns with the social changes and the evolving needs of students and foreign language users. In the European context, the main guiding tool for the language teaching-learning process emphasizes the learner as a social agent, co-constructing meaning in interaction (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR, 2001, and Companion Volume – CEFR-CV, 2018). Given that a significant portion of communication over the past two decades has shifted online, digital literacy has become a crucial component of contemporary education. Therefore, the second version of the CEFR includes digital interaction as part of communicative activities, incorporating it under interaction—one of the four modes of communication developed by the framework in specific descriptor grids.

Artificial intelligence (AI), particularly the new chatbots based on Large Language Models, can prove to be useful and creative assistants in designing communication materials for learning a new language. Among the array of available AI assistants, we chose to work with ChatGPT 3.5 not only because of its accessibility and popularity but also due to its ability to incorporate user feedback and progressively correct its discourse errors. It has evolved to generate increasingly accurate and complex output, even in lesser-known languages such as Romanian. Moreover, developing materials with the help of this prompt-driven digital assistant seems to us the most appropriate and productive direction in language didactics. Nowadays, true professional intelligence lies in learning how to use AI productively rather than managing study materials without it.

This article is based on an applied research project carried out within Romanian language classes for international students, in which we tested the effectiveness of using ChatGPT for generating and adapting teaching materials for online interaction activities. The proposed tasks were designed, implemented, and evaluated with B1-level groups, aiming to align CEFR descriptors with the learners' real communication needs. The next step is to identify appropriate pedagogical approaches and specific teaching activities for student groups, which are less present in the pedagogical guidance documents mentioned. These activities will allow us to manage Romanian language learning through its interactive and authentic component, in direct contact with real life.

2. Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The phrase "online interaction" refers to any type of communication between two or more people, sometimes between a person and a machine or application, and it requires the mediation of a device. Its most visible and, at the same time, most complex feature is the multimodal perspective it involves, combining listening, reading, producing spoken or written messages, reacting through words or symbols, and conveying messages through images or words.

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory approach aimed at assessing the pedagogical potential of Chat GPT in designing online interaction materials for learners of Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL). The central objective is to determine how AI-powered tools can support curriculum development, particularly for activities aligned with the CEFR-CV descriptors for online interaction. More specifically, the research seeks to identify teaching strategies that integrate AI in meaningful, communicative tasks that replicate real-life online exchanges. The methodology is structured around two core components: (1) a content-based analysis of the CEFR-CV descriptors pertaining to B1-level online interaction activities, and (2) a series of structured prompts and interactions with Chat GPT designed to generate, adapt and refine online learning tasks. These prompts were developed using two main strategies: the *funnel method*, which progressively narrows the task focus based on descriptor analysis, and *progressive-hint prompting*, which builds on previous responses to improve relevance and clarity. The goal is not only to evaluate Chat GPT's performance as a digital assistant in instructional design but also to generate practical, ready-to-use didactic scenarios that are authentic, student-centered, and adaptable to various classroom contexts.

2.1. CEFR and Online Interaction Activities

As mentioned in the introduction, while preparing materials for language lessons with international students, we refer specifically to the most important European document available to teachers and students on the Council of Europe's platform (<https://t.ly/eEPNO>). The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – Companion Volume* is fundamental for the level-based grids it proposes for learning a new language. Although it proves to be a useful self-assessment tool for learners, the CEFR is primarily "a tool to assist the planning of curricula, courses, and examinations by working backwards from what the users/learners need to be able to do in the language" (CEFR-CV 2020, 21). Thus, after it came into use, the action-oriented perspective gained ground in the institutionalized environment. The "learner can" descriptors allow teachers

to focus more on what still needs to be acquired in the classroom and less on what is incorrect in the students' messages. As for the syllabi, they gradually abandoned content-based progression and focused instead on the needs of the target group, decisively oriented towards real-life tasks.

Substantial content additions were made to the 2001 version of the CEFR in the Companion Volume (CEFR-CV 2018), including the entire activity that is the subject of this study: online interaction. It can be found in section 3.3.1.3 of the new guide, framed within one of the four fundamental modes of communication: reception, production, mediation, and interaction. The latter includes, in addition to oral and written interaction, online interaction, which combines elements from the first two, as well as complementary activities, such as understanding and generating messages.

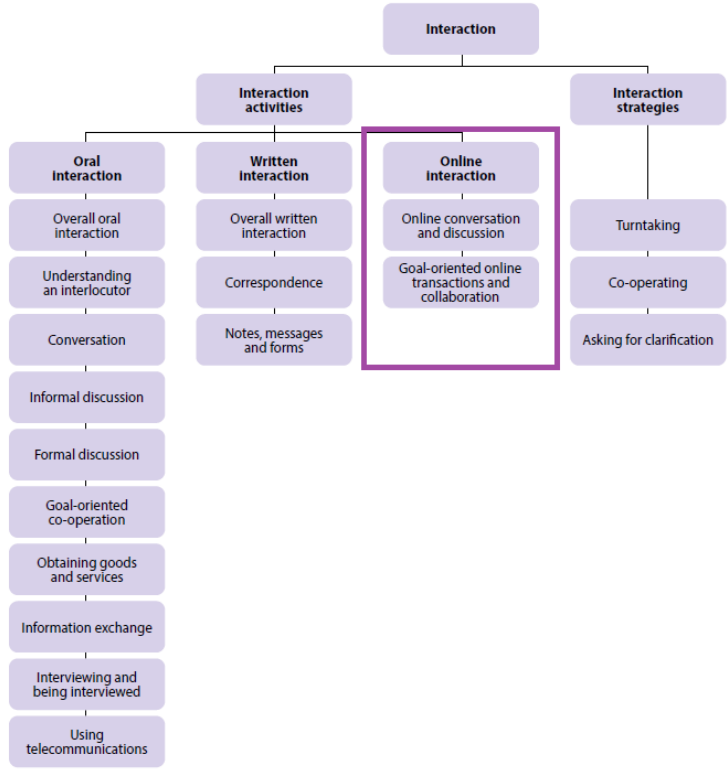


Table 1. (adapted) Interaction Activities and Strategies (Fig. 13 from CEFR-CV 2020, p. 71)

The most important features of this new activity lie precisely in its interstitial nature, situated between classic forms of communication, both oral and written, reception and production. The four communication skills structured the 2001 volume of the CEFR, following a model adopted from the 1960s. When using digital channels, the activity becomes multimodal, “including just checking or exchanging responses, spoken interaction and longer production in live link-ups, using chat (written spoken language), longer blogging or written contributions to discussions, and embedding other media” (CEFR-CV 2020, 25). Compared to face-to-face communication activities, web users must remain vigilant to a few unique aspects: “the need for more redundancy in messages; the need to check that the message has been correctly understood; the ability to reformulate in order to aid comprehension and address misunderstandings; and the ability to handle emotional reactions” (CEFR-CV 2020, 84).

The 2018 *Framework* not only introduces online communication as part of interaction—an activity partially outlined in the 2001 edition—but also proposes two related grids, which include progressive descriptors from pre-A1 to C2. The categories of the scales provided are complementary: *online conversation and discussion* and *goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration*. We will return with a brief analysis of these in the following section, before the practical exercises involving ChatGPT as an efficient assistant for the foreign language teacher. For now, we find this new online interaction activity commendable, even though it offers only two grids, compared to the more complex and nuanced guidance provided for other activities. But, as Brian North, the patriarch of the Framework, states, “The CEFR is certainly not perfect, but it is open-ended, as shown by the recent update with the CEFR/CV. The CEFR is still not used to its full potential” (North 2020, 19). We remain convinced that digital literacy will be more extensively presented in a third edition of the volume in question.

2.2. Artificial Intelligence in Developing Communication Competence

On June 14, 2023, the European Parliament began the process of negotiating its stance on AI, aiming to finalize the specific law after discussions with all member countries. The law would ensure that AI developed and used in Europe is fully aligned with EU rights and values, including human oversight, safety, privacy, transparency, non-discrimination, and social and environmental well-being. (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230609IPR96212/meps-ready-to-negotiate-first-ever-rules-for-safe-and-transparent-ai>)

Such regulations would bring greater comfort and security to users, including in the use of chatbots as useful tools in education. The challenges and dilemmas currently include concerns such as those raised by Reinders and Pegrum, who explained the risk of reducing language learning to a few daily minutes of activity within smartphone applications, known as "applification" (Reinders and Pegrum 2015, 2). From collaborative learning designs to learning based on structured exercises, this approach leaves little room for the creation of complex and creative messages, generating insurmountable limits that block linguistic progression. Therefore, encouraging interaction with one or more communication partners, in a formal or non-formal setting, is a critical goal for learning a new language in the era of Web 3.0.

In the following pages, we intend to test a research hypothesis that seeks to overcome the outlined anxieties: under conditions of supervision and with progressive guidance, we can transform ChatGPT into a creative and reliable ally in our work of developing communication competence and improving the online interaction activities of our students learning Romanian as a foreign language (RFL). This is because, to a large extent, it succeeds in promoting personalized learning experiences, fostering an understanding of another language and its associated culture, overcoming language barriers, facilitating the creation of an inclusive learning environment, encouraging critical thinking, and supporting student collaboration, among others (Ekellem 2024, 2).

3. Results

Since the starting point for creating activities and materials lies in the two specific grids from the CEFR-CV, we will first clarify their features before selecting specific descriptors to guide the interaction with ChatGPT. The progression of communication from pre-A1 to C2 in the provided scales considers four important principles for language learners: moving from simple social exchanges to professional and educational interactions; evolving from asynchronous to synchronous interactions; utilizing symbols, images, and other codes to compensate for the absence of emotional cues or suprasegmental features (such as tone or stress); and developing the ability to manage misunderstandings, both linguistic and cultural (Goodier & Piccardo 2020, 17).

The first CEFR scale for managing online interaction focuses on *Online conversation and discussion*. It incorporates spontaneity in responses and turn-taking strategies from oral interaction, but also includes new skills such as commenting on others' posts, reacting to embedded media, and inserting images, symbols, emojis, GIFs, and other graphic reactions into one's own

discourse. The skills outlined in the grid evolve from "can post simple online greetings" or "can formulate very simple messages" (A levels) to "can make personal online postings" or "can participate actively in an online discussion" (B levels), while at the C levels, we see skills such as "can adapt their register according to the online context" and "can anticipate misunderstandings, including cultural ones" (CEFR-CV 2020, 85-86).

The grid entitled *Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration* deals with interactions that pursue a specific goal: purchasing goods and services online, negotiating terms, participating in a joint project, resolving communication issues, and so on. Here too, the progression is visible across the grid levels: "This can be seen as a progression from filling in predictable online forms at Pre-A1, to solving various problems in order for the transaction to take place at the B levels, through to being able to participate in, and ultimately co-ordinate, group project work online at the C levels" (CEFR-CV 2020, 85-86). In terms of skills, the progression moves from "can make selections in a form" and "can use formulaic language to respond to routine problems" (A levels) to "can respond to instructions" or "can take a lead role in online work" (B levels), and finally to "can deal with communication problems and cultural issues" or "can deal effectively with frictions that arise" (C levels).

From the proposed levels, we have chosen to develop several activities related to *online interaction* with the help of ChatGPT, and to assess their relevance, adaptability, and efficiency in the curriculum. These activities target only one level, as space does not permit the exploration of multiple online communication skills across levels. The chosen level is B1, the first one where the language user becomes independent. We will develop the B1 descriptors with all types of activities from the two scales. In our conversation with ChatGPT, we applied two essential techniques for managing the provided content in order to reach a valid and productive instructional scenario.

- a. *The funnel strategy* involves narrowing down the discussed content, starting from the descriptors in the scales and shaping the conversation with the Open AI chatbot towards concrete suggestions for content and appropriate methods.
- b. *The method of progressive hint prompting* involves interactions with ChatGPT4, where we use previous responses as clues to obtain a better output, more tailored to our specific objectives (Zheng et al. 2023, 2). If we were to provide all the details from the start, hoping for a complete and accurate response, we might be disappointed. In fact, the chatbot could feel overwhelmed and begin to "hallucinate," as any user might observe under such conditions.

We will not reproduce the entire conversation from the Open AI platform, as it is too extensive for the limited space of an article. However, interested readers can find the full version at the following URL: <https://chatgpt.com/share/af98078e-3ce2-4474-b27d-38a408dd21e0>. Instead, we will outline here the stages of the discussion and the chatbot responses in four structured steps. At the end, we will select the activity we have adjusted to build a complete online interaction scenario, applicable to the group of students learning Romanian as a foreign language (RFL).

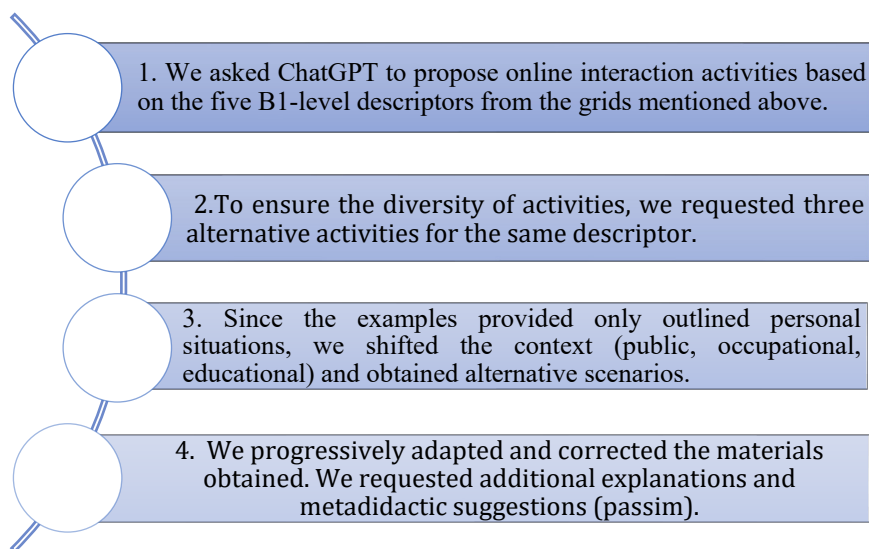


Figure 1. Key Points of the Dialogue with ChatGPT on Online Interaction

1. We asked ChatGPT to propose online interaction activities. In the table below, the targeted descriptors appear on the left, specifically those from the B1 level in both grids. It should be noted that we did not include the higher level, B1+, even though there are developed skills for that level as well. In the right column, we have reproduced the activities suggested by ChatGPT in their initial formulation, before applying the progressive hints to optimize and adjust the applicable scenarios. Each activity suggestion was integrated into a didactic scenario with objectives, instructions, and steps, but for now, we will only reproduce the activity itself in the table.

Descriptors, B1	Activities
Online conversation and discussion	
Can post a comprehensible contribution in an online discussion on a forum on platforms such as Google Classroom, Moodle, familiar topic of interest, provided they can or any other learning platform used. The discussion prepare the text beforehand and use online topic will be "My Hobbies and Interests." Each student tools to fill gaps in language and check will be required to choose a hobby or interest and write accuracy.	Students will participate in an online discussion on a private blog or on a file-sharing platform, where they will post weekly about a recent personal experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted them. Each student will create an online journal, either on a private blog or on a file-sharing platform, where they will post weekly about a recent personal experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted them. Each student will create an online journal, either on a private blog or on a file-sharing platform, where they will post weekly about a recent personal experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted them. Each student will create an online journal, either on a private blog or on a file-sharing platform, where they will post weekly about a recent personal experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted them.
Can make personal online postings about experiences, feelings and events and respond individually to the comments of others in some detail, though lexical experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted limitations sometimes cause repetition them. and inappropriate formulation.	Each student will create an online journal, either on a private blog or on a file-sharing platform, where they will post weekly about a recent personal experience, a feeling, or an event that impacted them.
Goal-oriented online transactions and collaboration	
Can engage in online collaborative or transactional exchanges that require simple clarification or explanation of relevant details, such as registering for a course, tour or event, or applying for membership.	Students must register for an online Romanian course on an educational platform. To enroll, they need to interact with a platform representative via online chat.
Can interact online with a partner or small group working on a project, provided there are visual aids such as images, statistics and graphs to clarify more complex concepts.	Students must collaborate online in small teams to create a presentation about a tourist city in Romania (e.g., Braşov, Sibiu). They will use images, statistics, and graphs to support their descriptions and recommendations.
Can respond to instructions and ask questions or request clarifications in order to accomplish a shared task online.	Students work together to organize an online welcome event for new international students. The task is to create an agenda for the event and distribute responsibilities.

Table 2. B1 Descriptors for Online Interaction (CEFR-CV 2020, 85; 87) and Activities Suggested by ChatGPT

2. To ensure the diversity of activities, we requested three alternative suggestions for the same descriptor, specifically for "Can engage in online collaborative or transactional exchanges that require simple clarification or explanation of relevant details, such as registering for a course, tour or event, or applying for membership." The proposals focus on the same scenario, online registration, with slight variations: registering for a city tour, subscribing to an online library, and signing up for a local cultural event.

3. Since the examples provided only outlined personal situations, we explicitly asked the chatbot to shift the context, and we obtained alternative scenarios in the public, occupational, and educational domains, as suggested by the Companion Volume in the examples from Appendix 5, an additional resource for users of the online interaction scale (CEFR-CV 2020, 191). While in the personal context, the descriptor led, with the help of progressive hints, to a WhatsApp discussion with classmates (for which the teacher will create a real group on the app), the alternative suggestions appear from the start (or perhaps as a result of the previous adjustments) to be more productive and efficient:

- ✓ *Public situation:* Students will make a post on a public Facebook group dedicated to the local community about their experience at a recent event held in the city, such as a festival, exhibition, or volunteer activity.
- ✓ *Occupational situation:* Students will simulate a post on a company's internal platform, sharing their thoughts on a recent workshop or training session they attended.
- ✓ *Educational situation:* Students will post on a discussion forum dedicated to a group project, describing the progress made and the challenges encountered so far.

4. In addition to these steps, which build the basic structure of the future course, we consistently asked ChatGPT for clarifications, examples, corrections, and further details when the response was not sufficiently accurate or specific. In the following section, we will detail some of the minor deviations or unexpected solutions provided by the digital assistant.

We summarized the final product we developed with ChatGPT, namely the didactic scenario ready to be implemented with the groups of international students at our university, learners of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL). It should be noted that the model below is inspired by the structured scenarios from Johann Fisher and his collaborators at the ECML (The European Centre for Modern Languages) in Graz, in a useful project that provides CEFR users with an implementation toolbox including grids, tables, and models (Fisher et al. 2023, <https://t.ly/i4yQ1>).

Didactic Scenario

Title: Chat Group for Planning a Weekend Outing

Language: Romanian as a Foreign Language

CEFR Level: B1

Author:

Scale: Online Interaction (Online Conversation and Discussion)

Descriptor: B1

Objective of the Activity: To develop the ability to actively participate in informal online discussions, reflecting the real dynamics of communication in chat groups, where spontaneous interaction and decision-making negotiation are essential.

Description of the main activity:

Students will participate in a chat group on WhatsApp, Telegram, or Discord to plan a weekend outing. The discussion will begin with an initial proposal, and other group members will react by suggesting changes, additions, or alternatives.

Introducing the activity in the classroom:

1. **Creating the chat group:** The teacher will create a chat group on the selected platform and add all students. The theme of the conversation will be "Let's plan a weekend outing in the city."
2. **Initial proposal:** A volunteer student (or the teacher) will start the discussion by proposing a specific activity for the weekend, such as "Let's go to a music festival in the park" or "What do you think about going to see a movie at the cinema?"
3. **Reactions and discussions:** The rest of the students will react to the proposal by expressing their opinions (e.g., "Sounds interesting, but maybe we can find something closer?" or "I like the idea, but I'd prefer to go in the morning"). They can also suggest alternatives or additions (e.g., "We could go to the festival and then to a café?").
4. **Final decision:** After an active discussion and exchange of opinions, the group will decide on a final activity. Each student will then write a short post (50-100 words) explaining why they chose that activity and what they expect from it.
5. **Review and correction:** Students will review their contributions after the discussion, using online resources to check and correct any language mistakes.

Peer feedback:

Duration: 20-30 minutes

a. Peer Feedback: 10-15 minutes

- **Goal:** To provide students with the opportunity to analyse each other's contributions, learn from their peers' mistakes and successes, and develop critical and constructive skills.
- **Activities:**
 1. **Sharing contributions:** Each student receives links or screenshots of their peers' posts and comments from the online discussion.
 2. **Guide for feedback:** The teacher provides a simple guide for offering peer feedback, which includes aspects such as:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Message clarity: "Was the peer's message clear and easy to understand?" ○ Relevance of ideas: "Were the proposals and solutions offered appropriate to the issue discussed?" ○ Interaction and collaboration: "Did the peer manage to contribute constructively to the discussion, supporting or developing others' ideas?" ○ Formulation and vocabulary: "Are there language errors that affected the message's understanding? How could it be improved?" 		
Assessment:		
	Yes	No
Did the student make use of appropriate vocabulary to suggest alternative plans or modifications?		
Did the student actively participate in the discussion by responding to at least one suggestion from a peer?		
Did the student clearly express their opinion about the initial proposal in the chat?		
Did the student use online resources to check and correct their language errors before finalizing their contribution?		
Did the student complete the final task by writing a short post (50-100 words) explaining their reasons for choosing the final activity?		

Table 3. Didactic Scenario for the Online Interaction Activity, Developed with the Help of ChatGPT

4. Discussions. Limitations

In the process of synthesizing the strengths and weaknesses of using AI assistants in the design of specialized teaching materials, it has become evident that it is difficult to imagine this activity in the future without chatbot assistance. Although the conscious presence of the teacher in the design process is still necessary, and the virtual assistant's responses should be taken *cum grano salis*, the support provided is not negligible in the didactic design.

When doing an analysis of the vulnerabilities, one can immediately notice ChatGPT tends to be exhaustive in its responses, aiming to cover as many aspects of the request as possible. However, this exhaustiveness comes at a cost: it generates horizontal development of the subject and suggests treating it in a rigid manner, often using clichéd language from the field rather than providing a more complex approach with examples and nuances. To achieve a satisfactory and useful result for the classroom, it was necessary to apply what Zheng et al. (2023, 1 et passim) call the "progressive-hint prompting" method. This method involves initially avoiding a large, detailed request, as the chatbot

might feel overwhelmed and respond in a fragmented and disorganized way. Therefore, the solution is a gradual conversation, allowing for a concentric approach to the subject, with content details requested step by step. For example, to reach the scenario in the previous table, it took a discussion that included 40,000 characters. However, given the chatbot's very fast response rate, the conversation took no more than 20 minutes, definitely less than it would take a teacher to think through and develop the entire scenario with alternative branches.

We progressively adapted and corrected the materials obtained, taking into account the suggestions for managing online interaction, structured by Johann Fisher and the team from Graz. One of the grids provided is of particular interest because it allows us to check whether the materials prepared for the courses meet professionalism criteria. It is called the "Checklist for online interaction activities" and advances ten criteria for analyzing an online interaction activity. We focus on the first five, which are characteristic of the material design stage, the subject of this paper: reflect a real-life exchange, engage students in authentic communication, is motivating for students, the skills practiced in the activity are applicable to real-life situations, and the activity can be implemented in the classroom (Fisher et al. 2023, <https://t.ly/9bKVB>). The criteria that were most rarely met were authenticity and reflecting a real-life situation. For instance, in the activity generated for the first criterion in **Table 2**, which was developed and refined throughout the entire conversation with ChatGPT, it was necessary to use successive prompts such as "the activity doesn't seem authentic/the students don't have such dialogues in real life/in a real WhatsApp group, young people don't intervene the way you've suggested." In the figure below, the amplification of authenticity hints can be observed, from one version to another, moving from an unbelievable online monologue to organized interventions and finally to a group discussion with agreements and disagreements.

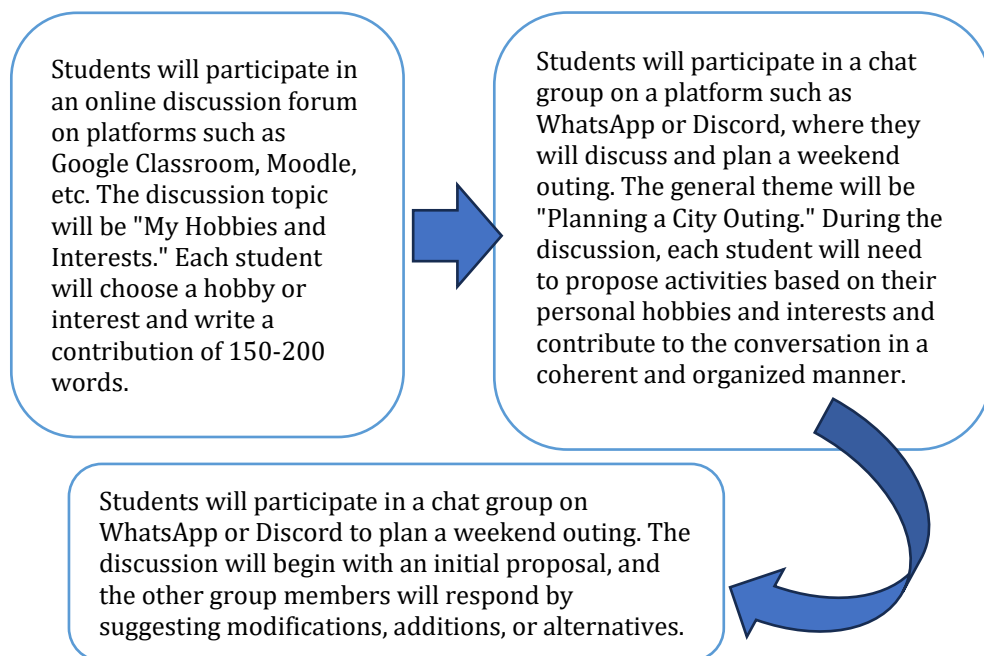


Figure 2. Adjusting ChatGPT's Responses through Progressive Hint Prompting

Another vulnerability we observed and tried to remedy was the presence of static, non-progressive prompts. Even the last prompt in **Figure 2**, though more authentic, was not supported by sub-elements of content useful for mapping out the online discussion for students. To prevent a loss of motivation, another important criterion from Fisher et al.'s checklist, we suggested the AI tool generated templates for introducing a response, and we received 13 thematic sets. We randomly reproduce here the one named *Establishing the Next Steps*: "The next step would be to..."; "I suggest we start with..."; "We can take care of this by..."; "Someone should handle...". Moreover, a major reason for giving up on learning a new language has proven to be the loss of motivation, especially due to the curriculum's misalignment with students' needs: "one reason why learners may lose interest can be if the material used in class does not seem relevant to individual needs, or the fact that activities in class do not mirror real-life contexts where they would naturally feel the need to communicate." (Saurer 2022, 170).

Regarding the strengths of ChatGPT in the conversation presented above, the following stand out: its quick response time, structuring of answers into easily followable points, adherence to the specified CEFR level (both in terms of language and task complexity), variety of solutions, and the ability to

quickly and systematically synthesize theoretical information and the concepts upon which a foreign language course is built. For example, in our conversation, we asked at one point for advice on how to apply the constructed scenario differently to homogeneous and heterogeneous student groups. Our university has both a French and an English line. While in the first case the mother tongue is exclusively French, in the English line the first language varies. The chatbot, emphasizing the advantages of the homogeneous group, organized the adaptations according to the group profile in the didactic scenario, carefully considering differences based on several precise criteria found in the theoretical literature of the field: linguistic comfort level, cultural influences, emphasis on linguistic complexity and finesse vs. clarity and understanding, and reflection time.

ChatGPT assistance with metadidactic issues is another advantage. From the very beginning, the request for the design of online interaction activities was met with quasi-complete scenarios, not just task guidelines. Each proposal included objectives, specific tasks, and implementation steps. When we asked for other elements from the teacher's internal toolkit, such as peer feedback methods for students and strategies for assessing teaching methods, they were generated in a manner adapted to the previously outlined scenario, with specific details regarding language and interaction skills on devices, as seen at the end of **Table 2**.

The above observations, as mentioned from the start, refer to a single level of study—namely, the independent speaker level (B1). We tracked all descriptors and related online interaction activities only horizontally at that level. The future challenge remains collaborating with ChatGPT and reflecting on its ability to generate responses vertically, ensuring correct evolution of proposed scenarios according to the pre-A1 to C2 CEFR scales.

5. Conclusions

This study confirms that Chat GPT can be a valuable ally in the design of teaching materials, particularly for training online interaction in Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL). The core hypothesis—that teachers should shift focus from avoiding AI to strategically leveraging it for curriculum enhancement—has been validated through both theoretical alignment and practical outcomes. Despite certain limitations, such as Chat GPT's tendency to produce overly generic or rigid responses, the benefits of integrating AI into the instructional design process are substantial. Notably, Chat GPT excels in content generation speed, organization, and adaptability. Its metadidactic capacities—such as

providing peer feedback models, tailored task instructions, and CEFR-aligned scenarios—offer tangible support in lesson planning and materials development. The study also demonstrates that effective use of AI requires thoughtful prompting and iterative refinement. By applying strategies such as progressive-hint prompting, teachers can elicit richer, more contextually appropriate outputs that resonate with learners' real-life communication needs. Furthermore, the CEFR-CV's new focus on digital interaction, though still underutilized, provides a structured yet flexible framework that aligns well with AI-supported pedagogy. Looking ahead, the challenge lies in expanding this approach vertically—across CEFR levels from Pre-A1 to C2—and tailoring it to diverse student profiles. Nonetheless, the current findings already point toward a paradigm shift: from AI as a novelty or threat to AI as a co-designer in the evolving landscape of language education.

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A PRAGMA-LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE SCHOLAR'S LANGUAGE IN *MANGA BLEACH*

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ABSTRACT. *A Pragma-Linguistic Analysis of the Scholar's Language in Manga BLEACH.* This study delves into the pragma-linguistic characteristics of the 'scholar's language' as portrayed in the Japanese comics, known as *manga*, specifically through the character Kurotsuchi Mayuri from *Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ). It examines how technical knowledge, verbal authority, and rhetorical sophistication converge to create a complex and memorable character. The analysis identifies several key traits: the use of specialized terms, uncommon verbal forms and particles, blending of formal or beautified language with overt mockery, rhetorical questions, a literary style, and Sino-Japanese vocabulary. These elements underscore Mayuri's intellectual superiority and distinct personality. Additionally, the research highlights the strategic use of *kanji* for parts of speech typically written in *hiragana*, enhancing the formality and erudition of the discourse. This preliminary study suggests that while the identified linguistic features may be specific to Mayuri's character, they also contribute to the broader stereotype of the scholar in *manga*, included under the concept of *yakuwarigo* (role language). The findings pave the way for more extensive research on the scholar's language across a diverse range of *manga* characters, aiming to establish a comprehensive understanding of how linguistic stereotypes are used to represent scholars in this pop culture context.

Keywords: *yakuwarigo, stereotypical speech, scholar's language, pragma-linguistic analysis, multimodal text, manga*

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REZUMAT. O analiză pragma-lingvistică a limbajului savantului în manga BLEACH. Acest studiu explorează caracteristicile pragma-lingvistice ale ‚limbajului savantului’ așa cum este prezentat în benzile desenate japoneze, numite *manga*, prin intermediul personajului Kurotsuchi Mayuri din *Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ). Analiza evidențiază felul în care competențele tehnice, capacitatea de a se impune prin discurs și rafinamentul expresiv contribuie împreună la conturarea unui personaj profund și distinctiv. Au fost identificate mai multe trăsături cheie: utilizarea termenilor specializați, forme verbale și particule neobișnuite, amestecul unui limbaj formal sau înfrumusețat cu batjocură evidentă, întrebările retorice, un stil literar și vocabularul sino-japonez. Aceste elemente subliniază superioritatea intelectuală și personalitatea distinctă a lui Mayuri. În plus, cercetarea evidențiază utilizarea strategică a caracterelor chinezești *kanji* pentru părți de vorbire de obicei scrise în *hiragana*, sporind formalitatea și erudiția discursului. Acest studiu preliminar sugerează că, deși trăsăturile lingvistice identificate pot fi specifice personajului Mayuri, ele contribuie și la consolidarea noțiunii de ‚limbaj al savantului’ în *manga*, care intră sub umbrela conceptului de *yakuwarigo* („stereotipuri de limbaj”). Această analiză pavează calea pentru cercetări mai extinse asupra ‚limbajului savantului’ la o varietate mai mare de personaje din *manga*, având ca scop stabilirea unei înțelegeri cuprinzătoare a modului în care stereotipurile lingvistice sunt folosite pentru a reprezenta savanții în acest context al culturii pop.

Cuvinte cheie: *yakuwarigo*, limbaj stereotipizat, limbajul savantului, analiză pragma-lingvistică, text multimodal, manga

Introduction to Japanese Pop Culture

From music and fashion to films, television shows, memes, and even viral trends, pop culture serves as a dynamic mirror reflecting the attitudes, values, and aspirations of a particular era. As an ever-evolving phenomenon that constantly adapts to social changes, it plays a crucial role both in shaping and responding to the cultural landscape. Until recently, the exploration of pop culture's components has not been a prioritized field of research, often considered peripheral.

Comic strips have emerged as a commercial artistic expression, serving as a significant form of entertainment for both youth and adults, and solidifying their role as a preferred leisure activity. The public's attraction to Japanese pop culture is partly due to the positive image and favourable stereotypes associated with Japan and its people, bolstered by Japan's cultural diplomacy strategies since the early post-war decades. After the defeat suffered in the World War II, the Japanese felt the need to redefine their national identity and international

image. Betting on a cultural reinvention, they adopted a form of cultural diplomacy, promoting peace, harmony, and “cuteness”. Known as “Cool Japan”, a term coined by American journalist McGray in 2002, the Japanese government begins promoting cultural exports such as music, *anime*, *manga*, video games, and fashion.

In Japan, *manga* serves as both a source of pleasure and a means of escapism for both young people and adults. Often, driven by the need for emotional release or the desire for catharsis, individuals find solace in the fictional worlds of comics. Long commutes to school or work, waiting in lines to enter shops or restaurants, and lunch breaks all become opportune moments for engaging in this type of reading (Ito 2000, 5).

Nevertheless, the influence of pop culture elements on language, communication, and social interaction within society holds substantial significance. In the contemporary context, pop culture is frequently characterized in terms that suggest a close connection with consumerism, often attributed a lower value compared to what is typically classified as “high culture” (O’Brien, Szeman 2017, 7). Researchers classify *manga* as a component of pop culture, which they regard as less valuable than “high culture”.

Manga as a Medium for Linguistic Analysis of Yakuwarigo

Japanese comic books, known as *manga*, play a significant role in the contemporary cultural landscape, serving as a means of artistic expression and communication that transcends national boundaries. In today’s context, the concepts of “consumerism”, “globalization”, “individualism”, and “pop culture” manifest in a complex, interdependent relationship, mutually influencing the evolution of *manga* and its global reception and interpretation. *Manga* has evolved into not only an artistic product but also a consumer commodity, reflecting the pervasive consumerism in modern society. This entails the production and commercialization in a manner aimed at satisfying the demands and desires of consumers, thereby reinforcing the connection between art and cultural industry. The proliferation of the *manga* genre in post-industrial Japanese society can be attributed to its adaptability to the social environment. Initially a form of humorous entertainment aimed at young people, *manga* has evolved into a recognized cultural industry with a significant impact on the mass audience and public opinion. In contemporary Japan, *manga* are regarded as a symbol of cultural imperialism and an effective means of shaping public opinion, playing a crucial role in understanding modern Japan and increasingly influencing serious literature and art (Frențiu 2023, 245-46).

In recent years, *manga* has garnered significant interest from a diverse range of researchers, including psychologists, sociologists, linguists, and translators. This attention is attributed to the genre's growing popularity, the diversity of themes it explores, and its ability to reflect social issues. Comics express contemporary societal concerns, although they often present a distorted view of reality, focusing instead on the realm of imagination (Manolescu 2011: 16). *Manga* magazines are read and interpreted in various ways depending on the reader's specific cultural context, similar to how they are differently evaluated and utilized according to the reader's professional sphere of interest (Pasfield-Neofitou et al. 2016, 14).

Etymologically, the term *manga* derives from two Sino-Japanese characters, 漫 (*man*) meaning “unrestrained” or “free-flowing”, and 画 (*ga*), meaning “drawing” or “picture”. In English, scholars have translated it as “whimsical pictures” or “improvised pictures” (Hernandez 2019, 7), while in Romanian, Dimitrescu (2004-2005, 164) proposes the phrase “imagini întâmplătoare”. Although in Japan the term *manga* is used broadly to refer to comics regardless of their country of origin, in international contexts it is typically understood to denote comic art and narrative forms that are distinctly Japanese.

From the perspective of applied linguistics, *manga* constitutes a complex multimodal medium that integrates visual and textual semiotic resources to construct rich communicative environments. The interplay between written language and visual representation facilitates the emergence of context-dependent meanings, positioning *manga* as a fruitful site for discourse-pragmatic analysis. The dialog is typically rendered through hybrid textual forms, where graphic conventions – such as font variation, spatial arrangement, and symbolic imagery – visually encode phonological features including intonation, stress, and vocal intensity. These elements function not only to simulate speech prosody but also to mediate interpersonal stance and emotional nuance. Additionally, the narrative framework provides essential contextual scaffolding, offering insights into the situational triggers, character interactions, and socio-relational dynamics that shape the progression of communicative events (Pasfield-Neofitou et al. 2016, 211).

A noticeable surge in scholarly attention to the linguistic features of fictional discourse can be traced back to the early 2000s, particularly with the work of Kinsui Satoshi, who introduced the concept of *yakuwarigo* (role language). In his volume *Vācharu Nihongo: Yakuwarigo no nazo* (“Virtual Japanese: The Enigmas of Role Language”), Kinsui defines *yakuwarigo* as a patterned set of linguistic expressions associated with specific character types in fictional narratives. This framework elucidates how particular lexical, grammatical, and phonological choices signal stereotypical roles – such as the elderly professor, samurai, or

schoolgirl – thus shaping the reader's or viewer's mental image of the character. Rather than merely reflecting real-life speech, *yakuwarigo* functions as a stylized register that establishes social and cultural cues within the fictional world:

When hearing a particular way of speaking (vocabulary, usage, phrasing, intonation, etc.), if it evokes a specific character image (age, gender, occupation, class, era, appearance, personality, etc.), or if, when directed to a specific character image, it brings to mind the way of speaking that the character would likely use, this way of speaking is called “*yakuwarigo*” (role language).²

(Kinsui 2003, 205)

The term *yakuwarigo* has been variously rendered in English as “role language”, “character language”, or “stereotypical speech”, each translation capturing the notion that fictional characters' speech styles are systematically aligned with their narrative roles and symbolic functions. This theoretical lens underscores the communicative efficiency with which linguistic features – such as specific lexical items, sentence-final particles, honorifics, and phonological stylization – can index socially and culturally recognizable attributes, including age, gender, social hierarchy, and personality traits. In this sense, *yakuwarigo* operates as a semiotic shorthand, enabling readers to infer character identity and social positioning with minimal contextual elaboration. Within the medium of Japanese *manga*, *yakuwarigo* offers a compelling framework for analysing how language shapes character construction and contributes to narrative coherence. Importantly, the concept extends beyond fixed linguistic stereotypes, encompassing a broader spectrum of pragmatic and interactional cues that support character differentiation and deepen the reader's engagement with fictional worlds.

Methodological Approach: Pragmatic Equivalence in Translation

As part of a broader research project on role language (*yakuwarigo*) across various Japanese *manga*, this article examines the speech patterns of a single character selected as representative of the scholar archetype, with the aim of identifying the linguistic features that define this type of role language

² My translation from the source text: ある特定の言葉づかい（語彙・語法・言い回し・イントネーション等）を聞くと特定の人物像（年齢、性別、職業、階層、時代、容姿・風貌、性格等）を思い浮かべることができる、あるいはある特定の人物像を指示されると、その人物がいかにも使用しそうな言葉づかいを思い浮かべることができる、その言葉づかいを「役割後」と呼ぶ。

and exploring the most appropriate pragmatic correspondences in Romanian. Given the vast number of *manga* characters that could be analysed, the present study offers a concise and preliminary exploration of this linguistic pattern. While the analysis may appear limited in scope, it serves as an initial step in outlining and systematizing the defining features of this particular speech style, paving the way for further, more comprehensive investigations.

My research will commence with a close examination of the original Japanese text, focusing on the intended pragmatic meaning embedded in the linguistic and contextual choices. The objective is to provide a translation that faithfully preserves the semantic integrity of the source while simultaneously identifying and applying appropriate pragmatic equivalences between the source language and culture (Japanese) and the target language and culture (Romanian). The degree of relevance of the translated text (target text) will be examined in relation to the interaction between the character and the reader, analysing how the translation influences the reader's reception and interpretation within the target culture. This evaluation will provide a valuable perspective on the effectiveness of the translation in conveying the pragmatic message and its impact on the reader's experience.

The translations included in this study are my own and are not intended to verify or test existing theories in translation studies. Instead, the primary objective is to assess to what extent the pragmatic equivalences achieved in the transposition of the Japanese text into Romanian are both relevant and effective.

The Scholar's Language: Premises

This study begins with the premise of the existence of a 'scholar's language', a distinct subtype of role language that, although closely related to previously defined categories, warrants a more nuanced examination. While this linguistic variety shares several traits with *hakasego* (博士語), the "doctor/professor language" defined by Kinsui (2003), it exhibits features that extend beyond the parameters of that category. Although Kinsui (2003) and Teshigawara & Kinsui (2011) do reference *hakasego*, the specific speech style observed in the character of Kurotsuchi Mayuri is not analysed in detail within those frameworks, nor has it been extensively discussed in other scholarly works published in Romanian, English, or Japanese.

Consequently, this analysis does not begin from a rigid, predefined set of characteristics but builds upon a detailed pragma-linguistic investigation. Through this approach, I aim to identify the linguistic features that serve as *yakuwarigo* markers and contribute to a refined understanding of what I refer to as 'scholar's language'.

The category of role languages defined by Kinsui (2003) that most closely approximates what I call the 'scholar's language' is the one specific to doctors/professors (*hakasego* 博士語). However, this language often intersects with that attributed to the elderly (*rōjingo* 老人語), and their characteristics do not fully align with the features I attribute to the scholar's language. In other words, characters who employ *hakasego* are typically depicted as elderly male professors/doctors, reflecting entrenched sociolinguistic stereotypes in fictional representation. The character examined in this study, Kurotsuchi Mayuri, diverges from this archetype both in age and in demeanour, thus challenging the conventional association between *hakasego* and the elder scholar figure. While Mayuri's speech draws from *hakasego*, its idiosyncratic elements and exaggerated stylistic markers suggest a fusion between role language and unique character language, as outlined by Kinsui and Yamakido (2015).

The doctor's language is also characterized by the use of technical terms and a formal discursive structure, thus indicating a high level of education and specialization (Kinsui 2003, 2-8). These traits are common to the scholar's language, which also involves profound erudition and attention to technical details. On the other hand, the language of the elderly male, although it may contain elements of wisdom and formality, does not necessarily reflect the level of technicality and specialization characteristic of the scholar's language. This language is often marked by a paternal tone and the use of archaic or regional expressions, which are not necessarily indicative of scientific or academic discourse (Kinsui 2003, 9-11).

Thus, it can be observed that although there are overlaps between the scholar's language and the doctor's language, as well as certain similarities with the language of the elderly, the scholar's language is distinguished by a unique combination of technicality, erudition, and precision, which gives it a distinct linguistic identity. This not only highlights the advanced knowledge of the scholar but also their ability to navigate and manipulate linguistic conventions to communicate complex ideas in a clear and authoritative manner.

In this context, the pragma-linguistic analysis will highlight the distinctive features of the scholar's language, contributing to understanding how these linguistic traits reinforce cultural stereotypes. The use of specialized terms, elaborate grammatical structures, and stylistic elements that give this type of discourse its distinctive character will be examined. Defining and analysing the scholar's language as a stereotyped language not only enriches the linguistic and cultural repertoire but also provides valuable insight into the intersection of language, professional identity, and social perception.

The Scholar's Language: The Case of Kurotsuchi Mayuri

The character that inspired this analysis is Kurotsuchi Mayuri, from the *manga* universe of *Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ). Written and illustrated by Kubo Tite (久保帯人), it follows the adventures of a teenager named Kurosaki Ichigo (黒崎一護), who acquires the powers of a death god (*shinigami* 死神) from Kuchiki Rukia (朽木ルキア) following unfortunate events. His new abilities allow him to perform various tasks, such as protecting humans from malevolent spirits and guiding deceased souls to the afterlife, leading him to multiple ghostly realms. *Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ) was published in Shueisha's Weekly Shōnen Jump magazine from 2001 to 2016, with its chapters republished in 74 individual volumes (*tankōbon* 単行本).

Kurotsuchi Mayuri (涅マヨリ) is the captain of the 12th Division (*gyūni bantai taichō* 十二番隊隊長) in the Gotei 13 (*gotē jyūsan tai* 護廷十三隊) and the head of the Department of Technological Development (*gijyutsu kaihatsu kyoku* 技術開発局). As described by Kubo Tite in *Bleach Official Character Book Volume 2: Masked* (2010, 122-25), Mayuri is an eccentric scholar and scientist with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, renowned for his extraordinary intelligence but also for his cold and unscrupulous nature, driven by his desire to explore the unknown and satisfy his intellectual curiosity (Kubo 2010, 123). As Camilleri (2022, 488) observes, characters who speak *hakasego* typically fulfil one of three narrative roles: the wise mentor, the embodiment of evil, or the confused and senile elder. Kurotsuchi Mayuri represents a complex fusion of the first two, combining intellectual authority with a sinister, unsettling presence. While Kinsui (2003, 7) frames the doctor figure as a symbol of wisdom, Mayuri subverts this archetype by embodying a form of malignant intellect – a calculated, morally detached pursuit of knowledge. This duality, along with his role as a scientist and scholar, makes his speech an especially rich case for analysis within the theoretical framework of *yakuwarigo*.

The Scholar's Language: A Pragma-Linguistic Analysis

Kurotsuchi Mayuri makes his debut in the *manga Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ) in chapter 81, with his initial interactions occurring in chapter 82. The selected frame below captures an act of communication characterized by formality, technicality, irony, and a sense of superiority.



Figure 1. *Bleach*, 2001-2016, vol. 10, cap. 82, p. 49
(Source: Kubo, Tite. 2001-2016. *Bleach*, Japan: Shueisha)

Source language: 猿芝居はやめたまえヨ。我々隊長クラスが相手の魄動が消えたかどうか察知できないわけないだろ。それともそれができないほど君は油断してたとしても言うのかネ!?

Transliteration: *Sarushibai wa yametamae yo. Wareware taichō kurasu ga aite no hakudō ga kieta kadōka sacchi dekinai wake nai daro. Soretomo sore ga dekinai hodo kimi wa yudan shiteta to demo iu no ka ne!?*

Translation: „Încetează cu acest teatru ieftin! Crezi că noi, cei din clasa căpitanilor, nu putem detecta dacă pulsația spirituală a inamicului a dispărut? Sau poate vrei să spui că ai fost atât de neglijent încât nu ai putut face asta?!”

猿芝居 (*saru shibai*): literally ‘monkey theater’, refers to an unconvincing action or a farce.

やめたまえ (*yametamae*): imperative form of the verb *yameru* (やめる), meaning ‘to stop’ or ‘to cease’. Derived from the verb *tamau* (給う), an honorific form meaning ‘to give’ or ‘to bestow’, the imperative form *tamae* (たまえ) can be attached to verb stems to create a mild command, often translated simply as ‘please’. However, *tamae* (たまえ) is used exclusively in addressing someone of lower status than the speaker and is predominantly used by men. This lower status relationship is usually evident to both the speaker and the listener, such as the relationship between a boss and a subordinate. According to Kinsui (2003, 108-109), in contemporary times, the imperative form *tamae* (たまえ) is perceived as a term used by older men of certain social standing towards subordinates, fitting into what he calls the “boss language” (*kyōshigo* 上司語). Although it is rarely used in real life today, during the interwar period, its usage was broader and seemed to be common practice. In other words, its use as a *yakuwarigo* element has imperceptibly increased. In conclusion, in the context I analysed, it reveals the character’s attitude of superiority, masked by a veil of politeness.

ヨ (*yo*): sentence-final particle adding emphasis or authority to the statement. Written in *katakana*, it also serves as a pragmatic marker indicative of the speaker’s linguistic repertoire.

我々 (*wareware*): first-person plural ‘we’ (singular form *ware* 我), used to include the speaker in an elite group (NKD Vol. 20 1972-1976, 702).

隊長クラス (*taichō kurasu*): ‘captain class’, indicating a high rank in the Gotei 13 hierarchy.

相手 (*aite*): noun meaning ‘opponent’.

魄動 (*hakudō*): technical term composed of the *kanji* for ‘soul’ 魄 (*tama*) and for movement 動 (*dō*), referring to ‘spiritual pulse’ or ‘spiritual resonance’. The use of this term demonstrates his advanced knowledge and linguistic specificity in the context of a *shinigami* (‘death god’ 死神).

消えた (*kieta*): past form of the verb *kieru* (消える), used in this context to mean ‘disappeared’ or ‘dissipated’.

かどうか (*kadōka*): compound particle expressing uncertainty, ‘whether or not’.

察知できない (*sacchi dekinai*): compound verb formed from the noun *sacchi* (察知), meaning ‘sense’ or ‘perception’, and the auxiliary verb *dekiru* (できる), conjugated in the negative, non-past form, meaning ‘cannot do’. The phrase translates as ‘cannot detect’.

わけない (*wake nai*): contraction of the phrase *wake ga nai* (わけがない), which expresses the idea of impossibility.

だろ (*daro*): conjugated form of the copula *da* (だ), meaning 'probably' or 'possibly', adding a nuance of certainty. It is a shortened form of *darō* (だらう).

できないほど (*dekinai hodo*): phrase composed of the negative form of the verb *dekiru* (できる), meaning 'to be able to', and *hodo* (ほど), a particle expressing degree or extent. It translates as 'to the point where you cannot' or 'so much that you cannot'.

君 (*kimi*): one of the variants for expressing the second-person singular in Japanese, similar to the personal pronoun 'you'. Japanese offers a wide variety of second-person appellations, such as *anata*, *kimi*, *omae*, *temē*, *kisama*, *onushi*. Therefore, the choice of *kimi* (君) is not accidental and is interpreted as emphasizing familiarity and superiority over the interlocutor. While it originally designated a person of noble lineage, added as a suffix of politeness after the name of a person of higher rank, in contemporary times it is used by men to address people of equal or lower rank (NKD Vol. 6 1972-1976, 39).

油断してた (*yudan shiteta*): compound verb formed from the noun *yudan* (油断), meaning 'negligence' or 'indolence', and the auxiliary *suru* (する), conjugated in the affirmative, past continuous form, meaning 'to do'. The phrase translates as 'you were negligent'.

とでも言うのかネ (*to demo iu no ka ne*): phrase translating as 'do you mean to say that', with the sentence-final particles *no ka ne* (のかネ) adding a nuance of questioning or confirmation. Together with the punctuation marks used, "!", this is considered a rhetorical question, which in the given context, enhances the sarcasm and superior attitude of the character. The *to demo* (とでも) structure is often used when dismissing an idea as absurd, while *ne* (ネ) at the end is a nonchalant, almost whimsical rhetorical flourish that makes his mockery more theatrical.

The following characteristics of the scholar's language are derived from a preliminary analysis of Kurotsuchi Mayuri and may be further refined or expanded as additional characters are examined in future studies:

→ The character uses specialized terms such as *hakudō* (魄動), which are not common in everyday Japanese language. This suggests not only advanced knowledge but also a concern for technical details, reflecting a high level of erudition and expertise in their field.

→ The use of verb forms such as *yametamae* (やめたまえ) and particles like *wake nai* (わけない) indicates a level of education and a position of authority. For instance, the phrase *Sarushibai wa yametamae yo.* (猿芝居はやめたまえヨ。), ‘Încetează cu acest teatru ieftin!’, (“Cease this monkey show.”) employs *tamae* (たまえ), a command form that is formally polite yet often used in a condescending manner by superiors addressing inferiors. This choice of wording is not meant to show respect but rather to highlight his dominance while ridiculing the opponent.

→ Mayuri Kurotsuchi’s speech style is defined by a deliberate blend of exaggerated formality and overt derision, creating a uniquely unsettling and provocative tone. He strategically employs linguistic refinements akin to *bikago* (美化語, beautification language), not to convey politeness, but as a tool of mockery and intellectual superiority. Rather than using elevated language to show respect, he manipulates it to sound condescending, theatrical, and psychologically domineering, turning formality into a weapon of ridicule. While *bikago* is traditionally used to refine speech or create a sense of distance, Mayuri does not employ it in a conventional manner. Instead, he distorts its function, using refined language not to show respect, but to enhance his condescension. His speech is highly calculated, seamlessly weaving formal linguistic structures with biting sarcasm to underscore his intellectual and moral superiority. Even when he does not explicitly use *bikago*, the combination of formal phrasing and theatrical disdain replicates its effect, reinforcing his distinctive brand of mockery and psychological dominance. This synthetic politeness – where he maintains a superficially polite register while lacing his words with unmistakable derision – reinforces his character as someone who derives pleasure from psychological manipulation and verbal humiliation. His speech is not merely a display of intelligence but an assertion of dominance, turning verbal exchanges into another arena for his experimentation and control.

→ The use of rhetorical questions carries significant strategic potential in discourse. In the case of Kurotsuchi Mayuri, such questions reflect a critical and self-assured stance, consistent with the persona of a scholar exhibiting heightened intellectual authority. Rather than seeking genuine responses, these interrogatives are employed to underscore the presumed ignorance or naïveté of the interlocutor. They often imply that the speaker already possesses the answer or is merely articulating a personal stance, with the rhetorical aim of influencing or persuading the listener to adopt a similar viewpoint (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2018, 51–52).

→ The character's literary style of expression is evidenced by what appears to be a colloquial style of politeness. Mayuri prefers short conjugation forms, which I interpret as an application of the economy of expression characteristic of written language (*kaki kotoba* 書き言葉) in speech. This further reinforces the scholarly trait I consider specific to the scholar's language, suggesting familiarity with a sophisticated and academic linguistic register.

Writing sentence-final particles, such as *yo* (ヨ) and *ne* (ネ), in the *katakana* syllabary, which is primarily used for rendering loanwords (*gairaigo* 外来語), highlights them as *yakuwarigo* markers that add a particular tone to each statement, emphasizing the speaker's authority and certainty. They are thus part of Mayuri's specific language, but I do not consider them representative of the scholar's language in general, serving rather as complementary elements.

In translating into Romanian, maintaining the authoritative tone, sarcasm, and technical specificity of the language is imperative. The proposed translation, 'Încetează cu acest teatru ieftin! Crezi că noi, cei din clasa căpitanilor, nu putem detecta dacă pulsația spirituală a inamicului a dispărut? Sau poate vrei să spui că ai fost atât de neglijent încât nu ai putut face asta?!', successfully conveys the note of arrogance and sarcasm, even retaining terms that are not part of common vocabulary. However, the translation falls short in preserving the other characteristics mentioned above, such as elements of *faux-bikago* (美化語, beautification language) and the economy of expression characteristic of written language (*kaki kotoba* 書き言葉), which cannot be faithfully reproduced in Romanian. These aspects are vital for fully conveying the nuances and depth of Kurotsuchi Mayuri's communication style, which combines an elevated linguistic register with a disdainful and critical attitude, typical of a scholar with a high opinion of their own intellectual superiority.

It is essential to extend this analysis to include additional contexts and situations where Mayuri's discourse stands out. This approach will allow me to observe the consistency and linguistic variations of the character depending on the situational context and interlocutors. Thus, the following frame captures the interaction between our scholar and characters of lower social status, in his attempt to turn them into subjects for his experiments.



Figure 2. *Bleach*, 2001-2016, vol. 14, cap. 121, p. 151
(Source: Kubo, Tite. 2001-2016. *Bleach*, Japan: Shueisha)

Source language: 薬物投与は一日八回！機械実験も一日五時間までにしよう！食事も経口で与えるし睡眠時には衣服もやろう！改造だって死ぬようなものは極力控えるようにするヨ！！どうだネ！？研究体としては破格の待遇だと思いがネ...

Transliteration: *Yakubutsutōyo wa ichinichi hakkai! Kikai jikken mo ichinichi gojikan made ni shiyō! Shokuji mo kēkō de ataeru shi, suiminji ni wa ifuku mo yarō! Kaizō datte shinu yōna mono wa kyokuryoku hikaeru yōni suru yo!! Dō da ne!? Kenkyūtai toshite wa hakaku no taigū da to omou ga ne...*

Translation: „Administrarea medicamentelor va avea loc de opt ori pe zi! Experimentele mecanice sunt limitate la cinci ore pe zi! Hrana va fi administrată pe cale orală, iar în timpul somnului vei avea haine! Modificările periculoase vor fi evitate pe cât posibil! Cum ți se pare?! Cred că este un tratament excepțional pentru un subiect de cercetare, nu-i așa...?”

Since the selected fragment is considerably long, I will limit myself to a detailed analysis of elements that are of interest for identifying the characteristics of the scholar's language, with connective terms being ignored or analysed within phrases.

薬物投与 (*yakubutsutōyo*): technical term for the administration of drugs. The use of this term suggests a deep knowledge of medical terminology.

一日八回 (*ichinichi hakkai*): a compound noun that can be translated as 'eight times a day'. This specific and precise expression indicates an exact frequency, reflecting a level of rigor and detail characteristic of a scientist.

機械実験 (*kikai jikken*): a technical term for 'mechanical experiments', indicating a field of scientific expertise.

一日五時間までにしよう (*ichinichi gojikan made ni shiyō*): indicates a limitation and suggests rigorous planning, typical of an organized scientist.

食事 (*shokuji*): term for 'meal' or 'food'. Notable is the choice of a Sino-Japanese noun to express objective formality, lending an elegant, elevated tone to the discourse.

経口で与える (*keikō de ataeru*): technical expression for 'oral administration'.

睡眠 (*suimin*): term for 'sleep'. The use of a Sino-Japanese noun is notable for expressing objective formality, giving an elegant, elevated tone to the discourse.

衣服 (*ifuku*): a Sino-Japanese noun meaning 'clothes', expresses objective formality, offering an elegant, elevated tone to the discourse.

やろう (*yarō*): the volitional form of the verb *yaru* (やる), meaning 'to give' or 'to offer', and can only be used towards an interlocutor of equal or lower status. Using it towards someone of equal status presupposes a close, intimate relationship.

改造 (*kaizō*): technical term for 'modification'.

死ぬようなもの (*shinu yō na mono*): expression suggesting a danger of death.

極力 (*kyokuryoku*): adverb meaning 'as much as possible' or 'to do everything in one's power'. Once again, a preference for a Sino-Japanese term, expressing objective formality, which offers an elegant, elevated tone to the discourse.

控える (*hikaeru*): verb expressing the idea of being temperate, 'to refrain'.

ヨ (*yo*): sentence-final particle emphasizing the statement, adding a firm tone.

どうだ (*dō da*): rhetorical, provocative question: 'How does it seem to you?!'

ネ (*ne*): particle adding a tone of insistence and seeking the interlocutor's agreement.

研究体 (*kenkyūtai*): technical term for ‘research subject’ or ‘guinea pig’.

破格 (*hakaku*): Sino-Japanese noun serving as an attribute, suggesting the idea of ‘exceptional’, ‘remarkable’, or ‘special’.

待遇 (*taigū*): Sino-Japanese noun meaning ‘treatment’.

The analyzed example reveals that the language used by Mayuri is imbued with technical terms and complex structures, reflecting not only his vast knowledge but also an authoritative and sarcastic attitude. This manner of expression denotes an elevated discursive style, characterized by a linguistic sophistication specific to scientists. In addition to the previously mentioned characteristics, there is a noticeable preference for the use of Sino-Japanese vocabulary, which conveys objective formality, thereby imparting an elegant and elevated tone to the discourse.

Furthermore, the use of particles written in *katakana*, such as *yo* (ヨ) and *ne* (ネ), accentuates the speaker’s certainty and authority while adding a distinctive and specific note to the character. These elements of *yakuwarigo* contribute to constructing a unique linguistic identity for Mayuri, thereby emphasizing his traits of intellectual superiority and subtle irony. Additionally, it is essential to mention that these particles, alongside the technical nature of his discourse, serve to create an atmosphere of intimidation and control, amplifying the reader’s perception of Mayuri as both an erudite and menacing character. This style of speech not only distinguishes him from other characters in the *manga* but also consolidates the image of a scholar who asserts his authority through knowledge and sarcasm.

Comparing the original with the translation, we observe that the translation manages to retain most of the pragmatic messages and the intended tone of the *mangaka* (the author of the *manga*), although some nuances specific to Japanese culture and language may be lost in the adaptation process. The Romanian translation preserves the clarity and authority of Mayuri’s discourse, yet certain subtleties of the technical and formal language, as well as the subtle ironies, may be more challenging to convey in full.

To further illustrate the complexity of the scholar’s language, I analyze the following scene from the same *manga*, where Mayuri shows complete disinterest in a subject he has extensively researched in the past.



Figure 3. *Bleach*, 2001-2016, vol. 14, cap. 121, p. 153
(Source: Kubo, Tite. 2001-2016. *Bleach*, Japan: Shueisha)

Source language: だがネ悪いが私はもう君等の研究は終えたんだヨ。もう君等には興味が無いんだ。そこを退き給えヨ。...ホウ...何だ、旅禍ってやつは敵の調査もロクにしないまま敵の本拠地に乗り込んでくるのかネ? せめて頂点の十三人ぐらいは頭に入れておくべきだと思うがネ.....!

Transliteration: *Da ga ne, warui ga watashi wa mō kimira no kenkyū wa oetanda yo. Mō kimira ni wa kyōmi ga nain da. Soko wo noki tamae yo. ...Hō... Nan da, ryokatte yatsu wa teki no chōsa mo roku ni shinai mama teki no honkyochi ni norikonde kuru no ka ne? Semete chōten no jyūsan nin gurai wa atama ni irete oku beki da to omō ka ne.....!*

Translation: 'Îmi pare rău, dar am terminat cercetarea asupra voastră, neînsemnaților. Nu mai am niciun interes față de voi. Dă-te la o parte! ...Oh... ce e asta? Așa-zișii intruși aducători de ghinion vin în baza inamicului fără să se documenteze corespunzător despre adversar? Măcar cei treisprezece lideri ar trebui să fie cunoscuți, nu crezi?'

だが (*da ga ne*): the phrase *da ga* (だが) means ‘however’ or ‘but’, and is used to introduce a statement that contrasts with previous expectations. *Ne* (ね) is a sentence-ending particle used to seek agreement or confirm what has been said. In this context, *ne* (ね) adds a tone of familiarity and can suggest a superior or condescending attitude.

悪いが (*warui ga*): *Warui* (悪い) means ‘bad’ and is used here as a polite form to express regret, though condescendingly. *Ga* (が) is a particle that connects two contrasting clauses. The equivalent in English would be ‘I’m sorry, but...’, displaying a false sense of regret, emphasizing the speaker’s sarcasm or irony. Although Mayuri states that he is sorry, the context suggests he is not sincere.

私 (*watashi*): A noun that expresses the first-person singular, and is the most common term for self-reference. In contemporary usage, *watashi* (私) is predominantly used by female speakers in situations requiring neutral politeness (NKD Vol. 20 1972-1976, 655). Considering the male speaker, choosing *watashi* (私) over more common male variants like *boku* (僕) or *ore* (俺) conveys multiple pragmatic messages. Mayuri is known for his eccentric and often sadistic personality. Using *watashi* (私), a formal and polite pronoun, starkly contrasts with his often condescending tone and authoritarian behavior. This creates a dissonance effect, highlighting the character’s eccentricity and complexity. In many cases, Mayuri uses formalities to emphasize his sarcasm. While *watashi* (私) is usually employed to show respect, in the context of Mayuri’s interactions with those of lower status, it can underline the irony of the situation. He uses exaggerated politeness to underscore his superiority and disdain. In conclusion, Mayuri’s use of *watashi* (私) towards an inferior is a strategic choice that underscores his complexity as a character, balancing surface formality with deep sarcasm or contempt. This not only reflects his knowledge and authority but also contributes to his characterization as an eccentric and often malevolent scholar.

君等 (*kimira*): *Kimi* (君) is one of the variants for expressing the second-person singular in Japanese, similar to the personal pronoun ‘you’. *Kimira* (君等) is a plural form that can be considered colloquial and somewhat informal. Adding the suffix *-ra* (等) introduces a pejorative sense, denoting disdain and disregard for the people being referred to. Mayuri uses this form to emphasize the inferiority and lack of respect towards his interlocutors, treating them as an unimportant or insignificant group. By using this form, Mayuri amplifies the stereotyping and irony in his language. This not only highlights his intellectual and professional superiority but also his intention to diminish the status of his interlocutors, often with a note of sarcasm. From a pragmatic perspective, this use of the pronoun indicates a clearly defined power relationship. Mayuri deliberately

positions himself in a dominant role, and his choice of language reflects not only his contempt for inferiors but also a method of keeping them at a distance and constantly reaffirming his superiority.

終えたんだ (*oetan da*): the past form of the verb 'to finish', with *n da* (んだ) adding an explanatory or emphatic note. It confirms the action of completing the research, adding a note of finality and certainty.

退き給え (*doki tamae*): the imperative form of the verb *doku* (退く), meaning 'to step aside' or 'to make way'. Derived from the verb *tamau* (給う), an honorific form meaning 'to offer' or 'to give', the imperative form *tamae* (たまえ) can be attached to verb stems to create a mild command. This is often simply translated as 'please'.

ホウ (*hō*): an interjection expressing surprise or interest. Writing this interjection in katakana emphasizes the character's dramatic tone and irony.

何だ (*nan da*): a rhetorical question meaning 'What is this?'. Pragmatically, it indicates a mix of surprise and contempt.

旅禍 (*ryōka*): a term specific to the *Bleach* (BLEACH ブリーチ) universe, referring to those who have illegally entered the Soul Society (ソウル・ソサエティ). This includes any intruder who enters without the permission of the death gods (*shinigami* 死神), whether they are a soul or a human. According to common belief, strangers are said to bring misfortune to the Soul Society, which is why they are eliminated without discrimination.

ってやつ (*tte yatsu*): a colloquial expression that can be translated as 'this so-called'. Its use adds a tone of disdain and belittlement.

ロクにしない (*roku ni shinai*): a colloquial expression meaning 'without even doing'. It adds a depreciative tone.

本拠地 (*honkyochi*): a technical term meaning 'main base'. It suggests knowledge of the military context.

のかネ (*no ka ne*): a rhetorical structure that adds a tone of irony and surprise. The sentence-ending particle *ne* (ネ), written in katakana, emphasizes the speaker's insistence and certainty.

頂点の十三人 (*chōten no jūsan nin*): a compound noun referring to the thirteen leaders of the Soul Society (ソウル・ソサエティ). It indicates detailed knowledge of the hierarchy.

The analysis of this paragraph from Mayuri's discourse confirms the linguistic characteristics of the scholar's language identified earlier, adding the novelty of *kanji* usage for parts of speech that, in contemporary everyday Japanese, are usually rendered using the *hiragana* syllabary. Examples include the lexical suffix *-ra* (等) and the negative, non-past form *nai* (無い) of the verb *aru* (ある).

In the context of modern Japanese, using *kanji* instead of *hiragana* for such grammatical elements not only intensifies the formality of the discourse but also imparts a note of erudition and sophistication. This can be interpreted as a way for Mayuri to assert his authority and deep knowledge in a specialized field. Additionally, this stylistic choice may reflect a deliberate intention to create a contrast between his elevated language and common speech, thereby highlighting his superior position both intellectually and hierarchically. This adds a dimension of sarcasm and superiority to his interactions with interlocutors, accentuating his distinctive traits as an eccentric scholar.

From a pragmatic perspective, the linguistic peculiarities attributed by the *mangaka* to Kurotsuchi Mayuri are intended to convey an authoritative and disdainful tone. He expresses his intellectual superiority and lack of interest in his interlocutors by using sophisticated and formal language combined with sarcasm. Mayuri employs particles such as *ne* (ネ) and *yo* (ヨ) to add a tone of superiority and sarcasm. While the translation manages to retain the authoritative and disdainful tone, the inability to fully convey these particles in Romanian results in a diminished degree of expressed sarcasm. The plural noun *kimira* (君等) could be equated with the deictic 'voi' (you), but this only captures the essence without conveying the pejorative nuances implied by the suffix *-ra* (〜等). My solution was to enhance the meaning by adding a pejorative term in Romanian, specifically 'neînsemnaților' (insignificant ones). I chose this term because Mayuri has no further interest in a group he has already studied, and therefore they hold no significance for him.

The Scholar's Language: Conclusions

This analysis highlights the pragmatic and linguistic intricacies of Mayuri Kurotsuchi's speech, demonstrating how his language constructs an authoritative, erudite, and condescending persona. His scholar's language is marked by a highly technical lexicon, synthetic politeness, and linguistic manipulation, all of which serve to emphasize his intellectual superiority and disdain for others. Key linguistic features include:

The use of specialized terminology (e.g., 魄動 *hakudō*, 'pulsăția spirituală'; 研究体 *kenkyūtai*, 'subiect de cercetare'), which not only signals advanced knowledge but also establishes a detached, analytical tone, characteristic of a scientist.

Formal yet condescending imperative forms (e.g., やめたまえ *yametamae*), reinforcing his authority while subtly ridiculing his interlocutors.

A preference for Sino-Japanese vocabulary, adding formality and precision, creating a linguistic register that feels both refined and intimidating.

Rhetorical questions and sarcastic structures, which frame his interlocutors as ignorant, further reinforcing his self-perceived superiority.

The use of particles written in *katakana* (e.g., ヱ *yo*, ネ *ne*), which function as *yakuwarigo* markers, enhancing his theatricality and condescending tone.

Given the culturally bound nature of *yakuwarigo*, its translation poses a challenge: the associations triggered in a Japanese reader may not carry over to a Romanian audience, thus requiring strategic choices to preserve the character's pragmatic authority and intellectual eccentricity. From a pragma-linguistic perspective, the Romanian translation successfully preserves the authoritative and sarcastic tone of the original. However, certain nuances – such as Mayuri's faux-politeness, lexical refinement, and subtle pejorative connotations – prove difficult to fully replicate. For instance:

The economy of expression found in the Japanese text is lost in the Romanian translation, as Japanese written language tends to be more concise and syntactically flexible.

Particles like *yo* (ヨ) and *ne* (ネ), which add certainty, sarcasm, and theatrical emphasis, have no direct Romanian equivalent, slightly diminishing the expressive force of the translation.

The plural second-person pronoun *kimira* (君等), which carries both familiarity and disdain, was adapted using a pejorative descriptor ('neînsemnaților' insignificant ones) to retain its dismissive tone.

Overall, this study concludes that Mayuri's scholar language is a refined yet calculated register, blending formal structures with overt mockery. His linguistic strategy is not merely a reflection of intelligence but a tool of psychological manipulation, positioning him as a superior intellectual force within the narrative. While the Romanian translation captures the core pragmatic intent, further research is needed to explore alternative linguistic strategies that might better convey the full spectrum of Mayuri's linguistic arrogance.

This preliminary study is subject to several limitations that must be acknowledged. The analysis focused on a single character, Kurotsuchi Mayuri, as a representative of the scholar's language, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Examining a broader range of characters associated with similar roles would allow for a clearer distinction between linguistic features specific to the role and idiosyncratic traits unique to individual characters. Moreover, the pragmatic interpretation proposed in this study is inherently subjective and may vary depending on the researcher's perspective, potentially leading to conclusions that are not universally applicable. Future studies should aim to incorporate comparative analyses across multiple texts and genres to strengthen the theoretical grounding of this category and to account for variation in representation and reception. However, this initial study provides a solid foundation for further research, emphasizing the need for a comprehensive and

systematic examination of the various linguistic manifestations attributed to scholars in *manga* literature. This would significantly contribute to understanding how the scholar's language is perceived and used within the specific cultural and narrative context of this form of pop culture.

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INTERVIEW

ENTRETIEN AVEC ILIANA HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU

Maria SIMOTA¹ 

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU est une jeune écrivaine qui a publié à l'âge de 20 ans le livre *Allez avec la chance* (2020) aux éditions Gallimard, dans la collection « Verticales ». Le récit raconte son voyage de 9 356 kilomètres en auto-stop à travers l'Amérique du Sud, qu'elle a réalisé en 2018, à l'âge de 18 ans, en partant du nord de la Colombie jusqu'au Chili. Iliana est la fille de l'écrivaine Irina Teodorescu, qui l'a encouragée et lui a donné de précieux conseils pour l'écriture.

Maria SIMOTA : Vous évoquez dans votre récit vos origines multiculturelles : un père d'ascendance colombienne, une mère roumaine. Vous êtes née en France, où vous résidez actuellement. Vous continuez à voyager, en Bulgarie, par exemple. Le voyage semble occuper une place importante dans votre histoire familiale. Pourriez-vous nous dire davantage sur l'importance du déplacement, de la migration, dans votre famille ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : En effet, notre récit collectif familial tourne beaucoup autour de la diversité de nos origines, avec des approches diverses qui se sont entremêlées. Au départ, je pense que c'est mon père qui a érigé ces origines en fierté avec une approche assez élitiste. Il vient d'un milieu bourgeois

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international et a grandi avec ces mélanges qui étaient valorisés. Son père à lui était certes Colombie – un pays pauvre, associé pour beaucoup au crime et à la délinquance –, mais d’une famille d’oligarques, alors c’était bien vu, ça rajoutait même une touche exotique, je suppose. Tout ce milieu me dégoûte un peu, mais à mon avis c’est de là que ce mythe familial découle. C’est sans doute réducteur car mon père a aussi rompu avec son milieu d’origine pour devenir artiste et vivre en dehors de cet entre-soi, mais c’est une des approches qui a été fondatrice. Je ne sais pas si ma mère, qui débarquait tout juste de Roumanie à ma naissance, aurait tenu à m’enseigner le roumain si mon père n’avait pas insisté. Aujourd’hui en tout cas, elle est consciente de la richesse que cela représente. En dehors de la vision de mon père, j’ai toujours été entourée, à l’école, d’enfants issus de l’immigration populaire. Ce n’était pas le même monde, leurs origines à eux n’étaient pas du tout valorisées socialement, d’autant qu’elles étaient plus visibles – moi je suis blonde et blanche, j’ai « l’air française » même si la France est à mes yeux définie par sa créolisation (un concept d’Edouard Glissant). J’ai donc remarqué assez jeune cette injustice : alors que je jouissais pleinement des bénéfices de mes origines, celles, plus visibles, des autres, devenaient un obstacle. C’était une corde de plus à mon arc, quelque chose que je maîtrisais, que je pouvais mettre en valeur au moment opportun et garder secrète la plupart du temps. Pour parler en des termes sociologiques et bourdieusiens, ces origines ont constitué pour moi un capital culturel indéniable, et on m’a toujours appris à en être fière, à les cultiver, les mettre en valeur, à parler plusieurs langues et à voyager.

Maria SIMOTA : À 18 ans, vous choisissez de prendre une année sabbatique pour entreprendre un voyage ambitieux sur un autre continent. Qu’est-ce qui a été l’élément déclencheur de ce départ ? Et pourquoi avoir choisi l’Amérique latine en particulier ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : J’ai tendance à dire que l’élément déclencheur – si banal ! – a été l’amour. J’avais rencontré un Chilien qui était aussi un grand voyageur, avec qui je suis toujours, et j’étais curieuse de découvrir son continent, bien que je ne sois pas allée dans son pays en premier. Avant cela, mes origines colombiennes ne m’intéressaient pas du tout et me paraissaient même un peu lointaines pour être encore revendiquées. Mais il ne faudrait pas négliger le rôle de l’amitié ! J’avais plusieurs amies plus âgées qui avaient fait des voyages d’un à plusieurs mois à la sortie du bac, avec une bourse attribuée par une association. Ça m’a inspirée et j’ai fait pareil. J’ai donc eu pas mal de modèles de voyageur·euses autour de moi. C’était aussi une idée qui en valait une autre à un moment où j’hésitais à poursuivre en deuxième année une licence de maths-physique. Je ne suis pas une adepte des grands discours sur le rôle émancipateur du voyage, donc je me tiendrai à ça : c’est un concours de circonstances qui m’a

poussée à emprunter cette route à priori étonnante, elle a été enrichissante et j'en suis heureuse, mais j'ai sans doute aussi loupé des choses, par exemple en me coupant, si jeune, du quotidien des gens de mon âge.

Maria SIMOTA : À une époque où la littérature française est largement dominée par le roman, vous avez choisi d'écrire un récit de voyage, un genre souvent considéré comme mineur et historiquement dominé par les hommes. *Aller avec la chance* était-il votre première tentative d'écriture, ou aviez-vous déjà écrit auparavant ? Comment avez-vous découvert votre goût pour l'écriture ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Depuis que je suis petite, j'ai toujours aimé les mots sous toutes leurs formes : bavardage, lecture, écriture, chanson... J'avais donc déjà eu des projets livresques enfantins, mais aucune tentative sérieuse avant *Aller avec la chance*. Il y a aussi eu une phase intermédiaire entre mon enfance et cette publication, pendant laquelle je ne savais pas sur quoi écrire. J'ai tendance à vouloir être très efficace, directe et pertinente, le propos m'intéresse sans doute davantage que la forme (littéraire ou autre) même si elle m'amuse. C'est donc vraiment cette expérience en stop, plus que le voyage lui-même d'ailleurs, qui m'a suggéré ce projet. Ce n'était pas une envie d'écrire mais plutôt une envie de raconter ça, de l'interpréter, de crier sur tous les toits cette vérité qui me semblait échapper à la plupart des gens : s'entraider est gratifiant et enrichissant pour les deux protagonistes, le stop est une pratique merveilleuse qui permet des rencontres rares et profondes grâce à un cadre particulièrement intime, malgré des préjugés innombrables qui se mettent parfois en travers de leur route, beaucoup de nos congénères sont prêt-es à aider, la peur de l'autre est infondée et dangereuse, si on en a la force, on peut aller au-delà de dangers bien réels (notamment les violences sexistes et sexuelles en tant que fille) pour faire advenir d'autres relations.

Je me dois aussi de dire que ma mère est devenue écrivaine pendant mon adolescence, et qu'elle m'a autant soutenue qu'inspirée, en me disant dès mes deux ou trois premières pages écrites que ce projet était fort et pouvait aboutir.

Maria SIMOTA : Dans votre récit, de nombreuses personnes rencontrées sur la route vous font remarquer qu'il s'agit d'un voyage particulièrement risqué pour une jeune femme de votre âge. Vous répondez dans votre récit que c'est en France, et non en Amérique latine, que vous vous êtes réellement sentie mal à l'aise en présence d'un homme lors d'un trajet en voiture. Dans *Les femmes aussi sont du voyage*, Lucie Azema souligne que plus une femme prend des risques en voyage, plus elle est perçue comme inconsciente, alors qu'un homme, lui, gagnera

en virilité et en réputation de héros. En quoi le fait d'être une femme a-t-il influencé votre expérience du voyage ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Je partage tout à fait le constat de Lucie Azema, même si je me demande à quel point c'est un domaine qu'il faut chercher à se réapproprier vu ses conséquences écologiques et sociales et son passé colonial. Ou, pour nuancer, on peut sûrement se réapproprier du voyage et de son récit en le subvertissant, mais ce n'est pas mon combat. Je n'aime pas que mon livre soit classé comme récit de voyage parce qu'à mes yeux mon voyage y est tout à fait secondaire, contextuel. J'avais conscience de n'avoir rien à raconter de spécial sur les zones que j'ai traversées ou sur le voyage comme expérience, c'était vraiment l'autostop comme exemple inégalable d'une pratique qui permet à la fois l'entraide et la rencontre qui me tenait à cœur. J'aurais sans doute pu écrire un livre similaire en me baladant à Paris et en demandant mon chemin à des inconnu-es et en prolongeant volontairement l'interaction. J'ai d'ailleurs fait cette expérience lors d'un stage à la revue DOR à Bucarest. Mais le contexte est moins propice parce que pour aller au-delà d'une interaction de 30 secondes, il faut forcer le destin. Mais cette configuration a en commun avec le stop de reposer sur une dépendance aux autres liée au refus d'un élément de confort matériel : un smartphone avec un GPS ou une voiture personnelle.

Pour revenir à la question, il est indéniable que j'ai traversé ce voyage – comme le reste de mon existence – à travers un prisme genré. Selon les pays traversés, des différences par rapport au contexte français dans le rapport entre les genres m'ont bien sûr frappées. Si je voulais faire une analyse de comptoir je pourrais estimer qu'en Colombie par exemple (le pays où j'ai passé le plus de temps), il y a plus de harcèlement de rue qu'ici, et que la projection de fantasmes sexuels dans des situations inappropriées sont plus fréquentes, mais que le « non » y est davantage respecté. Mais rien que le fait que ces observations se déroulent dans le cadre d'un voyage en sac à dos fausse toute comparaison avec ma vie sédentaire en France. Ce dont je suis certaine, c'est que l'Amérique Latine n'est pas plus sexiste que l'Europe. Les évolutions des rapports de genre y suivent un autre chemin, notamment grâce à des mouvements féministes intersectionnels très dynamiques.

Comme partout dans le monde je pense, être une femme en voyage a été un défi, mais j'ai essayé de ne pas me laisser démoraliser, d'emmener mes conducteurs vers un autre type de relation, sincère et respectueuse, dans la considération de l'autre en tant que personne et pas en tant qu'objet sexuel. J'ai l'impression que c'est souvent possible, que les gens ne sont pas monolithiques, qu'on peut faire dévier leur comportement en les abordant différemment. On n'est pas toujours prête à faire cet effort qui demande de prendre sur soi, d'être pédagogue, de prendre du recul sur la misogynie de notre interlocuteur en

estimant que c'est une culture qui parle à travers lui, mais je trouve les vies des gens tellement intéressantes que pour moi ça vaut la peine.

Maria SIMOTA : Depuis plusieurs décennies, l'autofiction et les récits à la première personne occupent une place prépondérante dans les librairies. Vous, en revanche, avez choisi de dresser le portrait des dizaines de personnes rencontrées sur la route, en leur donnant la parole à travers votre récit. Vous expliquez que vous préférez faire de l'autostop seule, car cela créait une intimité avec le conducteur et facilitait les échanges. J'ai l'impression que les gens se confient à vous avec une grande aisance, parfois même sur des sujets que leur propre famille ignore. En quoi le fait d'avoir recueilli tant de témoignages a-t-il eu un impact sur vous ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Le stop est un cadre de rencontre assez particulier. La voiture, même si c'est un symbole un peu archaïque, reste le seul endroit fermé mais non-immobilier, où les gens sont chez eux. C'est donc le seul moyen opérationnel qui me vient à l'esprit pour rentrer chez quelqu'un, même si ce n'est que dans son véhicule ! En plus d'être intimiste, ce cadre donne aussi un objectif commun, une route à suivre ensemble. Une autre auto-stoppeuse m'avait même dit qu'elle voyait une dimension presque hypnotique dans cette configuration : on regarde dans la même direction (la route), on est concentré dessus en même temps qu'on discute, alors, presque malgré nous, on se livre. Je pense qu'il y a une part de vrai, que cette configuration aide beaucoup, mais que, comme dans toute interaction, la personnalité et les caractéristiques sociologiques des protagonistes jouent aussi. Les automobilistes se livrent mais en tenant compte de l'autostoppeuse qu'ils ont à leurs côtés. C'est assez inhabituel, de rencontrer un inconnu et que les grandes lignes de la relation se tracent si rapidement. Et puis il faut se présenter plusieurs fois par jour, parfois on s'ennuie d'être soi-même et de devoir répéter sans cesse la même chose ! Mais c'est un exercice intéressant. J'ai aussi réalisé à quel point les gens ont besoin d'être écoutés, et même, plus activement, d'être questionnés. J'ai donc appris ça sur les gens, et aussi sur moi : à quel point j'adore poser des questions, essayer de comprendre les gens, entendre des histoires et discerner une tension principale dans leur existence, une lueur de folie qui les rend si différents de tous les autres malgré les similitudes. Là, en répondant à cette question, je me dis même que c'est un cadre tellement spécial que ça doit influencer sur ma façon d'entrer en relation dans des contextes qui n'ont rien à voir, où les enjeux sont différents.

Plus personnellement, je pense que j'ai écrit ce livre parce qu'à travers le stop je suis toujours surprise par la profondeur et la complexité des gens, par leur ambivalence, alors que dans la vie courante j'ai tendance à être facilement déçue, un peu misanthrope. J'imagine que comme souvent quand on crée, on est

un peu en lutte avec soi-même, on essaie d'équilibrer ses travers, d'adopter des postures qui nous semblent inaccessibles... Mais des témoignages, des rencontres, d'il y a cinq ans ne suffisent pas, il faut en accumuler des nouvelles, et dans un sens je suis heureuse d'avoir encore cette source d'émerveillement.

Maria SIMOTA : Étant donné le grand nombre de rencontres faites au cours de votre voyage, quelles ont été vos méthodes pour retranscrire ces échanges dans votre écriture ? Avez-vous commencé à travailler le texte en cours de route, ou l'avez-vous principalement élaboré après votre retour ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Je ne suis pas partie avec l'idée d'écrire un livre, ni avec celle de faire du stop, et je ne suis pas particulièrement rigoureuse dans la vie. Alors avec tout ça, j'ai eu plein de méthodes qui se sont enchaînées, selon le moment du voyage et mon objectif du moment, selon ma motivation mais aussi en fonction des astuces que j'ai trouvées en cours de route. J'ai commencé à écrire quelques jours après mon premier trajet en stop, donc le début du livre repose sur des souvenirs. Après je m'étais fixé comme objectif d'écrire les rencontres d'une journée de stop avant de repartir pour un nouveau trajet. Mais je n'ai pas tenu le rythme, alors j'ai essayé d'au moins prendre des notes pour me remémorer des rencontres. Au bout d'un moment, pour contrebalancer mon manque d'assiduité, je m'envoyais des messages vocaux sur Messenger en descendant d'un véhicule, depuis le bord de la route, avec les éléments clés de la rencontre. J'ai donc écrit une partie des textes sur place, et une autre partie à mon retour, voire longtemps après mon retour parce que je ne croyais pas toujours à ce livre. Je n'avais pas vraiment de méthode précise dans la façon de raconter, j'essayais seulement de diversifier un peu les approches pour ne pas tomber dans la galerie de portraits. Et puis j'ai réalisé des choses en cours de route aussi, notamment que de simples portraits dans lesquels je m'effacerais totalement seraient probablement plus pauvres et moins sincères en ce que mes réactions, ma personnalité, mon apparence, ma présence, tout cela influait aussi sur le cours des choses, alors il fallait rendre tout ça palpable pour les lecteurs.

Maria SIMOTA : Dans l'imaginaire collectif, le voyage est souvent perçu comme le rite initiatique par excellence, celui qui marque le passage de l'adolescence à l'âge adulte. Vous retrouvez-vous dans cette vision du voyage comme une expérience initiatique ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Pas vraiment non, ma réflexion sur le voyage est assez basique, à l'heure du bouleversement écologique et en tenant compte

des impacts sociaux du tourisme de masse. Je pense qu'il faut limiter les voyages en termes de distances parcourues et de ressources mobilisées en général, se limiter aux endroits avec lesquels on a un lien, et éviter de découvrir un pays à l'autre bout du monde où, inévitablement, on va créer des attaches et vouloir retourner. C'est peut-être triste, dans un sens, mais il y a aussi énormément de choses à découvrir pas loin de chez soi – notamment sur les routes! Il y a bien sûr des gens comme moi, qui profitent des failles d'un système sans vraiment l'alimenter, c'est comme faire les poubelles d'un supermarché qui jette des kilos de nourriture chaque jour. Mais ce n'est pas généralisable, c'est du parasitisme, et la grande distribution, la quantité d'automobilistes (souvent solitaires par ailleurs) sur les routes et l'horreur des autoroutes restent un problème. Étant donné le privilège que constitue le voyage, j'espère qu'il n'est pas nécessaire pour grandir et être surpris par le monde !

Maria SIMOTA : Dans votre récit, vous racontez qu'un soir, en campant sur une île du lac Titicaca, vous lisiez *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, précisément le passage où Bardamu, expatrié en Afrique, est empêché de dormir par le bruit des tambours et des chants. Le lendemain matin, ce sont des sons similaires qui vous réveillent, lors d'une cérémonie locale, brouillant ainsi la frontière entre la fiction et la réalité. Quelles autres lectures ont accompagné ou inspiré votre voyage ? Êtes-vous une grande lectrice de littérature de voyage ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Je ne lis pas spécialement de littérature de voyage, en tout cas ce n'est pas un critère pour moi, c'est même un qualificatif qui éveillera plutôt ma méfiance. J'ai lu divers livres pendant mon voyage, d'auteurs sud-américains mais je me souviens avoir dévoré Anna Karénine dans un hamac ! Mise à part cette coïncidence troublante en lisant Céline, je ne vois pas de lien évident entre mes lectures d'alors, ou même mes lectures en général, et mon livre. Mais il doit y en avoir, c'est juste que je n'écris pas d'une façon très consciente et contrôlée.

Maria SIMOTA : Autour de votre livre, vous proposez également des lectures-spectacles où vous jouez de l'accordéon accompagnée par Fabricio Leiva Ceron à la guitare. Ce type de lecture-performance de votre texte a eu quel impact au niveau du public ?

Iliana HOLGUÍN TEODORESCU : Je pense qu'elles ont touché un public plus large, parfois de personnes qui ne lisent pas. Et j'ai beaucoup aimé mettre ce texte si terre à terre en musique, pour laisser plus de place à l'imagination. Mais je trouve que les spectateurs semblent souvent être passés à côté de ce qui me

semble important à moi pour plutôt rester obnubilés par le voyage, l'Amérique du Sud, ou encore par mon supposé courage à 18 ans dans un continent réputé dangereux. Mais ça ne m'étonne pas, je pense qu'il existe des vents contraires puissants en ce moment, opposés à mon message sur l'ouverture, l'intérêt de susciter la rencontre, de s'entraider, sur nos peurs démesurées, et que beaucoup de gens n'y croient pas trop, ils préfèrent relativiser, me dire que j'ai eu de la chance, où confiner mon récit au domaine de l'extraordinaire, de l'aventure. J'ai aussi entendu quelques fois que je dressais un portrait trop sombre des hommes, comme si j'avais inventé quoi que ce soit, et alors que je pense avoir été la plus compréhensive possible avec leurs comportements, les mettant volontiers sur le compte d'une culture qui les traversait. Mais c'est mon côté misanthrope qui reprend le dessus ! J'essaie de ne pas mélanger ce que les gens disent pour avoir l'air sympathiques en venant me parler après un spectacle et ce qui les a vraiment traversés ! Bien sûr, c'est plus facile pour eux de me parler du voyage au Japon de leur fille plutôt que d'improviser une réflexion philosophique sur la nature humaine ! Je pense que les chemins de la pensée sont tortueux, et j'espère en tout cas avoir laissé, quelque part dans ce labyrinthe, une petite graine de solidarité.

BOOKS

**Andreea SOARE, *Cuvintele, între fizic și metafizic*
[Les Mots, entre le physique et le métaphysique],
București, Pro Universitaria, 2023, 240 p.**



Fruit de « centaines d'heures d'enseignement et d'autres centaines d'heures de lecture » (p. 12), les 240 pages du livre d'Andreea Soare illustrent les préoccupations didactiques et scientifiques de l'auteure. Elle est depuis 25 ans membre du Département de linguistique de la Faculté des lettres de l'Université de Bucarest, où elle a enseigné au fil du temps différentes branches de la linguistique. À présent, son intérêt porte sur la linguistique générale et les approches interdisciplinaires de la langue.

Le titre même – *Les Mots, entre le physique et le métaphysique* – reflète la structure de l'ouvrage : deux parties comprenant des chapitres et des sous-chapitres. S'y ajoutent un avant-propos à titre évocateur, « Au début de l'ouvrage » (pp. 11-20), un « Avertissement ou pour prendre conscience des dangers qui se cachent dans l'artificialité de la modernité » (pp. 183-192), les conclusions réunies sous le titre « En guise de final » (pp. 193-196), trois annexes (pp. 209-240), la bibliographie (pp. 197-201) et les remerciements (pp. 203-207).

Dans la « Première partie ou sur la physique du langage » (pp. 21-108), qui compte cinq chapitres, Andreea Soare présente au lecteur la fascinante anatomie du mot. Pour assurer la réussite de sa démarche, la linguiste organise son discours dans un crescendo. Elle commence par nous familiariser avec des éléments de linguistique générale, comme la genèse de la linguistique et



ses branches [« 1. Notions générales » (pp. 23-28)], le sémantisme et la fonctionnalité des termes *langage, langue, parole* [« 2. Langue – langue – parole » (pp. 29-34)], la structure et les fonctions du signe linguistique dans la langue/parole [« 3. La langue – un système de signes » (pp. 35-60)], pour s'intéresser ensuite aux constituants de la structure du mot, en insistant tant sur son côté sonore (de la physiologie de la production/articulation sonore, au rôle distinctif des phonèmes) que sur les procédures d'analyse paradigmatique et syntagmatique en phonologie, à savoir la commutation et la distribution [« 4. Phonétique et phonologie » (pp. 61-88)], et pour, enfin, discuter des aspects de la morphologie (flexion et catégories grammaticales), en passant en revue les points de vue exprimés sur le terme *morphème* et en présentant sa typologie [« 5. Morphologie » (pp. 89-108)].

La « Deuxième partie ou quand le physique s'imprègne du métaphysique » (pp. 109-181) comprend quatre chapitres, où la linguiste, suivant le même schéma progressif, nous conduit, à force de démonstrations, de la syntaxe et de la sémantique à la pragmatique. Ainsi, partant du postulat que « toutes les grammaires ayant jamais existé tentent de rassembler la multitude d'éléments, de processus, de règles utilisés par les humains pour communiquer » (p. 115), dans le 6^e chapitre, « Syntaxe (sans arbres, sans analyses de texte) » (pp. 111-130), Andreea Soare fait une synthèse des possibilités en matière d'approche syntaxique : structurelle ou catégorielle, fonctionnelle, phrastique, transphrastique, générative ou générative-transformationnelle, pour arriver à la conclusion que, « [s]i la grammaire fait partie du mental, c'est-à-dire de l'esprit et que le support de l'esprit soit le cerveau, il n'est plus possible ni justifié de séparer nettement la linguistique des sciences comme la biologie, les neurosciences ou la psychologie. » (p. 118). S'attachant à présenter les différents types de sémantique – lexicale structurelle, syntaxique, générative, logique ou formelle, psychologique, cognitive, philosophique –, la linguiste bucarestoise démontre dans le chapitre 7, « Sémantique ou le sens est dans tout » (pp. 131-160), que le mot est « une **énergie informée, façonnée et dirigée par l'intention, matérialisée par l'intonation et par l'émotion** » (p. 159) et que les relations entre les mots produisent des effets dans et à travers le sens engendré. Des questions telles que « D'où vient le sens ? », « Où se trouvent les significations des mots, et, implicitement, les mots, lorsqu'ils ne sont pas utilisés (parlés, écrits) ? », « Quelle est la relation entre le cerveau, les mots et la parole ? », « Où se trouve **l'esprit** ? », « L'esprit est-il un produit du cerveau ? », « L'esprit peut-il exister sans le cerveau ? », « Quelle est la différence entre l'esprit et la **conscience** ? », « Les gens, pensent-ils tous de la même façon ? », « Comprennent-ils les mots et leurs sens de la même manière ? » (p. 137) ne font que mettre l'intelligence de l'individu au défi de s'ouvrir à une « compréhension de plus en plus profonde de certains phénomènes très spéciaux, uniques, qui concernent la composition, le fonctionnement, la façon d'être de l'homme et le langage » (p. 137). Les effets engendrés par la parole sont analysés dans le chapitre 8, portant le titre suggestif « Les trois *i* d'or de la communication – l'intention, l'intonation, l'intuition. Pragmatique subtile » (pp. 161-166). L'auteure s'y penche sur trois ces facteurs impliqués dans l'acte de communication pour ensuite traiter dans le chapitre 9, « Langage et réalité - adéquation ou... tout le contraire ? » (pp. 167-181), de la question « dans quelle mesure la langue que nous parlons reflète-t-elle la réalité ? » (p. 167). La réponse nous en est fournie après un voyage dans le monde de la physique et de la réalité de la langue : « La langue ne reflète pas la réalité scientifique, prouvée en laboratoire et rendue par de belles équations mathématiques. La langue,

plus précisément la parole de chaque peuple, est la création des générations de locuteurs qui ont vécu, cherché à connaître et à comprendre le monde, la vie, l'homme et ont mis des mots sur ce qu'ils avaient compris, ce qu'ils avaient considéré comme vrai. » (p. 180). Et Andreea Soare ne s'arrête pas là. Elle poursuit sa réflexion dans « Avertissement ou prendre conscience des dangers qui se cachent dans l'artificialité de la modernité » (pp. 183-192), où elle attire l'attention sur le danger de l'utilisation des outils numériques et, implicitement, sur leurs effets sur le psychisme de l'individu : la « démence numérique », décrite dans l'ouvrage de Manfred Spitzer, *Digitale Dementz* (Droemer Verlag, 2012).

Les trois annexes accompagnant la recherche – « L'audition – sens ou portail ? » (pp. 209-215), « Il est temps pour un linguiste qui regarde les gens et les étoiles » (pp. 216-229) et « Les mots – une perspective quantique » (pp. 230-240) – apportent des perspectives complémentaires qui renforcent les approches inter et transdisciplinaires de la linguiste.

Les conclusions d'Andreea Soare, réunies dans « En guise de final » (pp. 193-196), soulignent une fois de plus le voyage *différent* auquel nous sommes invités pour découvrir la linguistique comme discipline : « Je veux une linguistique vivante, pleine d'*âme*, de *conscience*, de *créativité*. [...] Je ne cherche pas de certitudes, mais des aspects, de possibles explications qui m'aident au moins à sauter d'une pierre à l'autre pour traverser la rivière si je ne peux toujours me confondre avec elle dans ma quête permanente d'une meilleure compréhension de l'homme, du langage, de l'univers. » (p. 196).

Nous aimerions conclure par dire que l'œuvre d'Andreea Soare a le mérite non seulement de toucher le public le plus large possible à travers la manière d'aborder et de présenter l'information linguistique, mais aussi de réussir à se placer dans le domaine de la transdisciplinarité à travers l'effort de l'auteure de rassembler « différents types de connaissances, afin d'atteindre une compréhension plus profonde de l'homme, de la vie » (p. 184).

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BOOKS

Lavinia-Iunia Vasii, Cristina Bocoș, *O gramatică... altfel. Dezvoltarea competenței gramaticale în limba română ca limbă străină (RLS). Nivelul A2*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2023, 240 p.



The publication of Lavinia Vasii and Cristina Bocoș is an original book in the field of Romanian as a foreign language (RFL) / Romanian as a second language (RSL): on one hand, because, as the title says, it is *Grammar... in a new way*, which doesn't include grammar lessons with theoretical descriptions of grammar content, alongside the classic structural exercises. Instead, it involves *acquiring grammar skills* through vocabulary and grammar exercises, through written reception activities, through oral and written interaction, through intercultural and mediation activities. On the other hand, because at the basis of developing all exercises and activities lies on authentic style and the motivation of the students.

The book tackles one of the most difficult aspects of grammar in Romanian language (both for non-native speakers in their learning process, as well as for teachers of RFL / RSL in their teaching process), such as the

subjunctive mood, the personal pronouns in the accusative case, the nouns and the adjectives in the genitive case etc., specific to language level A2.

As the authors state in the *Introduction*, the book is especially meant for “people who study Romanian as a foreign language in an institution (universities, schools [...]), under the guidance of teachers, however it can prove itself useful to self-learners” (p. 17). Therefore, it can be used by foreign college students that are learning RFL, as well as by highschool students that are learning RSL.



At the same time, the study can be used successfully by teachers of RFL / RSL, especially during teaching and explaining grammar concepts, due to schemes and tables of accessible and friendly nature, during exercise and retention, due to the exercises and communicative activities suggested, during actualization / summary steps, during several activities of learning through play etc. as well as, in our opinion, during the design of exercises and knowledge testing activities.

Also, we suggest that the current book could be useful to speakers of Romanian as inherited language, meaning people who belong to diaspora, who learned and use Romanian language at home, with their families, but they didn't study it or studied it very little within an institutional framework. For these people who wish to develop their communication skills in Romanian or those who wish to get a certificate of competency in Romanian language, studying *Grammar...in a new way* would be, we believe, a successful encounter with their own inherited (Romanian) language.

Although the study is meant for non-native Romanian speakers, we believe that it could also be used by native speakers, due to its functional-communicative character and its interaction, mediation and intercultural activities that follow each grammar content explained.

The book opens with a table of contents, in which each grammar content is associated with a lexical sphere, with certain communicative functions and different intercultural aspects. For instance, the subjunctive mood includes, from a grammar point of view, "the subjunctive mood, present tense, particularly the IIIrd person singular and plural; verb 1 + the subjunctive mood, impersonal verbal expressions with "to be" verb + the subjunctive mood; "to have" verb + noun + the subjunctive mood, etc. It is associated with several lexical spheres, such as "holidays; professions; wishes; hobbies and leisure activities; problems and solutions" etc. Its use in context involves activating several communicative functions, such as "expressing interdiction / permission; expressing preference; talking about qualities and skills; making a recommendation/suggestion" etc. Also, it is associated with different intercultural aspects, such as: "specific wishes for certain occasions (birthdays, New Year etc.); interdictions / unwritten rules in different societies / cultures; cultural shocks; traditional food; old folk remedies" (p. 9).

The book is comprised of six chapters, each meant for a specific grammar content for A2 level, presented in a progressive teaching-learning order (from simple to complex): Compound perfect, Subjunctive mood, Comparison, Ordinal number, Genitive mood, Accusative mood.

Each chapter begins with a table of contents and is comprised of two parts (associated, we believe, to the stages of a lesson/ unit for language skill development): *Discovering* and *Practicing*.

In the first part, *Discovering*, the grammar contents are explained progressively, through some schemes and logical tables that are accessible, as comprehensive as they can be at this level and very friendly. The authors suggest the term "micro-metalanguage" for these simplified explanations of grammar structure, without using abstract definitions. Thus, the student is not overwhelmed by a lot of theoretical information, but encouraged to observe and understand the use of grammar content. Furthermore, the mistakes in the structures presented in terms of oral and written expression are marked and corrected,

the correct phrasing and punctuation are highlighted and there are some *useful expressions* suggested with the respective grammar structures. The absolute novelty consists of inserting in this section some cultural anecdotes – beliefs and old folk sayings, songs for special occasions, traditional food, slang etc. – in which the grammar structures explained in the book are used. An example of a humorous cultural anecdote, we would assert, is the following: “*Some romanians believe that, if you leave the door and the window open, you can get sick, because «you catch a drift»: My head hurts. I think I caught a drift.*” (p. 75). (Author’s note: In Romanian language, the literal translation of this saying is: “The drift catches you”).

At the same time, the authors offer suggestions of songs, vlogs, reading material in which the grammar content explained is used and offer the students links and QR codes which, once accessed / scanned with the mobile phone, refer to the (online) material recommended. Thus, beside the fact that the students observe the functionality of grammar structures in contexts as authentic as possible, they become motivated to learn how to use them in their own interactions, because they prove themselves useful (also) outside class. Furthermore, they are presented with the opportunity to use technology for educational purposes and, through its use, the grammar content is brought closer to their reality.

The second part of each chapter, *Practicing*, presents, we believe, the progressive stages of practice from a lesson / unit for language skill development. The first stage is represented by structural exercises which, although today might seem obsolete and in disagreement with the functional-communicative model, are meant to set the grammar content, through repetition, in the short term memory of the student. These types of exercises are more focused on practicing the grammar form and less focused on the semantic content. It is precisely at this point that the current book sets itself apart through originality, because the authors manage to design structural exercises *in a new way*, not boring at all; on the contrary, appealing, exercises that spark the interest and enthusiasm of students to become actively involved in solving the tasks. Also, some of them are meant for team work, competition and stimulating creativity. In other words, these tasks stimulate students to think inside the language, without appealing to translation method (from the mother tongue or from a contact language in Romanian language and the other way around).

The playful aspect of the tasks creates an emotional space fruitful for learning, stimulates memory, attracts and maintains the interest of students and creates a positive attitude towards learned content (in this case, RFL / RSL).

The most important stage, from our point of view, as well as the most original, which confirms the purpose of this book, namely the development of grammar skills (not just memorizing some grammar and content form), is the introduction of several written reception activities, followed by production, oral and written interaction (starting from a written message or not) and mediation. The texts chosen for communicative activities are authentic, adapted to A2 Level, suitable from a subject, lexical and functional point of view and they also have equally authentic images. Because the “perception of students relative to the relevance of the task for their individual needs remains the most important factor in their motivation”, the authors chose to integrate explanations and exercises in “communicative situations as close as possible to real communication settings

in which the student would partake outside of class”, but also to select the most frequent contexts of using grammar content (p.15). Through these dynamic communicative activities, the student becomes the main actor in the process of learning the language, instead of a passive spectator (a common role he finds himself in when it is asked of him to simply solve the classical structural exercises to fill in the gaps, for instance).

Another very relevant aspect is the fact that, even within the exercises, the authors respect the principle of grammar progression and the order of exercises and activities from simple to complex.

We believe that, in the exercises part, the most important element is the integration of grammar skills into the other components that form general communication skills, according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). Thus, the authors consider, beside the language skills (grammar, orthography etc.), the sociolinguistic skills (through expressing politeness, through examples of spoken language), the pragmatic skills (related to function, through exercising some communicative functions such as asking for / offering information / recommendations / help, expressing preference/dislikes, making an invitation etc. and related to discourse, through some discourse markers), competencies and general knowledge (through activities such as *Did you know...?*, through general knowledge quizzes), intercultural competency (through cultural anecdotes), strategies and communicative activities.

The book comprises three appendixes as well. The first one relays a descriptive scheme from CEFR, which shows the place of grammar skill between all other skills and underlines the importance of acknowledging and connecting all aspects of general communication skills, as follows: general knowledge and skills (*savoir, savoir-faire, savoir-etre, savoir-apprendre*), linguistic communication knowledge and skills (linguistic: lexical, grammar, semantics, phonology, orthography, orthoepy; sociolinguistic and pragmatic: discourse, functional) and communication strategies (reception, writing, interaction and mediation) (p. 237).

The second appendix shows two scales from CEFR related to grammar skills at A2 level: one scale for the general linguistic range and one for grammar accuracy. These scales are extremely important in teaching, as well as evaluation (and self-evaluation), because it shows us what a non-native speaker can do in a communication setting if they have A2 level knowledge and grammar skills. For instance, “uses a couple of simple structures, but still makes basic, systematic mistakes, such as: mixing tenses, not using the verb or adjective agreement” (p. 238).

The third appendix presents an excerpt from *Minimal description of Romanian language*, which focuses on the grammar content that should be taught, learned, evaluated at A2 level.

The red thread of this volume is represented, as the authors say, by “the relational approach of grammar skill, not in isolation, as a separate concept from all the other components of general communication skill, but in close connection to all other skills, strategies and activities”, by “the increased attention towards the elements that could contribute to boosting the motivation of students” (p. 13) and, we would add, by the grammar progression.

A particularly useful instrument included in this book, especially for teachers of RFL / RSL, is the *Bibliography*, which includes framework-documents, studies and foreign language teaching books and books for teaching Romanian as a foreign language, handbooks and guidelines, both from Romania, as well as from foreign sources.

Finally, we cannot overlook the design of this book, which is very modern, very accessible and user-friendly (due to the careful structure of information through colors, images, schemes, drawings).

The need for this type of work in the field of RFL / RSL is indisputable, because it brings forward a new vision on developing grammar skills, attuned to the European documents and practices on teaching-learning a foreign/non-native language, namely the interdependence between grammar skills and other aspects of general communication skills and it underlines the motivation of the students and their individual needs, which are the factors that contribute most to the learning process.

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BOOKS

**Susana Benavente Ferrera, Francisco Calvo del Olmo, Erika Hilde Frisan,
Veronica Manole, Karine Marielly Rocha da Cunha et
Hugues Sheeren, *Voyage en langues romanes : Interculturel,
Plurilinguisme, Intercompréhension*, Paris : Éditions Didier, 2024, 216 p.**



Wilhelm von Humboldt décrivait au XIX^e siècle la langue comme étant un *cercle* qui enfermait ses locuteurs. Ainsi, parler une autre langue signifiait automatiquement sortir du cercle de sa langue maternelle et entrer dans celui de la langue étrangère. Et si l'on veut justement comprendre l'autre langue et pas nécessairement la parler?... Alors c'est à travers l'*intercompréhension* qu'on peut se placer entre deux *cercles*, entre deux langues de la même famille linguistique, par le fait d'utiliser sa langue maternelle pour en comprendre une autre, comme c'est le cas des langues romanes.

En désirant continuer ce qui s'est arrêté en 2011 avec la parution du manuel *EuRom5, Voyage en langues romanes : Interculturel, Plurilinguisme, Intercompréhension* traite toujours la pratique de l'intercompréhension, qui « était naturelle au Moyen Âge parmi les commerçants » (p. 6). En ajoutant, par rapport à *EuRom5*, une sixième

langue – le roumain, « trop souvent délaissé par certains projets d'intercompréhension » (p. 14) –, le manuel propose « une pédagogie inductive de découverte des similarités linguistiques » (p. 7) pour : le portugais, l'espagnol, le catalan, le français, l'italien et le roumain, qui sont considérés comme « les six langues romanes les plus parlées » (p. 7).



Premièrement paru en édition italienne, en 2022, à Bologne chez Zanichelli, avec le titre *PanromanlC – Manuale di intercomprensione fra lingue romanze*, le manuel voit aujourd'hui paraître son édition française. La version française conserve les avantages de l'édition italienne : une version numérique qu'on peut utiliser à l'aide d'une application, les textes proposés par les auteurs sont accompagnés par une version audio à laquelle on peut accéder grâce au code QR sur la couverture du manuel, et les exercices proposés disposent de solutions sur le site de la maison d'édition.

À la différence des autres manuels d'intercompréhension, *Voyage en langues romanes* offre aux lecteurs et lectrices la possibilité de découvrir les langues romanes non seulement linguistiquement, mais aussi culturellement. Cet aspect est très important, vu le fait que la langue est ancrée dans la façon dont ses locuteurs se rapportent au monde qui les entoure, idée formulée par Humboldt. Ainsi, le manuel est structuré en dix unités thématiques, précédées par une *Préface* (p. 6-7), une *Introduction* en chacune des six langues romanes (p. 8-19) et une brève présentation des six auteur(e)s et de leur contribution dans la réalisation des *fiches*, dont la difficulté augmente graduellement.

Pour ce qui concerne les unités, elles sont organisées selon les thèmes suivants : « les territoires, les langues, la gastronomie, les personnalités emblématiques, la musique et l'art, les coutumes et les stéréotypes, les légendes » (p. 7). Ensuite, chaque unité comporte 6 *fiches* (une pour chaque langue romane) typisées : un texte suivi par des exercices regroupés en deux parties, la première vérifiant la compréhension du texte et la deuxième assurant son exploration. De cette façon, qu'il s'agisse du bonheur des Brésiliens (p. 58), de la ville précolombienne des Incas (p. 114), d'écrivaines catalanes (p. 98), d'un « style musical rebelle » (p. 134), du Carnaval de Venice (p. 170) ou du chat noir qui porte malheur (p. 190), les personnes intéressées par les langues romanes pourront découvrir une variété d'informations utiles à travers les textes attentivement sélectionnés par les auteur(e)s.

À la fin on retrouve une autre nouveauté du manuel : il propose dix *fiches* au total (ayant une structure plus simple : un texte suivi par six questions et/ou consignes qui visent la compréhension du texte) qui introduisent progressivement dix langues régionales ou minoritaires (qui sont toujours accompagnées par des supports audio), afin d'offrir aux lecteurs et lectrices une vision plus élargie sur cette famille linguistique. Concentrées sous le titre *Focus*, les *fiches* sur le corse, le sarde, le galicien, le mirandais, l'occitan, le francoprovençal, le frioulan, le ladin, le romanche et l'aroumain sont précédées par une section intitulée *Approfondissement grammatical* qui, « partant du latin, offrent une vision d'ensemble sur des aspects linguistiques-clés permettant une meilleure lecture et compréhension des textes » (p. 14).

Et cela n'est pas tout ! Le manuel comprend aussi un *Guide de verbes* qui présente des explications, dans chacune des six langues mentionnées, sur le système verbal de ces langues (p. 195-196), suivies par des tableaux qui contiennent, pour chaque langue, la conjugaison des verbes les plus importants, comme *être* et *avoir* (p. 197-198), *aller* (p. 199) ou *faire* (p. 201) etc.

Ce manuel d'intercompréhension se distingue par sa clarté, ainsi que par l'harmonie et la précision dans la construction des unités. En ce sens, on mentionne le fait que le manuel est très attractif non seulement par les activités proposées, mais aussi grâce à la diversité chromatique de l'ouvrage. Les auteur(e)s ont attribué une couleur distincte

à chacune des six langues romanes, ce qui facilite l'orientation dans le manuel. Également, les textes et les exercices présentés sont animés par une variété d'images suggestives qui contribuent à la compréhension du texte.

Voyage en langues romanes offre à ses lectrices et lecteurs, comme l'indique le titre même, la possibilité non seulement de découvrir les langues romanes d'une façon traditionnelle, mais de le faire à travers leurs cultures, d'une manière harmonieuse qui permet à la fois le développement linguistique et culturel.

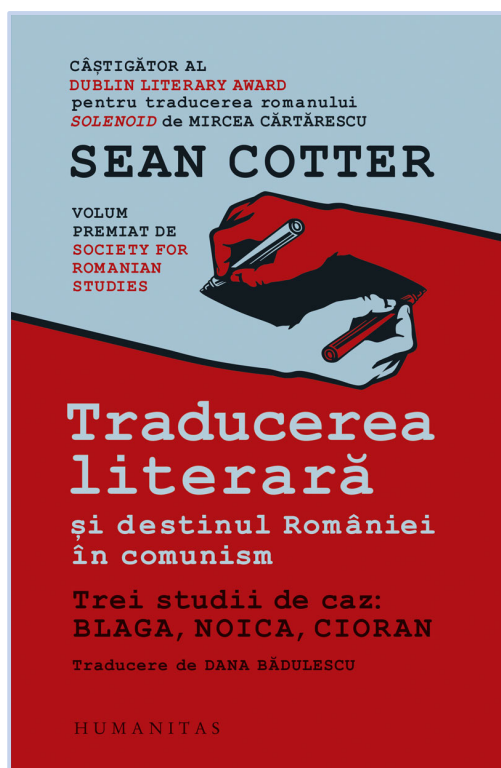
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BOOKS

Sean Cotter, *Traducerea literară și destinul României în comunism. Trei studii de caz: Blaga, Noica, Cioran*, translated and with a preface by Dana Bădulescu, București: Humanitas, 2024, 248 p.



Sean Cotter, professor of literature and translation studies at the University of Texas at Dallas, is undoubtedly one of the most important international scholars interested in Romanian culture and literature. Dr Cotter is both a scholar with a solid background in comparative literature, proven by his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, and a versed translator from Romanian. Up to now Dr Cotter gave excellent English equivalents to the works of important Romanian writers, such as Mateiu Caragiale, Nichita Stănescu, Magda Cârneci, or Mircea Cărtărescu. In 2014, Cotter published a monograph entitled *Literary Translation and the Idea of Minor Romania* at the University of Rochester Press.

Cotter's study was translated into Romanian by Dana Bădulescu under a new and very well-chosen title: *Traducerea literară și destinul României în comunism* [*Literary Translation and Romania's Destiny in Communism*]. This modification facilitates the reception of this work in Romania where some

readers might react negatively to a title that they could perceive as a foreign perspective imbued with some hegemonic undertones. Dana Bădulescu is professor at the Faculty of Letters of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași, Romania and an experienced translator from English into Romanian. Her wide scholarly interests range from British and American modernism and postmodernism to transnationalism and poetics.



Bădulescu succeeded in giving Cotter's scholarly text a Romanian translation that "flows" smoothly and naturally. The translator's toil is hidden with such dexterity that one could say Cotter's book was a text originally thought, conceived, and written in Romanian. Bădulescu found the best Romanian substitutes for Cotter's intellectual style.

Undoubtedly, it is very important that Bădulescu also offered Romanian readerships a metatext where she elaborated on the importance of translation starting from Cotter's work, as a particular case. Because the translator must enter the intimate levels of the source text, it is no wonder that Bădulescu started by explaining the minor as a way of cultural survival through translation. The translator having spent her childhood and adolescence in the Romania of the 1970's and the 1980's, this translation is also a personal(ised) experience. It brings back memories and makes Bădulescu relive a historical period that she experienced directly and painfully. There is a strong bond between the author and the translator as Bădulescu reiterated Cotter's research. She had the ambition to find the original of the quotations from Blaga, Noica, and Cioran that Cotter had translated into English in the source book. In this way, Bădulescu avoided a third degree translation which would have sounded awkward and maybe even disrespectful to the Romanian reader. The translation became a sort of space constructed through the personal interactions between the author and the translator and situated at the intersections between the English and the Romanian languages.

The book starts with a well-documented presentation of Romania's forcible transition from the interwar period to the span of time when Soviet troops kept Romania under a brutal occupation and minorization. The Romanian reader is fascinated to find out details about the complicity of important scholars with the new regime. For instance, one can read about Iorgu Iordan's contribution to the Sovietization of Romanian linguistics and his insistence that all writers should learn Russian¹. On the one hand, the Soviet Union imposed an ideological and political "translation" of Romania that alienated Romania from itself. On the other hand, translation, a minor and minorized writerly activity, had a complex role for the writers of the time. It provided survival for some writers who were allowed to publish only translations under their own name or hidden under the protective author(ity) of a writer whose name was accepted by the regime.

In other cases, translation was a refuge and a discreet, very discreet defiance of communist censorship. The three cases chosen by Cotter to show the importance and the many-sided valences of translation during this period are also intertwined with considerations about the inner and/or the outer exile experienced by Blaga², Noica and Cioran.

Most of the study is dedicated to Blaga who responded to the harsh treatment to which he was submitted from 1944 to 1960 by becoming a great translator that

¹ One might wonder why one of the main research institutes functioning under the authority of the Romanian Academy is still named: The "Iorgu Iordan – Al. Rosetti" Institute of Linguistics.

² In 2020 Nicolae Mareş published a collection of letters and documents entitled: *Lucian Blaga – traducător, traductology* [*Lucian Blaga – A Translator and Translation Studies Specialist*], postfaced by Zenovie Cârlegea. This book is rather a data base useful to anyone interested in the topic, but lacking the sophistication of Sean Cotter's academic study.

defied the Iron curtain. Blaga's translations from several great authors (Goethe, Keats, Yeats) that belong to world culture were a cultural challenge to the new order imposed by the Soviets. Cotter considers that Blaga became a national translator in spite and because of his alienation and marginalization during the communist regime. It is known that Blaga was fluent in German, but had no command of English. In this case, Blaga needed and relied on collaborators. According to Cotter, Blaga's only collaborator in the translation of the English poems published in his 1957 collection was Flori Gavrilă. Cornelia Blaga, the poet's wife, is only mentioned as an amanuensis. Or the role of Blaga's wife in the poet's life and work (especially, in the English translations) deserves more exploration and, probably, even an independent monograph.


The next chapters extend the temporal span of the research (up to the 1970's and the 1980's) and their object is Noica and Cioran. According to Cotter, Noica prefers to adapt to Ceaușescu's regime and his strategy is trans-lating, from many points of view. During the inter-war period and World War II Noica translated from Cecil Day Lewis, Dickens, H.G. Wells, Descartes, Kant, Saint Augustine. After he was freed from prison, Noica and his circle toiled to translate from Plato, Hegel, and Heidegger, which constitutes a sort of implicit dissidence from the officialised Marxism. Conceptualizing Romania as the translator of Europe, Noica was honoured to be part of this national effort to transgress the closed space behind the Iron Curtain and defy the Cold War. Cioran's defiance was different. He left Romania before the imposition of the communist regime and never came back. Since his youth Cioran had been intensely preoccupied by Romania's minor status. Cotter analyses Sanda Stolojan's translation of Cioran's 1986 book *Des larmes et des saints* (*Tears and Saints*). Cioran shortened the French text, which is not so much a translation as an adaptation, according to what Cioran considered to be more suitable to the French taste and secularism. In spite of the distance he takes from Romania, both geographically and existentially, Cioran's interest in the specificity of Romanianness survived in a modified form all his life. On the one hand, Cioran distances himself from Blaga's space understood as the space of Mioritza, a sort of nationalistic totem. On the other hand, Cioran is still anxious about the minor but also aware of its potential.

Cotter's competence allows him to daringly polemicize with world-known literary theoreticians. An excellent example, in this respect, is Pascale Casanova who considers that all writers from the so-called "deficient" literatures dream only of recognition in the major cultural centres of the world. Casanova's sample of this tendency is Cioran.

In its theoretical section, Cotter's monograph meets half way the work of Virgil Nemoianu, a prominent Romanian American scholar, who authored *A Theory of the Secondary: Literature, Progress, and Reaction*, published at John Hopkins University Press in 1989 and translated into Romanian for Univers Publishing Press by Livia Szasz Câmpeanu, in 1997. Both scholars' contention is that there is a new formal relationship between the principal and the secondary (with Nemoianu), the major and the minor (with Cotter). Both scholars are aware of the relative character of hegemony and of the impossibility of a uniform equality between and within their opposing terms. Nemoianu's and Cotter's terminological (and not only) couples are made up of opposing, but not contradictory terms which must be seen in their complex and multiple intertwining and

interference. The main difference between the two academics is that Nemoianu privileges the aesthetic character of the relationship he explores, whereas Cotter is more interested in the political character of his doublet and in the impact of the political upon culture. The two books do not compete with each other, they coexist and complete each other as two very valuable researches.

Beyond any doubt, Sean Cotter's excellent survey brings a new and very valuable contribution to the study of Romania's (cultural) history, to the study of totalitarian regimes by exploring communist Romania from a new angle: the role of translation and translators in a culture obliged to convert to a new ideology. The case studies of the three great Romanian intellectuals invite to meditation upon the historical confrontation between culture and political violence. Indirectly, Cotter warns us that even if democracy is possible, it is not guaranteed, and the danger of slipping into a dictatorial regime should never be underestimated. An issue more topical than ever!

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BOOKS

Carmen Andrei, *Réflexions sur l'identité, la culture et la littérature belges*, Paris, L'Harmattan, coll. « Des Hauts et Débats », 2022, 259 p.



Dans *Réflexions sur l'identité, la culture et la littérature belges*, Carmen Andrei, professeure à l'Université « Dunărea de Jos » de Galați, explore la singularité d'une littérature belge qui, loin de souffrir de sa position périphérique, en tire au contraire une force féconde. L'ouvrage constitue une synthèse de plusieurs années de recherches, réunissant des textes déjà publiés ou présentés lors de colloques, ici révisés et, pour certains, substantiellement remaniés. L'ensemble s'articule autour de la question identitaire, envisagée dans ses rapports à la culture et à la production littéraire belge.

Organisé en six parties, le volume s'ouvre sur un chapitre introductif intitulé « Prolégomènes aux questionnements identitaires dans la culture de la Belgique ». S'appuyant sur les travaux de Benoît Denis et Jean-Marie Klinkenberg, Carmen Andrei y propose une lecture

synthétique de l'évolution de la littérature belge de langue française, articulée autour d'une périodisation tripartite qui met en lumière la relation ambivalente qu'entretiennent les écrivains belges avec le centre parisien – une relation oscillant entre dénégation et intégration.

Les débuts de la littérature française de Belgique sont ainsi marqués par un malaise linguistique, perceptible notamment chez des écrivains issus de familles d'origine

mixte, qui doivent concilier un héritage culturel flamand avec l'usage du français, langue de l'enseignement, de l'administration et de l'élite sociale. Cette première phase, qualifiée de centrifuge (1830-1920), se caractérise par les premiers signes de rejet de l'hégémonie culturelle française et les tentatives d'affirmation d'une identité propre. C'est dans le métissage culturel que se dessinent les traits d'une originalité belge, les auteurs cherchant à inventer « une langue personnelle, un univers à part où se nouent rêves, légendes, mythes, hantises, désarrois, émotions » (p. 14).

La période suivante, s'étendant des années 1920 aux années 1960/70, correspond à une phase centripète, marquée par des rapports plus ambivalents avec Paris. Tandis que certains auteurs, tel Henri Michaux, optent pour un exil volontaire à Paris et une quête de pureté linguistique, d'autres, comme Franz Hellens, revendiquent une littérature française de Belgique originale, affranchie de tout complexe d'infériorité.

La troisième phase, dialectique, s'amorce dans les années 1970 avec l'apparition du concept de « belgitude », qui célèbre la diversité culturelle et linguistique belge. Carmen Andrei explore les diverses postures identitaires chez des auteurs tels Pierre Mertens, Jacques De Decker, Hugo Claus ou Marc Quaghebeur.

Dans la deuxième partie de son ouvrage, « Des origines au naturalisme », Carmen Andrei s'attache à deux figures fondatrices du roman belge : Charles De Coster et Camille Lemonnier. Dans une lecture approfondie, l'autrice met en lumière l'originalité de la *Légende de Ulenspiegel*, une œuvre singulière dans l'histoire de la littérature française. Elle en souligne la richesse formelle et thématique, qualifiant ce texte de « fresque nationale » qui mêle roman historique, récit légendaire et roman réaliste. Représentative de la phase centrifuge, l'œuvre de De Coster constitue une transition entre la sensibilité romantique et les esthétiques modernes.

Camille Lemonnier, surnommé le « Zola belge » est abordé à travers ses romans *Un Mâle* et *L'Hallali*. Carmen Andrei s'attarde sur les notions de souveraineté et de transgression dans la construction des protagonistes masculins : le braconnier Cachaprès et le baron Gaspar de Quevauquant. Ces deux figures incarnent le credo du romancier, pour qui la littérature doit « glorifier un Dieu de la joie et de la force, non un Dieu du renoncement et de la tristesse » (p. 56). Le braconnier Cachaprès est décrit comme un être primitif, en parfaite communion avec la nature et profondément en rupture avec les normes sociales.

Sa transgression est vitale, instinctive, presque sacrée. À l'inverse, celle du baron Quevauquant s'inscrit dans un affrontement tragique entre le père, chasseur brutal, dominateur et destructeur, et son fils Jean-Norbert, porteur d'une vision opposée. À travers ces personnages, Lemonnier interroge la modernité et les tensions entre nature, culture, pouvoir et humanité.

La question du théâtre en tant que lieu de l'expression d'une identité plurielle est traitée dans la troisième partie. Carmen Andrei focalise son attention sur deux figures majeures : Maurice Maeterlinck et Michel de Ghelderode. Le premier, couronné par le prix Nobel de littérature en 1911, a porté le symbolisme belge à une reconnaissance internationale. En rupture avec l'esthétique dramatique traditionnelle, Maeterlinck a inauguré ce qu'on appelle le *théâtre de situation* ou le *théâtre de l'âme*. Ce théâtre se caractérise par l'abandon de l'intrigue au profit d'un drame statique, centré sur des situations ordinaires – il s'agit de donner « à réfléchir plus profondément sur le simple fait

quotidien de vivre, fait pourvu d'une immanence tragique, et de laisser dialoguer l'âme avec sa destinée. » (p. 91).

Michel de Ghelderode, quant à lui, est présenté en tant que « révolutionnaire de la poétique dramaturgique ». Carmen Andrei interprète son malaise identitaire à travers la tension entre un imaginaire foncièrement belge et l'usage du français comme langue d'expression. Ce tiraillement se manifeste dans l'invention d'une langue personnelle, marquée par des belgicisms et des flandricisms, ainsi que dans le choix d'un pseudonyme, perçu comme le signe d'une quête identitaire et d'une hérédité non assumée (p. 99). La dramaturgie de Ghelderode se distingue par ses contenus esthétiques singuliers : goût de mystification, provocation, cruauté, hallucination, parodie grinçante, et par une fusion du charnel et de la métaphysique.

La quatrième partie du volume s'intéresse à la poésie, un autre espace de cristallisation des tensions identitaires et esthétiques. Achille Chavée, le chef de file des surréalistes en Belgique, développe une poétique fondée sur un humour grinçant oscillant entre parodie et autodérision. Cet humour, particulièrement présent dans ses aphorismes, fonctionne comme un outil de subversion : il bouleverse le langage, remet en cause les visions rigides du monde et provoque un rire libérateur. Dans la même veine, mais dans une tonalité plus introspective, Carmen Andrei consacre une analyse à François Jacqmin pour qui l'écriture s'impose comme une affirmation paradoxale de l'échec : écrire, pour lui, c'est avant tout reconnaître les limites du langage. Le poète devient, selon ses propres mots, un simple « passeur de mots », d'où son rejet du style au profit d'une forme épurée.

La cinquième partie du volume explore la diversité des voix narratives de la modernité littéraire belge à travers le portrait de cinq romanciers. Le premier, André Baillon, avec *En sabots*, illustre une poétique de la modernité axée sur le fragment et le détail sensoriel. Carmen Andrei met en avant son *style substantif*, centré sur des noms plutôt que des verbes, et une écriture épurée composée de dialogues elliptiques, portraits et mini-récits qui fragmentent volontairement le récit.

Un survol de la littérature belge du XX^e siècle ne saurait faire l'impasse sur Georges Simenon, figure emblématique du polar policier. Carmen Andrei en propose un portrait nuancé en insistant sur sa position paradoxale : marginal dans le champ littéraire, Simenon finit néanmoins par être institutionnalisé. L'image que trace l'autrice est celle d'un Simenon à la fois narcissique et virtuose, dont les traits se reflètent dans son personnage de Maigret.

L'influence de la psychanalyse constitue un fil conducteur dans l'œuvre de Nicole Malinconi et Jacqueline Harpman. Carmen Andrei met en lumière comment cette approche permet à ces romancières de sonder les mécanismes de la solitude, de l'exil intérieur ou encore de ce qu'elle appelle la « déconfiture identitaire ».

Enfin, le chapitre sur Paul Emond, nourri de l'expérience de traductrice en roumain de ses œuvres, met en valeur la richesse stylistique et l'érudition de cet écrivain. À travers l'analyse de romans tels que *La danse du fumiste*, *Plein de vue* ou *Tête à tête*, l'autrice souligne l'importance des digressions, des jeux de mots, des références intertextuelles et de l'humour dans une prose qui déconstruit les cadres narratifs classiques. L'écriture d'Emond se distingue par son imaginaire débridé, sa créativité lexicale et sa volonté

constante de détourner les modèles établis, autant d'éléments qui mettent à l'épreuve le traducteur tout en offrant au lecteur un plaisir renouvelé.

La dernière partie aborde la poétique de deux grandes villes, Bruges et Bruxelles, sources de mythes et de mystifications. L'analyse s'inscrit à la fois dans une approche géocritique, génératrice des mondes imaginaires, et dans une lecture d'esthétique spirituelle. Carmen Andrei examine le lien entre destin individuel et atmosphère urbaine, notamment dans *Bruges-la-Morte* et *Le Carillonneur* de Georges Rodenbach où Bruges devient un véritable personnage. La ville domine le destin des protagonistes et incarne une rêverie symboliste étroitement liée à l'amour et à la mort. La ville de Bruxelles est étudiée à travers les regards d'écrivains étrangers du XIX^e siècle – Lord Byron, Walter Scott, Théo Hannon, Victor Hugo ou Rimbaud – qui y projettent admiration, curiosité ou ironie. Plusieurs auteurs belges de XIX^e et XX^e siècles, dont Camille Lemonnier dans *La vie belge* ou Pierre Mertens dans *Les éblouissements*, s'attachent également à en restituer les multiples images. La ville se transforme alors en espace d'imaginaire, de mémoire et de projection littéraire.

Le volume *Réflexions sur l'identité, la culture et la littérature belges* se distingue par la pertinence de son approche critique et la richesse de ses analyses. Carmen Andrei, en « véritable lectrice amoureuse du verbe littéraire », y propose une lecture sensible et rigoureuse d'œuvres clé de la littérature belge. En mobilisant des approches thématiques et esthétiques, elle parvient à dégager les lignes de force d'un corpus riche, mais encore peu étudié. Ce travail, à la fois érudit et accessible, s'adresse autant aux chercheurs qu'aux lecteurs curieux de découvrir ou de mieux comprendre cette littérature singulière.

Emanuela MUNTEAN 

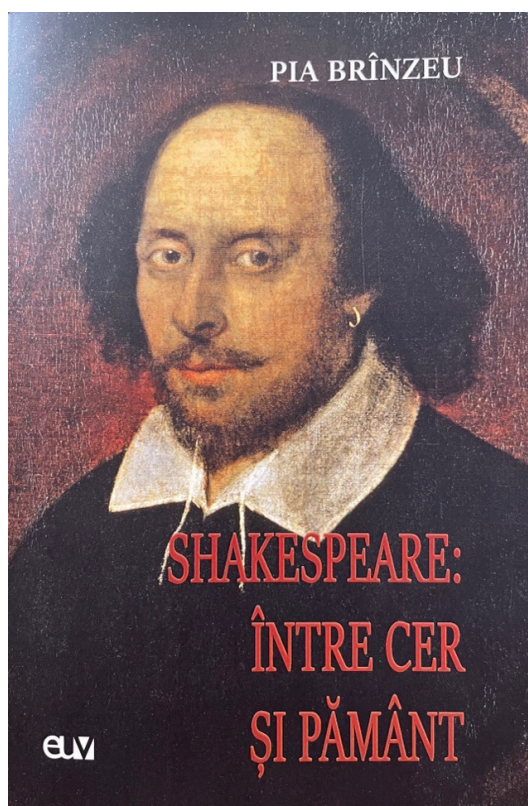
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BOOKS

**Pia Brînzeu, *Shakespeare: între cer și pământ*, Timișoara:
Editura Universității de Vest, 2024, 456 p.**



The idea of Shakespeare as a demiurge is not new. Critics such as Harold Bloom famously argued that Shakespeare “invented the human,” and Thomas De Quincey considered the Bard to be much more than an artist and compared Shakespeare’s works to natural phenomena that exist beyond human capabilities (*On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth*). The idea infiltrated even Romanian poetry. Marin Sorescu opened one of his poems with the line: “Shakespeare created the world in seven days.”

Building on such interpretations, Pia Brînzeu offers an in-depth analysis that both supports and expands previous theories. What sets her study apart is the way she approaches the Shakespearean cosmos from a surprising angle: she examines Shakespeare as a demiurge who, like a primordial creator, relies on all four classical elements – earth, water, air, and fire – to construct his fictional worlds. By doing so, Brînzeu provides a fresh perspective on how

Shakespeare shapes not only his plots, but the very fabric of his dramatic universe.

In the Preface, Brînzeu places her approach within a broader historical and philosophical context. She traces the idea of analysing the world through the four primordial elements back to Empedocles, the ancient philosopher who first articulated

this cosmological framework, and the medieval and early modern infatuation with his philosophy of nature. This perspective, she argues, offers a new lens for examining Shakespeare's works – both at microscopic and macroscopic level.

The first chapter examines Earth as a passive and feminine element, fundamental to existence, and central to both creation and stability. Brînzeu explores various natural elements, including mountains, trees, caves, sand, stones, and gems, which symbolize either a "world that is heavy and asleep" (25) or one imbued with its own intrinsic energy. The chapter investigates all the references to Earth as dust, clay, and powder. Hamlet, for instance, famously perceives the world and humanity as "the quintessence of dust" (Hamlet, II.2). Brînzeu studies the planet's gravitational pull, which compels characters to kneel – a solemn act that signifies humility, remorse, submission, prayer, or the pursuit of forgiveness. Next, the focus shifts to Earth as land, highlighting Shakespeare's attention to geographical accuracy. As Brînzeu notes, "the locations mentioned by him in his plays belong to correct maps" (66), with only two notable exceptions: *The Winter's Tale*, where Bohemia is placed by the sea, and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, which suggests a water route between Verona and Milan. Interestingly, Shakespeare's geographical descriptions come alive in depictions of parks, alleys, streets, castles, and inns, yet remain minimalistic or even absent in battlefields and dungeons, where fateful events unfold. As Brînzeu notes, "it is evident that for Shakespeare, life on stage is not truly lived if its geographical variety does not also include imagined territories" (68).

The second chapter focuses on Water. While also passive and feminine, it is the source of life, embodying adaptability, emotion, and renewal. For Shakespeare, the seas and the oceans are a symbol of infinity and of the life-death duality. Shakespeare's seas transform characters – they stand for survival, dominance and enthusiasm. The sea represents one of the most comprehensive symbols in Shakespeare's works: man is compared to a drop of water, kings are likened to the ocean and the sea, and life itself is seen as a long sea journey (especially in *Pericles*). Because he grew up next to the Avon, Shakespeare's fascination for rivers is substantial, much more so compared to other Elizabethan playwrights. The action *flowing* is also of significance to the Elizabethan playwright, as he lends this quality to a multitude of other things – love, thought, spirit, speech, truth, pride, joy, to name a few. A different, but equally important type of water is the water of the eye – tears. Tears of joy, of sorrow, tears flowing like a river – Shakespeare is generous with them. "The chemistry of the water inside the character's bodies is surprising" (220) – if they are the result of true sorrow, of pure nature and feeling they are as clear as dew, holy tears, precious jewels. If they are "wet tears", they are sincere tears, but if they are "muddy", they stem from falseness.

Fire, an active and masculine element, is a burning force that can either purify and sanctify or bring destruction and chaos. The origins of fire can be traced to a fundamental duality – demonic and divine, it purifies but also scorches. Fire is used by common folk – to illuminate their homes, to get warm, to boil water and brew magic potions. At the same time, fire burns both in heaven and in hell; it is simultaneously man's enemy and friend. Love is an important source of fire. It is also the flame that burns most strongly in Shakespeare's works – the playwright even compares it with the sun (*Romeo and Juliet*, II.2). Love's fire ranges in complexity: it is innocent in *Pericles*, a

blind passion in *Romeo and Juliet*, it stands for the body's pleasure in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, or it is entirely false in *Timon of Athens*. Brînzeu, talks about the most important source of fire in the Shakespearean universe: the Sun. Even though the characters are always under the sun, nothing happens without it. It brings the world out of darkness (Juliet must part from Romeo during the day), and is praised by Belarius and Guiderius in *Cymbeline*: "Hail to thee, Sun!" and "Hail Sun" (III.3).

The last chapter focuses on Air – an active and masculine element. It is the primordial force that sets the world in motion, representing breath, spirit, and transformation. It also stands for spirituality, the unseen life, and serves as the perfect medium for light, flight, colours, and perfume. Air means sky. In English, Brînzeu points out, there is a clear distinction between *sky* (appearing 60 times in Shakespeare's works) and *heaven* (more than 500 occurrences). The characters make this distinction evident: Hamlet exclaims "Heaven and Earth!" (I.2), Iago refers to the all-knowing powers of the Venetian skies (III.3), and Pericles acknowledges this when wishing his daughter happiness, despite her birth amid a tempest (III.1). The sky both blesses and curses, showing pity for the weak while remaining ruthless with the powerful.

Wind emerges as another elementary force in the Shakespearean cosmos. By kissing everything in its path (*Othello*, IV.2), the wind is unpredictable and inconstant, behaving like a prostitute (*The Merchant of Venice*, II.6). Tempests are common in Shakespeare's works, functioning as background information or comedic devices that separate characters and enable their reunions (*The Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*, *Pericles*, *The Tempest*). Human lives depend on these storms – both literally (when travelling at sea) and metaphorically (when tested by Providence). In tragedies, tempests are devastating, because they mirror the characters' inner turmoil – *King Lear* instantly comes to mind.

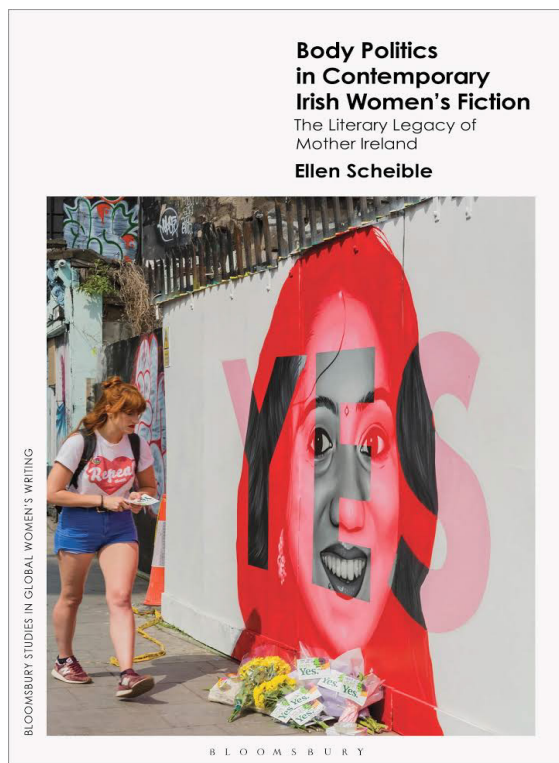
To conclude, the book represents a valuable resource for students and researchers of Shakespeare. It offers an impressive in-depth analysis of the four primordial elements – earth, water, fire, and air – in all their representations and forms, and in all of Shakespeare's plays.

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BOOKS

Ellen Scheible, *Body Politics in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction: The Literary Legacy of Mother Ireland*, Great Britain: Bloomsbury Academic, 2025, 177 p.



From the exposure of the Magdalene Laundries in 1993 to the publication of the Ryan Report in 2009, the Catholic Church's authority in the Irish Republic has struggled to resurface amid the unrelenting waves of scandal and controversy. Its waning influence over public opinion marks a profound shift in the island's institutional history and legislative politics. In the wake of the Church's receding power, Ellen Scheible's 2025 book, *Body Politics in Contemporary Irish Women's Fiction: The Literary Legacy of Mother Ireland*, contributes to the ongoing collective "unveiling of Ireland's historical traumas" (4), providing an in-depth examination of the multifarious ways literature has revisited and confronted the atrocities of the past.

Through six chapters extending across multiple generations of Irish writers—such as James Joyce and Sally Rooney—the study surveys

a wide-ranging selection of prose writings that challenge the idealized Revivalist image foundational to postcolonial Ireland, traditionally modeled on the sanctified figure of the Virgin Mary. With an intersectional focus on the depictions of the Irish domestic interior and the female body, Scheible argues that modern definitions of Irishness were

inextricably shaped by a female subjectivity entrenched in binary constructions of gender, the patriarchal “internal policing” within the confines of “the family cell” (15), and the regulation of sexuality and reproductive autonomy.

The first chapter aims to highlight how the newly independent yet divided Irish nation was formed within the liminal space between tradition and modernity, through an ideological entanglement of “nation-making and homemaking” (24) embedded in the doctrine of Mariology. Scheible’s analysis begins with a reappraisal of James Joyce’s well-established innovative and subversive political aesthetics. She draws on Lacanian theoretical framework to show how the feminine in Joyce’s texts acts as a signifier of cultural difference that resists and disrupts homogenous and oppressive colonial visions of nationhood and masculinity. Presented by Scheible as destabilizing confrontations with one’s unfulfilled bodily desires, the male protagonists’ encounters with women-as-mirrors (26) become sites for potential epiphanies, contingent on whether they embrace (Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom) or dismiss (Gabriel) the reflection of their selves in the female Others (Lily, Molly Ivors and Gretta). Within the broader project of nation-building, such narratives of recognition offer an alternative, hybridized version of postcolonial Irish subjectivity that “rejects unity as its founding principle” (37) and reconfigures the Irish home as a space free from the state of paralysis imbued with shame and sexual repression. According to Scheible’s reading of Joyce’s critique of nationalism, if the Irish domestic interior and discourse of national identity have historically been mapped on the female body, the liberation of women represents a crucial step in fully decolonizing Ireland.

In the second chapter, Scheible expands on the intrinsic relationship between domestic space and Ireland’s biopolitics by exploring a set of texts authored exclusively by women: Angela Bourke, Elizabeth Bowen, Pamela Hinkson, and Tana French. What ties them together is their thematic concern with the regressive and repressive paradox that is Mother Ireland—a trope that demands women be both virgins and mothers (42)—as it was grafted onto the Irish domestic interior. This gendered paradox, in turn, reflects the bifurcated identity of the Irish nation. Caught between a folkloric Catholicism and a “colonial modernity” (47), the tension can be traced in two symbolically charged spaces: the Irish cottage and the Big House. Through Angela Bourke’s *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (2001), Scheible seeks to emphasize how a childless, working female body not only challenges gender binaries but also renders a woman as an outcast, interpreting Cleary’s murder as an attempt to re-assert manliness as the dominant symbolic order within the home. In a parallel example, the metaphorical silence (55) inherent to the Big House—an emotionally-vacuous passivity anchored in colonial masculinity—reveals yet another side of the gendered paradox: the silence requires the suppression of femininity, even as it relies on the feminine-coded domestic space to uphold a masculine power structure. This characteristic “numbness” permits the unmitigated “consumption of war, violence, and human suffering” (55) afforded by the gentry lifestyle at the expense of the Irish peasantry. Thus, argues Scheible, neither the Catholic nor the Anglo-Irish framework can mediate Ireland’s transition toward a (re)productive future, for both rely either on the oppression or the absence of women.

Near the end of the second chapter, the book shifts its focus to Ireland's contemporary setting, specifically the post-Celtic Tiger period. In the third chapter, Scheible conceptualizes the female body as "a text" (74) inscribed with the economic anxieties and aftershocks of this era. Framed as a haunting spectre, this period prompts a Gothic reading of the two mystery novels Scheible analyzes: *The Likeness* (2008) by Tana French and *The Wonder* (2016) by Emma Donoghue. Before close reading the texts, Scheible articulates a female subjectivity rooted in Edmund Burke's theory of the sublime, which entails a "feminized body (...) formed through bifurcation, separation, and distance" (74). The idea aligns with Scheible's argument that both novels conceive the female body as a "site for loss" (75), revealing and confronting—rather than reinforcing—the "systemic oppression inflicted by systems of power," namely "capitalism and Catholicism" (81). For instance, in *The Likeness*, the murder of an unmarried and pregnant young woman by her roommates within a Big House estate is interpreted as a rebuke of youth's obliviousness to Ireland's traumatic history of sexual abuse and incest amidst economic bliss. As Scheible notes, "modernization (...) without the incorporation of Irish history and memory will only result in the return of the repressed" (77). Similarly, *The Wonder* denounces a hidden, unaddressed economy built on the exploitation of women and children by the Catholic Church, where "the physical wasting away of both characters without successful reproduction demands a reconsideration of the role of the family in Irish economic development" (80).

Along these lines, Scheible identifies two main directions in contemporary Irish female fiction: the reassessment of both the Irish family and of female identity as inherently tied to motherhood. She opens the fourth chapter with a discussion of the Bildungsroman, propounding that the female versions of the genre interrogate "the reproductive expectations put on women in Irish culture" (89) by reimagining the failure of the female body "as one way to undermine the pressures to conform to capitalism as a patriarchal system of oppression" (90). Perusing texts such as *The Likeness* (French) *The Wonder*, and *The Pull of the Stars* (Donoghue), along with Emilie Pine's personal collection of essays *Notes to Self* (2018), Scheible seeks to demonstrate how strategic failure—or Bildung-through-failure—undercuts "the nation-as-woman trope" (101). In these works, reproductive failures or nonreproductive bodies become metaphors that both mirror and subvert the economic failure of the Celtic Tiger capitalism, with loss fostering the emergence of an autonomous female self, independent from biological determinism and familial structures. Whether by rejecting traditional forms of ownership (*The Likeness*), embracing nonbiological caregiving roles (*The Wonder* and *The Pull of the Stars*), or finding empowerment in infertility (*Notes to Self*), Irish women writers, as Scheible observes, call for a redefinition of female sexuality beyond a heteronormative paradigm (104).

Although they discuss different novels, the last two chapters both delve into the topics of masculine privilege and entitlement. The fifth chapter analyzes *The Witch Elm* (2018), another mystery novel by Tana French, which proposes a radical ethics of reparations demanding that "men who benefit from a long history of racial, gendered, and economic privilege [to] sacrifice their own freedom for those who did not benefit from that same system" (108). Scheible's analysis contains a thorough examination of the

novel's symbolic use of character and setting to comment on the historical containment of female bodies, the insidious effects of cultural amnesia, and the pernicious legacy of "ancestral wealth and property ownership" (119). In the sixth chapter, Scheible positions Sally Rooney within the contemporary Irish literary landscape as a successor to James Joyce's politics of desire, where "desire is the central motif for the development and salvation of [a] struggling nation" (139). For both writers, she posits, the heteronormative family unit and the commodification of sexuality within it remain "essential to the formation of Irish national identity" (145). Thus, despite economic progress, only through a raw "expression of intimacy" (151) can Ireland rid itself of the violence cemented deep within the nation (144-145). Accordingly, Rooney attempts to offer alternative portrayals of heterosexual relationships that do not rely on the currency of female violence (144).

A key strength characterizing Ellen Scheible's study lies in her holistic approach, which interweaves critical theory, history, politics, and literature to unpack the complex layers behind the abiding image of Mother Ireland. Given its depth, the book assumes some familiarity with critical theory and Irish history. Nonetheless, the rigorous and compelling work stands as a valuable contribution both to Irish scholarship and feminist literary criticism. Equally significant is its engagement with contemporary debates in migration and transnational studies, as it responds to the urgent need for new, plural, and non-restrictive notions of home, selfhood, and cultural identity.

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