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## DES MOTS À LA COMMUNICATION

Ileana TĂNASE<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The methodology of modern language teaching is linked both to linguistics and to the extra-linguistic domain, in view of the decoding and encoding of linguistic messages involved in any act of communication. The borderlines between the two are not clearly cut, since the perceived meaning of a communication is not always exactly the same as that one wanted to get across: it is often the result of the interaction between speaker and interlocutor, whose interaction can lead to an exchange considered as a “harmonious scene” or as “the consequence of a cold war” (according to the affirmations of researchers in contemporary semantics, who treat meaning in terms of a “mysterious entity”, by means of which we get to act upon one another). Learning a foreign language represents a process which is far from being passive, (as it has long been considered), but an active one, insofar as each participant in the communication has to be in turn both speaker and addressee: the latter is supposed to receive the information transmitted to him and then initiate, in his turn, a new communicative exchange.*

**Key-words:** *didactic, modern languages, communicative approach, methodology*

La définition stéréotypée «la langue, instrument de communication»<sup>2</sup> projette la nouvelle perspective dont on conçoit, dès les années 1970, l'interaction langagière dans le cadre de celle plus vaste qu'est l'interaction sociale. Les aspects linguistiques (phonétiques, morphosyntaxiques, sémantiques et pragmatiques), étudiés jusqu'alors séparément (pour ne pas dire «isolément») ne représentent plus la seule compétence à acquérir, ils deviendront dorénavant les termes de la compétence grammaticale sous-jacente à celle d'ensemble, appelée «compétence de communication». Cette dernière prendra en compte non seulement les dimensions linguistiques de tout échange communicatif, mais aussi les dimensions

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<sup>2</sup> La communication représente l'échange verbal entre un sujet parlant (appelé *locuteur/émetteur*) qui produit un énoncé destiné à un autre sujet parlant (*récepteur/interlocuteur* ou *allocutaire*) dont il sollicite l'écoute et/ou une réponse explicite ou implicite (selon le type de communication). Les paramètres énonciatifs ne se résument pourtant pas aux deux pôles participants à l'interaction verbale. Il va de soi que le rôle principal est joué par le *je* locuteur, centre de l'énonciation qui a l'intention de communiquer quelque chose et qui, par conséquent, est l'initiateur de l'échange verbal. De même, les dimensions spatio-temporelles de la situation de communication ont leur rôle à part. On ne saurait ignorer les relations temporelles entre le moment de l'énonciation et le moment de l'énoncé (les aspects et les temps), les relations spatiales entre le sujet et les objets de l'énoncé, présents ou absents, proches ou éloignés, ainsi que les relations sociales entre les participants à la communication. Ces trois repères fondamentaux, désignés comme «embrayeurs de la communication» sont symbolisés tout court par la formule «je, ici, maintenant».

extralinguistiques dont il ressort à la fois un savoir-dire et un savoir-faire, une connaissance- appropriation des règles psychologiques, sociologiques et culturelles qui en permettent l'emploi adéquat en situation. Il ne suffira donc plus de connaître les règles grammaticales de la langue étrangère, il faudra en plus connaître les règles d'emploi de cette langue (suivant la situation, adapter les «outils linguistiques» à son interlocuteur en fonction des besoins et des buts proposés). Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas si difficile: ce qui compte, avant tout, c'est de trouver la/les *bonne(s) technique(s)* pour arriver à la compétence de communication qui va au-delà du système intériorisé de règles permettant de comprendre et de produire un nombre infini de phrases. L'échange verbal ne saurait faire abstraction des choix linguistiques requis par l'attitude du sujet parlant à l'égard de ce qu'il se propose d'exprimer, y compris son interlocuteur et la situation où s'inscrivent à la fois les traces de deux subjectivités distinctes. L'acquisition d'une langue étrangère ne suppose donc pas que des contraintes lexico-grammaticales caractéristiques de la langue cible, mais aussi des contraintes situationnelles, en dehors de celles socioculturelles (encyclopédiques) qui déterminent la sélection et la mise en discours d'unités linguistiques déterminées. La didactique des langues modernes s'attache tant au côté linguistique qu'à celui extralinguistique en vue du décodage et de l'encodage des messages linguistiques produits lors d'une communication quelconque. Les frontières entre les deux sont assez floues, car le sens perçu dans une communication ne s'identifie pas toujours à celui qu'on a voulu transmettre: il est souvent le résultat de l'interaction locuteur/interlocuteur dont l'influence réciproque peut mener à un échange considéré comme une «scène harmonieuse» ou comme la «poursuite d'une guerre froide» (selon les affirmations des sémanticiens contemporains [B. Larsson, 1997] qui traitent du sens dans les termes d'une «entité mystérieuse», par l'entremise de laquelle on arrive à des actions *avec* ou *sur* autrui). L'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère représente un processus non pas passif (comme on l'a longtemps estimé), mais actif, puisque dans la communication chaque intervenant doit être tour à tour locuteur et allocutaire: ce dernier est censé recevoir l'information qu'on lui transmet et ensuite être lui-même l'initiateur d'un nouveau échange communicatif.

*L'approche communicative* est une nouvelle approche en linguistique, prenant son origine dans la réaction contre la méthodologie audio-orale et audiovisuelle. On l'a appelée de la sorte par souci de prudence, vu qu'on ne l'avait pas considérée d'emblée comme une méthodologie proprement dite.

Elle s'est dirigée à son début vers un nouveau public d'apprenants, composé d'adultes, et notamment de migrants. C'est le concept de *formation continue* qui est devenu le but principal de la recherche en didactique des langues, ce qui a éveillé en même temps l'intérêt des psychologues, des sociologues et des pédagogues, non seulement des didacticiens.

Les problèmes soulevés par les nouveaux centres d'intérêt consistant dans l'accès des étudiants non-spécialistes à des documents écrits de caractère informationnel ont ouvert la voie d'une nouvelle approche dans l'enseignement du français langue étrangère. La préoccupation essentielle des enseignants consistera, à partir de ce moment crucial dans la didactique des langues, à adapter

l'apprentissage aux besoins langagiers de chaque public. Ce qu'il faudrait souligner c'est que l'analyse de ces besoins l'a emporté sur l'élaboration même des cours de langue, ce qui a provoqué le renouveau général dans la didactique des langues, renouveau qualifié de «véritable révolution méthodologique». Au centre de ce renouveau se trouvera dorénavant l'emploi de la langue cible centrée sur des situations de communication déterminées. À la différence des apprenants en milieu scolaire qui apprennent pour la plupart une langue étrangère par obligation, les étudiants s'attachant à l'étude du français pour des raisons professionnelles se trouvent motivés par des besoins langagiers réels. Pour aboutir à une communication efficace, il faudra à l'apprenant, outre la compétence linguistique requise, une compétence communicative garantissant la prise en charge des paramètres énonciatifs dont on distingue, à côté du *je*, locuteur ou émetteur du message, les autres éléments constitutifs du cadre énonciatif, à savoir:

- l'allocutaire ou le destinataire, récepteur du message (*tu*)
- la situation de communication avec ses coordonnées spatio-temporelles spécifiques, y compris les conditions générales de la production/réception du message concernant la nature du canal, le contexte socio-historique, les contraintes du discours.

Dans les deux sphères de l'émetteur et du récepteur s'insèrent, en dehors des compétences strictement linguistiques, plusieurs éléments de même importance dans l'encodage et le décodage du message:

- les déterminations psychologiques et psychanalytiques (l'incidence du facteur «psy-» sur les choix linguistiques n'est pas moins appréciable)
- les compétences culturelles ou «encyclopédiques», ensemble des savoirs implicites que le locuteur et l'allocutaire possèdent sur le monde
- les compétences idéologiques qui procèdent des systèmes d'interprétation et d'évaluation de l'univers extralinguistique.

*L'approche communicative* interfère, depuis le milieu des années '90, avec *l'approche actionnelle*. Nous employons le terme «interférer» puisqu'il nous semble qu'il est le plus apte à rendre l'enjeu de tout acte communicatif: en se proposant de dire quelque chose, le locuteur a l'intention non seulement de communiquer quelque chose, mais aussi d'*agir* d'une manière ou d'une autre sur son interlocuteur. Il est bien connu qu'avec son célèbre *Quand dire c'est faire*, J. L. Austin a frayé le chemin de ce type de recherche d'abord en linguistique et ensuite dans la didactique des langues. La perspective sur la dimension actionnelle du langage considérant avant tout l'usage et l'apprenant d'une langue dans son action/interaction à l'intérieur d'un domaine particulier où il aura à accomplir des tâches concrètes constituera le centre d'étude de toute approche appelée désormais *actionnelle*. Toutes les fonctions du langage, représentative, logico-rationnelle, expressive, esthétique, volontaire, pratique etc. sont liées à la fonction communicative (centrée sur le locuteur) et à la fonction actionnelle (pragmatique), dont l'intérêt porte notamment sur les relations instaurées entre les interlocuteurs et/ou entre les interlocuteurs et leurs énoncés. Somme toute, on peut parler de la triple finalité du langage, comme l'a brillamment fait B. Russel [1969] :

- le langage *indique* des faits;
- le langage *exprime* l'état du locuteur;
- le langage *altère* l'état de l'auditeur.

C'est cette troisième finalité que prend en compte la recherche pragmatique du langage. Rappelons qu'en grec *pragma* signifie *action*, donc ce nouveau type de recherche se donnera pour but l'étude de la dimension actionnelle du langage grâce à laquelle tout énoncé, quel qu'il soit, provoque une réaction de la part de celui auquel il s'adresse. Le langage donne au locuteur la possibilité d'agir sur son interlocuteur, de lui *faire faire* quelque chose selon sa volonté et son intention. En ce sens, n'ignorons pas qu'il y a, dans presque tout acte communicatif, une relation de pouvoir, orientée du plus fort vers le moins fort, le premier faisant assujettir et soumettre ce dernier, le menant agir à son gré. Cela est dû à ce que le locuteur exerce son autorité sur l'allocataire en vertu de certaines *qualités à part* qu'il possède ou bien en vertu de l'*ascendant* de sa situation, dicté par plusieurs sortes de hiérarchies (d'âge, de rang social, d'agressivité biologique marquée), dicté parfois par la simple conjoncture. Le langage dépasse ainsi sa sphère abstraite pour en venir à celle concrète, de l'action. Austin, d'ailleurs, avait fait la distinction entre les énoncés *constatifs* (descriptions concernant les objets du monde, affirmations vraies ou fausses) et les énoncés *performatifs*, visant à *faire* quelque chose. Dans cette perspective, non seulement que le locuteur agit sur son interlocuteur, déclenchant en celui-ci des attitudes et des actes projetés d'avance, mais il accomplit lui-même des actes, appelés *actes de langage* (la dénomination d'*actes* est due à ce qu'ils servent à *promettre, prévenir, prier, féliciter, demander, ordonner, menacer* etc.). Les actes de langage (ou de parole) se réalisant dans les activités langagières, ils sont inscrits à l'intérieur des actions en contexte social. Lors d'une communication, les sujets parlants réalisent leurs compétences dans des conditions variées, s'imposant des contraintes destinées à accomplir les tâches langagières et actionnelles qu'ils se sont proposées dans la stratégie d'ensemble de leur participation à l'échange interpersonnel. Toute tâche vise à une finalité, à un résultat conçu comme des intentions à réaliser, recouvrant des problèmes à résoudre ou des obligations à remplir. La portée actionnelle est, à cet égard, des plus variées: il peut bien s'agir soit de conclure une affaire ou un contrat, d'écrire un livre ou une lettre, de faire une partie de cartes, de participer à un concours ou à une compétition etc. Entrent en jeu, dès lors, les compétences générales individuelles, depuis celles de savoir-apprendre jusqu'à celles de savoir-faire et, finalement, de savoir-être. On a donc redéfini les objectifs d'apprentissage; autrefois on mettait l'accent sur l'acquisition des structures linguistiques- en particulier sur leur aspect oral. Maintenant l'accent porte sur la mise en place d'un ensemble de procédés destinés à faire acquérir des savoir-faire. Tous ces savoirs représentent en fait les centres d'intérêt d'une méthodologie centrée sur l'apprenant. L'évolution de ces méthodologies a fait changer la place de l'enseignant et de l'enseigné. C'est à ce dernier que revient la place centrale; l'enseignant ou le «maître», ayant cessé d'être le point focal du groupe ou de la classe, est devenu un *co-communicateur, un facilitateur et un animateur*, car toutes



les interactions ne passent plus par lui. Il lui incombe d'instaurer un climat de confiance et d'adapter le contenu du cours ou des thèmes à discuter aux besoins langagiers des apprenants: il devra les puiser dans la vie réelle, c'es-à-dire dans les domaines qui intéressent les apprenants. Un rôle à part dans l'apprentissage reviendra aux *documents authentiques* (sonores ou écrits), étudiés dans la perspective de l'approche communicative qui ne saurait ignorer ni la démarche globale, ni l'importance du travail en groupe, ni l'autonomie de chaque apprenant non plus.

En présentant aux enseignés les tâches à résoudre, l'animateur doit stimuler chez ceux-ci la compréhension active et la production linguistique dirigée vers le but à atteindre, tout en attirant l'attention sur les variations possibles des situations de communication auxquelles doit s'adapter l'usager s'il veut mener à bien sa tâche.

À partir du/des document(s) authentique(s) présenté(s) aux apprenants, on leur demande généralement de conceptualiser la situation, d'y travailler linguistiquement sur les régularités et irrégularités morphosyntaxiques, d'en simuler d'autres situations apparentées ou éloignées, de s'exprimer spontanément ayant pour point de débat ou de réflexion le noyau conceptuel proposé en thème. S'exprimer facilement en langue étrangère, réagir authentiquement devant le support-cadre situationnel, c'est ce que l'on recherche de la part des apprenants tout en les incitant à tenir des discours personnels dans une perspective ou autre.

Dans le milieu universitaire, la didactique des langues étrangères-Niveau 3- s'attachant à la formation des spécialistes en «langues et littératures étrangères» (professeurs, interprètes, traducteurs) connaît la même «équation didactique» qui relie l'enseignant aux enseignés par l'entremise des objectifs, des contenus informationnels et des méthodologies employées. Les enseignés du Niveau 3 représentent un public adulte, dont la formation comprend à la fois des connaissances de culture générale et de langue étrangère. Étant bien motivé pour l'étude de la langue et la littérature étrangère, ce public a des exigences précises concernant l'horizon d'attente du cadre institutionnalisé où il entend parfaire ses connaissances. Les futurs professeurs trouveront dans le système d'enseignement/apprentissage de la langue visée tant le cadre de la formation professionnelle que celui de la pratique de leur futur métier. Aussi seront-ils confrontés aux modèles des compétences linguistiques et communicatives à acquérir.

Les objectifs de ce niveau seront établis conformément aux besoins langagiers des apprenants en même temps qu'aux modèles pédagogiques adoptés ; ils devront poursuivre ceux des approches communicatives-fonctionnelles des niveaux antérieurs. Tout en dépassant le niveau linguistique, ils auront en vue l'acquisition du métalangage de même que celle de la compétence culturelle, les connaissances de culture et de civilisation étrangère constituant une composante fondamentale de la compétence communicative en son ensemble. Le système culturel qu'un natif adopte de manière naturelle, l'étranger doit l'intérioriser «pas à pas», devant parfois commencer par des pratiques culturelles auxquelles il s'habitue d'abord par la seule simulation. Ensuite il improvisera et s'adaptera

spontanément à des situations où il agira beaucoup plus aisément, vu sa capacité de créer et de recréer de nouvelles situations discursives, d'après celles qu'il a déjà entendues ou expérimentées.

Les contenus informationnels à transmettre viennent élargir et restructurer ceux antérieurement acquis. La revalorisation des connaissances structurées en fonction du type de cours (général/optionnel) et du type d'activité langagière (cours-séminaire-travaux pratiques) rend également compte des liaisons étroites existant entre les objectifs didactiques, la programmation didactique et la programmation méthodologique, entre les disciplines de spécialité et celles pédagogiques. Cela répond à l'exigence de restructurer les acquis dans un modèle global, intégrant les connaissances de manière à dépasser leur simple addition. Le degré de généralité de l'ensemble ne devra pas empêcher de prendre en considération ses formes d'actualisation spécifiques. Selon que l'on valorisera les connaissances d'une manière ou d'une autre, il y aura ou non motivation continue des apprenants du Niveau 3. S'y ajoute la valorisation du public même, car le facteur humain joue le rôle principal dans le processus d'enseignement/apprentissage. Tout cela remet en cause la question de la méthodologie à élaborer et à aborder (il n'y a pas encore de méthodologie unitaire pour le Niveau 3, pas de méthodes complètes pour ce niveau). Ce qui est certes acquis, c'est le cadre didactique, destiné au déroulement du processus d'enseignement, structuré d'après des critères précis mais aussi ouvert sur les exigences de la finalité professionnelle des études. Le Niveau 3 vise, outre le facteur *enseignant* (dont le rôle consiste à organiser, à transmettre et à évaluer les connaissances), le facteur *enseignés*, délimitable non dans son côté passif de récepteur d'informations, mais cette fois-ci dans son côté actif, d'acquéreur et producteur de connaissances à la fois. Il est important de définir, d'une part, la catégorie des connaissances à enseigner (avec, bien entendu, les modalités de les évaluer et transmettre), d'autre part, les possibilités de faire naître chez les apprenants une participation active pendant le processus d'enseignement/apprentissage. En ce qui concerne l'activité cognitive des étudiants, l'enseignant s'efforcera de stimuler leurs connexions socio-cognitives, linguistiques et culturelles censées relever les aspects communs et différents des approches comparative et contrastive entre la langue cible et la langue source. La démarche interculturelle reposera elle-même sur les informations fournies par ces types d'approche, ce qui, finalement, mènera à des représentations d'ensemble qui puissent rendre compte tant des ressemblances que des dissemblances entre deux ou plusieurs manières de concevoir le monde avec ses aspects généraux et particuliers de la vie réelle ou seulement imaginaire. Le principe de la ressemblance/dissemblance peut opérer dans tous les domaines de la réflexion linguistique, psychologique, culturelle, pouvant être étendu à la réflexion didactique sur les techniques et les stratégies communicatives à adopter en vue d'obtenir, chez les apprenants, une meilleure attitude face aux quatre types d'aptitudes requis par les oppositions écrit/oral et compréhension/expression. L'emploi généralisé de la langue étrangère comme véhicule de communication comporte des débats, des discussions, des présentations de cas divers qui

constituent autant de possibilités de s'exprimer en fonction des situations proposées comme points de départ discursifs. C'est aussi une possibilité d'exprimer des points de vue personnels, exploitables linguistiquement et didactiquement dans la double perspective du statut des apprenants envisagés comme actuels enseignés et futurs enseignants. Les techniques didactiques ont pour stratégie, entre autres, l'analyse des comportements linguistiques et culturels, la traduction intersémiotique et la production de textes, conçue comme restitution, paraphrase et réécriture de nouveaux textes à base de ceux déjà étudiés. C'est ainsi que l'on pense aboutir à l'acquisition de la compétence plurilingue et pluriculturelle dont le Cadre Européen Commun de Référence [2000, p. 129] parle en termes de «compétence à communiquer langagièrement et à interagir culturellement d'un acteur social qui possède, à des degrés divers, la maîtrise de plusieurs langues et l'expérience de plusieurs cultures (...), une compétence complexe, voire composite».

Les techniques didactiques introduisant constamment la composante culturelle dans l'approche communicative sont centrées sur l'enseignement/apprentissage de la langue étrangère au moyen des actes de langage et des comportements socio-culturels qui en découlent. La synthèse langue/culture dépasse le cadre strictement linguistique pour en venir à celui ouvert sur les codes et les usages sociaux interculturels auxquels les apprenants sont initiés graduellement. A partir des renseignements encodés dans les paramètres discursifs de l'échange communicatif, un locuteur bien informé saura sur-le-champ «décoder» le statut intellectuel de son interlocuteur, son rang social, le niveau du savoir extralinguistique de celui-ci, somme toute il sera à même de repérer l'implicite psychologique et culturel de son partenaire de dialogue. Sa compétence communicative mettra en jeu le repérage des signes aussi bien visibles qu'invisibles, car tout acte communicatif comporte en même temps les valeurs de la communication verbale et non verbale, cette dernière pouvant élargir ou, par contre, détruire tout l'échafaudage linguistique prononcé. La connaissance ou la méconnaissance de certains codes, modes de fonctionnement, comportements et pratiques d'une culture étrangère peut mener, selon le cas, à la réussite ou à l'échec d'un acte communicatif. C'est pourquoi la compétence de communication est inséparable de la perspective interculturelle en vertu de laquelle les signes linguistiques acquerront une signification ou autre. Savoir se plier à des contextes langagiers et situationnels déterminés c'est savoir sélectionner, dans un amas de connaissances de toutes sortes, celles les plus appropriées aux caractéristiques de l'échange en question. Comme le langage est, lui-même, un phénomène culturel, susceptible de servir de médiateur d'une autre culture, on ne saurait le séparer des données culturelles et de civilisation dont il devient porteur. Aussi met-on l'accent sur la relation existant entre la langue, d'un côté, et la culture-civilisation, de l'autre. Bien que les mots ne traduisent pas directement- par leur sémantisme- les phénomènes culturels qu'on se propose d'explorer dans la langue cible, ils constituent, cependant, les traces des représentations d'objets du monde, fussent-ils réels ou imaginaires. Le sémantisme des mots employés devient donc signifiant du processus cognitif de structuration et de symbolisation de contenus conceptuels et/ou culturels. Les acceptions d'un mot peuvent constituer autant de

représentations sur la manière de penser et de se rapporter au monde. Une analyse plus détaillée et raffinée des mots pourrait démontrer que les mots sont porteurs de significations beaucoup plus profondes qu'ils ne laissent deviner à première vue. Les changements de sens d'un lexème tel *fortune* n'ont pas de rapport au seul aspect sémantique du mot, ils rendent compte des transformations de mentalité et de psychologie concernant les croyances et les habitudes d'esprit de toute une communauté linguistique et culturelle. Pour n'en donner qu'un exemple, il convient de savoir que l'évolution sémantique de *fortune* a suivi de près l'évolution mentale des gens, à savoir l'attitude qu'ils ont eue face aux repères fondamentaux de leur existence. Cela explique pourquoi le mot *fortune* connaît trois acceptions qui dévoilent, au fond, la vision que l'homme (et, par extension, toute la communauté linguistique concernée) s'est faite de la vie, en attachant le plus d'importance à l'aspect qu'il a considéré, dans le temps, comme le plus représentatif de son existence. Bref, selon que l'homme a estimé que sa vie dépend 1) du sort ; 2) de la réussite sociale ; 3) de l'argent, il y a eu dans le sémantisme de ce mot une évolution qui est partie de l'idée de sort (*fortune*, emprunté au latin *fortuna* a signifié initialement la «divinité qui symbolise le sort» ; en emploi didactique et littéraire, souvent avec F majuscule, il a symbolisé la divinité qui présidait aux hasards de la vie, la puissance qui dispensait au hasard les biens et les maux dans la vie de chacun). Ensuite, il y a eu une autre grande acception (à l'époque classique), celle de «réussite dans la vie», surtout dans l'expression *faire fortune* qui renvoyait notamment à l'idée de succès dans la carrière. C'était bien l'époque où les gens s'intéressaient à briller dans leur carrière : la réussite sociale était, à leurs yeux, le grand intérêt menant le monde. La même expression, *faire fortune*, a cessé de signifier le succès dans la carrière, cédant la place, avec l'avènement du capitalisme à la signification de «amasser de l'argent», *fortune(s)* signifiant dès 1837 des sommes d'argent importantes (on l'a également employé, par métonymie, pour désigner la «situation de celui qui possède une fortune»). Et les exemples peuvent continuer. Le vocabulaire ne traduit pas expressément par lui-même les faits de culture, mais l'agencement des mots dans des énoncés ou phrases, les relations sémantiques établies entre eux, le fait que, par exemple, un locuteur choisit dans toute une série synonymique une unité linguistique et non pas une autre, tout cela peut constituer un indice de l'état mental et culturel du sujet parlant (les traces de sa subjectivité dans le langage). Sinon, que signifierait ce que l'on a appelé et que l'on continue d'appeler la «caractérisation de quelqu'un/d'un personnage par son langage» ? Les mots employés en disent long sur celui qui les emploie. C'est, bien sûr, un truisme que de dire que dans la mesure où les mots «disent le monde», ils *nous* disent, nous aussi, en projetant l'image où nous nous retrouvons évoqués, représentés par l'intermédiaire de notre propre langage. L'apprentissage de la dimension culturelle ne s'effectue donc pas par les seuls cours de littérature et de civilisation. L'étude du langage (fût-elle lexicale, syntaxique, sémantique ou pragmatique) peut suffire quelquefois à rendre des contenus conceptuels et culturels inouïs. Une étude descriptive (même la plus modeste) du contenu des formes linguistiques pourrait entraîner, selon le cas, des problèmes généraux de mentalité, de culture, de civilisation et surtout de représentation d'une manière

spécifique de concevoir la relation du langage au monde. Les découpages linguistiques, propres à chaque langue, à chaque communauté parlant une langue, révèlent finalement une manière d'exister par le langage, ce qui nous aide à mieux nous connaître et à nous définir en relation à nous-mêmes et à autrui. C'est que par le truchement du langage, on re-produit une réalité, qui cesse d'être la seule réalité abstraite du langage. Le langage est coextensif au monde. Il ne lui est aucunement adjoint.

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# ASPECTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LIGHT VERB CONSTRUCTIONS AND SIMPLE VERB CONSTRUCTIONS

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**Abstract:** *This paper deals with aspect in so-called light verb constructions (LVCs), comparing them with the corresponding simple verb constructions (SVCs). A light verb and its nominal complement form a complex predicate in a LVC. Although the LVC has almost the same meaning as the corresponding SVC, they are different. The number of activities denoted by a predicate is more specific in LVCs than in SVCs. Since in LVCs the noun heading the complement is typically modified by the indefinite article a, the number of activities denoted is just one. In SVCs, on the other hand, the number of activities is not specified in the absence of any modification. This difference plays a key role in aspectual differences between LVCs and the corresponding SVCs in many cases.*

**Key-words:** *Aspect, LVC, SVC, telic, atelic, punctual verbs.*

## 1. Introduction

In linguistics, a light verb (LV) is a verb participating in a complex predication (a V+V compound) that has little semantic content of its own, but provides some details on the event semantics, often aspect or temporal information. Jespersen [1965] is generally credited with first coining of the term *light verb*, which he applied to English V+NP constructions, such as in expressions ‘*to have a rest*’, ‘*to take a walk*’, and ‘*to give a sigh*’. The semantics of the compound as well as its argument structure are determined by the head or primary verb. The intuition behind the term *light* is that although these constructions respect the standard verb complement patterns in English, the verbs *to take*, *to give*, etc. cannot be said to be fully predicating. In other words, one does not physically «give» a «sigh» but rather «sighs». The verbs, therefore, seem to be more of a verbal licenser for nouns. However, the verbs are not entirely devoid of semantic predicative power either; for instance, there is a clear difference between *to take a bath* and *to give a bath*. The verbs thus seem to be neither at their full semantic power, nor at a completely depleted stage. Rather, they appear to be semantically *light* in the sense that they are contributing something to the joint predication. While the exact characterization is difficult, many consider LVs as a separate syntactic class with a syntactic distribution lying somewhere between functional and lexical domains.

There are different approaches to light verbs. Some consider LVs as a semantically empty predicate-licenser [Grimshaw & Mester 1988], some as a subtype of auxiliary. Other approaches see LVs as contributing to the predication in

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a fairly systematic way and propose to encode this within analyses which allow for some kind of argument structure composition. In these approaches, the light verb is analyzed as being syntactically and semantically dependent on the main verb. That is, the light verb is in some way incomplete and depends on the predicative power of the main verb/ predicate.

Another possible idea within generative syntax is that LVs are actually instantiations of *v* [Adger 2003]. The idea of *v* goes back to Chomsky [1957] who introduced it for auxiliaries and modals. As used in current analyses, *v* is a curious category; it could be interpreted as either a functional or a lexical category, or a mixture of both. Given the mixed nature of light verbs (bearing some semantic but predicationally-dependent information), *v* would actually seem to be quite a good candidate for a light verb analysis.

In some English constructions a verb and its noun complement form a complex predicate in so-called light verb constructions (LVCs), which express more or less the same meaning as the corresponding simple verb constructions (SVCs). Since a light verb has less meaning and its nominal complement has the main meaning, the former is lighter than the latter in the sense of Jespersen (1954) and Cattell (1984). A typical LVC/SVC pair is as follows:

- (1) a. John breathed deeply (SVC)  
       b. John took a deep breath. (LVC)

The light verb *take* and its nominal complement *a deep breath* (where the head noun *breath* is modified by the indefinite article *a* and the adjective *deep*) form a complex predicate *take a deep breath* in the LVC, as in b). On the other hand, the simple verb *breathe* and the adverb *deeply* form a verb phrase *breathe deeply* in the corresponding SVC, as in a). The LVC in b) has more or less the same meaning as the SVC in a). Next we discuss main semantic differences between LVCs and the corresponding SVCs.

First, as many researchers point out (Cattell 1984, Quirk *et al* 1985, Dixon 1991, Algeo 1995, and others), in some cases a SVC does not have a one-to-one relationship with the corresponding LVC but has more than one corresponding LVC. In other words, LVCs express more specific meaning than the corresponding SVCs. The examples from b) to d) are from Quirk *et al* (1985: 752).

- (2) a. She shrieked. (SVC)  
       b. She gave a shriek. (LVC, an involuntary shriek)  
       c. She had a good shriek. (LVC, a voluntary shriek for own enjoyment)  
       d. She did a (good) shriek. (LVC, a performance before an audience)

The SVC has three LVCs with a different light verb. According to Quirk *et al* (1985), the LVC with the light verb *give* in b) denotes an involuntary shriek while the LVC with the light verb *have* in c) expresses a voluntary shriek for the shrieker's own enjoyment. Another LVC with the verb *do* in d) refers to a shriek in a performance before an audience.

Second, a LVC is more specific in the number of activities denoted than the corresponding SVC.

- (3) a. John kissed Mary. (SVC, at least one kiss)  
       b. John gave Mary a kiss. (LVC, one kiss)

c. John gave Mary kisses. (LVC, more than one kiss)

The SVC in a) does not express how many times John kissed Mary, although it indicates that John kissed Mary at least once. Likewise, the LVC in c) does not describe how many times John kissed Mary, although it implies that John kissed Mary more than once. On the other hand, the LVC in b) indicates that John kissed Mary just once.

The reason why the differences between SVCs and LVCs occur is because of the modification of the noun in a LVC. Since the noun with which a light verb forms a LVC is typically modified by the indefinite article *a*, the number of activities described by a LVC is just one. We may say, more generally, that nouns have an intrinsic property of number while verbs do not, as Cattell (1984:11) points out. This difference leads to another difference in that ‘nouns individuate actions whereas verbs do not’ (Cattell 1984:16).

## 2. Aspect

It is widely assumed that aspect is compositional in English (Verkuyl 1972, 1993, 1999; Tenny 1987, 1994; Smith 1991, 1997, and others). In other words, aspect depends not only on the verb itself but also on a number of constituents such as objects or adverbials. We will take sentences with a transitive verb as examples and show how aspect is compositional.

With a transitive verb, a sentence generally expresses the completion of an activity and is telic (that is, temporally bounded) when an object is modified and bounded while it expresses an incomplete activity and is atelic (that is, temporally unbounded) when an object is not modified and unbounded.

- (4) a. John ate orange/oranges/the oranges. (countable noun, bounded/unbounded/bounded)  
b. John drank a glass of water/water/the water. (mass noun, bounded/unbounded/bounded)

When the countable noun *orange* is modified by the indefinite article *a* and is bounded, the sentence expresses a natural endpoint and is telic, in a). However, when the countable noun *orange* is plural (that is, *oranges*) and is unbounded, the sentence does not describe a natural endpoint and is atelic. When the plural noun is modified by the definite article *the*, and is bounded, the sentence expresses a natural endpoint and becomes telic again. Likewise, in b), the sentence expresses a natural endpoint and is telic when the uncountable/mass noun *water* is modified by *a glass of* and bounded.

However, when the noun *water* is not modified and unbounded, the sentence does not describe an endpoint and is atelic. The sentence denotes a natural endpoint and becomes telic again when the noun is modified by the definite article *the* and bounded. However, with some verbs, a sentence is atelic even with an object noun modified and bounded. Tenny (1987:151, 156) states that there are some groups of verbs with which sentences are atelic even with its object noun bounded because a change of state does not take place.

- (5) a. John drove a car. (atelic)



- b. John used the water. (atelic)
- c. John walked a dog. (atelic)

All the sentences have a bounded object noun but they do not express a perfective meaning and are all atelic. In a), for instance, the noun *car* is modified by the indefinite article *a*, and the object *a car* is bounded but the sentence with the verb *drive* does not express the completion of driving. Likewise, in b), the verb *use* has the bounded object *the water* because the noun *water* is modified by the definite article *the*, but the sentence does not express a perfective meaning. The object noun *dog* is also modified by the indefinite article *a* and the object *a dog* is bounded in c) but the sentence with the verb *walk* does not have a natural endpoint and expresses no perfective meaning.

Tenny (1987:156) claims that the following groups of verbs do not form telic sentences even with its object bounded: verbs of imparting motion (such as *push*, *shove* and *roll*), perception verbs (such as *watch* and *observe*), verbs of contact (such as *tap*, *hit*, *beat*, *wave*, *poke* and *kick*) and miscellaneous other verbs (such as *kiss* and *remember*). However, those atelic sentences with a bounded object noun can be telic with some additional element.

- (6) a. John drove a car to the post office. (telic, with a goal phrase)
- b. John used the water up. (telic, with an adverbial)
- c. John walked a dog a mile. (telic, with a measure phrase)

The atelic sentence in 5a) becomes telic when the goal phrase *to the post office* is added and the sentence denotes the completion of driving, as in a). Likewise, when the adverb *up* is inserted to the atelic sentence in 5b), the sentence expresses the completion of using the water and becomes telic, as in b). Likewise, the atelic sentence in 5c) turns to be telic after the measure phrase *a mile* is added and the sentence describes the completion of walking a dog, as in c).

We have seen above how aspect is compositional in English: (1) a sentence (with a transitive verb) is telic when a object noun is modified and bounded, (2) a sentence (with some verbs such as *drive*) is atelic even with a bounded noun, and (3) an atelic sentence with a bounded object can be telic with an additional element such as a goal phrase.

### 3. Aspect in LVCs

There are many researchers who mention aspect in LVCs (Live 1973:34-5, Wierzbicka 1982:757, 791, Stein 1991:16-7, Mulder 1992:203, Brinton 1996:298-200 and others). Here we discuss three types of cases in which LVCs are aspectually different from the corresponding SVCs and we will also show that the modification of a noun by the indefinite article *a* plays a key role in giving rise to such aspectual differences.

### 3.1. Two types of nouns in LVCs

In some cases SVC/LVC pairs show that SVCs denote an Activity while LVCs denote an Activity or an Accomplishment.

- (7) a. John danced for/\*in ten minutes. (SVC)  
b. John did a dance for/in ten minutes. (LVC)
- (8) a. Mary rolled for/\*in three seconds. (SVC)  
b. Mary did a forward roll \*for/in three seconds. (LVC)
- (9) a. Prof. Smith lectured on molecular biology for/\*in an hour. (SVC)  
b. Prof. Smith gave a lecture on molecular biology for/in an hour. (LVC)
- (10) a. John breathed deeply for/\*in three seconds. (SVC)  
b. John took a deep breath for/in three seconds. (LVC)

The SVCs are all incompatible with a time-point phrase and only allow a durative phrase expressing an imperfective meaning. The LVCs, on the other hand, are compatible at least with an *in*-phrase. A LVC has an endpoint and denotes a perfective meaning when it occurs with an *in*-phrase while it does not have an endpoint and expresses an imperfective meaning when it occurs with a *for*-phrase. An activity involving a noun such as *dance* has a specific endpoint when the noun is modified by the indefinite article *a*.

The LVC in 7) contains the light verb phrase *do a dance (in ten minutes)* with the noun *dance* which is modified by the indefinite article *a* and is bounded. Since the LVC is aspectually bounded, it denotes the completion of dancing because it denotes a specific sequence of dancing which has a pattern and a specific endpoint. Likewise, the LVC in 8) with the light verb phrase *do a forward roll (in three seconds)* expresses the completion of rolling forward. Since the noun (*forward*) *roll* is modified by *a* and is bounded, the LVC expresses the completion of rolling forward because a forward roll usually takes a few seconds but not many. The LVC in 9) containing the light verb phrase *give a lecture on molecular biology (in an hour)* where the noun *lecture* (with the complement *on molecular biology*) is modified by *a* and bounded also expresses a perfective meaning. The LVC denotes the completion of a lecture because a lecture has an endpoint although it probably does not have a pattern like dancing and may not always have a specific endpoint. The LVC in 10) containing the light verb phrase *take a deep breath (in three seconds)* with the noun *breath* modified by *a* and the adjective *deep* expresses the completion of breathing because the breathing has an endpoint although it does not have a specific sequence with an endpoint like dancing. In some cases, however, a SVC/LVC pair shows only Activity.

- (11) a. John slept for/\*in an hour. (SVC)  
b. John had a sleep for/\*in an hour. (LVC)
- (12) a. John imitated an American accent for/ in a minute. (SVC)  
b. John did an imitation of an American accent for/\*in a minute. (LVC)
- (13) a. Mary rested for/\*in half an hour. (SVC)  
b. Mary took a rest for/\*in half an hour. (LVC)
- (14) a. John contributed to the charity for/\*in ten years. (SVC)  
b. John made a contribution to the charity for/\*in ten years. (LVC)

In all the examples both SVC and LVC are incompatible with a time-point phrase and only allow a durative phrase. In 11) the SVC with the verb *sleep* and the LVC with the light verb phrase *have a sleep* are both compatible with the *for*-phrase *for an hour* but not with the *in*-phrase *in an hour*. They only have a durative interpretation of sleeping. In 12) the SVC with the verb phrase *imitate an American accent* is not compatible with an *in*-phrase but is with a *for*-phrase. Likewise, the LVC with the light verb phrase *do an imitation of an American accent* is also compatible with a *for*-phrase but not with an *in*-phrase. The durative interpretation of imitation can be obtained with a *for*-phrase. In 13) the SVC with the verb *rest* and the LVC with the light verb phrase *take a rest* are both incompatible with an *in*-phrase and only allow a *for*-phrase. They both only allow a durative interpretation. In 14) the SVC with the verb phrase *contribute to charity* is compatible only with a *for*-phrase and not with an *in*-phrase. The LVC with the light verb phrase *make a contribution to charity* is also compatible with a *for*-phrase, and not with an *in*-phrase. They express that a contribution lasted for ten years.

The reason why LVCs with nouns such as *sleep* do not express a perfective meaning, unlike those with nouns such as *dance*, is because the former do not have a specific endpoint and give no perfective meaning. Even when the noun *sleep* is modified by the indefinite article *a* in LVCs, for example, it is not easy to get a perfective meaning because sleeping does not have a specific endpoint.

Furthermore, in connection with the difference in the number of activities between SVCs and LVCs discussed in Section 1, LVCs denote a continuous activity or state while SVCs may express a discontinuous activity or state. For example, the LVC in (11b) expresses a continuous one-hour sleep while the SVC in (11a) may denote a discontinuous sleeping which can be divided into, say, two periods of sleep giving one hour of sleep in total, although it may express a continuous one-hour sleep. The reason is because with LVCs the number of periods of sleep is just one because of the modification of the noun *sleep* by the indefinite article *a* while with SVCs the number of periods of sleep is indeterminate.

Considering two types of SVC/LVC pairs, we may say that there are two types of noun and the aspectuality of LVCs depends on which type of noun is present. LVCs with nouns such as *dance* modified by the indefinite article *a* express a perfective meaning with an endpoint while those with nouns such as *sleep* modified by *a* do not denote a perfective meaning. Furthermore, it does not seem to be the case that light verbs are totally responsible for sentential aspectual boundedness because the same verbs are used in both constructions with nouns such as *dance* and those with nouns such as *sleep*. This does not mean that light verbs do not take a part in determining aspectual boundedness in LVCs but only that the combination of a noun and the indefinite article *a* is more responsible for it at least in some LVCs.

### 3.2. LVCs with a bare noun

In some LVCs the noun cannot be modified by the indefinite article *a*, because it is an uncountable/mass noun. A LVC with a bare noun expresses only a durative activity with no natural endpoint.

- (15) a. John helped in washing up the plates for/in three minutes. (SVC)  
b.\*John gave a help in washing up the plates for/in three minutes. (LVC)  
c. John gave help in washing up the plates for/in three minutes. (LVC)
- (16) a. John sheltered from the rain under the tree for/\*in ten minutes. (SVC)  
b.\*John took a shelter from the rain under the tree for/in ten minutes.(LVC)  
c. John took shelter from the rain under the tree for/\*in ten minutes.(LVC)
- (17) a. The toothache troubled me for/\*in two days. (SVC)  
b.\*The toothache gave me a trouble for/in two days. (LVC)  
c. The toothache gave me trouble for/\*in two days. (LVC)
- (18) a. The teacher praised the pupil for/\*in a minute. (SVC)  
b.\*The teacher gave the pupil a praise for/in a minute. (LVC)  
c. The teacher gave the pupil praise for/\*in a minute. (LVC)

The SVCs are all incompatible with a time-point phrase and only allow a durative phrase, as in a). In other words, the SVCs all express an atelic situation. In the LVCs the noun cannot be modified by the indefinite article *a* because it is an uncountable/mass noun, as in b). However, a LVC with a bare noun is never compatible with an *in*-phrase but is compatible with a *for*-phrase, as in c). This indicates that a LVC with a bare noun denotes an Activity situation because it does not have a natural endpoint and expresses a durative activity.

To summarise, the generalisation that a sentence with an unbounded noun generally does not express a telic situation and that only a sentence with a bounded noun does is applied to LVCs in relation to aspect. Furthermore, as far as aspectual compositionality is concerned, we may say that aspect in LVCs is compositional in LVCs containing a noun (e.g., *dance*) modified by the indefinite article *a* and with those containing a bare noun. However, it is not compositional in LVCs containing a noun (e.g., *sleep*) modified by *a* and those containing a bare noun because both types of LVCs are atelic.

### 3.3. So-called punctual verbs

Here we discuss SVCs with so-called punctual verbs and their corresponding LVCs. We have seen that a LVC is more specific as to the number of activities than a SVC. However, there are some exceptions and some simple verbs are specific in the number of activities. Some verbs such as *cough* denote a single action (Comrie 1976:42, Smith 1991:56-7, 1997:18, 30). These verbs are sometimes called ‘punctual verbs’, or ‘momentary verbs’ (Quirk *et al* 1972:96). The term ‘semelfactive’ is sometimes used for referring to ‘a situation that takes place once

and only once' and the term 'iterative' for referring to 'a situation that is repeated' (Comrie 1976:42).

- (19) a. John coughed. (semelfactive)
- b. John was coughing. (iterative)
- c. John coughed for five minutes. (iterative)
- d.\*John coughed in five minutes<sup>7</sup>. (no perfective meaning)

The sentence in a) denotes a single cough rather than a series of coughs (Comrie 1976:42). In other words, it expresses a semelfactive situation rather than an iterative one. However, according to Smith (1991:56), the situation can be changed when the sentence occurs in the progressive, as in b), with a 'multiple-event Activity interpretation'. It does not express a single cough any more but a series of coughs. A sentence with the verb *cough* also expresses a series of coughs when it occurs with a durative phrase such as *for five minutes*, as in c). It is not compatible with a time-point phrase such as *in five minutes* in a perfective sense, as in d). Next we look at LVCs, comparing them with the corresponding SVCs.

- (20) a. John coughed for/\*in five minutes. (SVC)
- b. John gave a cough \*for/\*in five minutes. (LVC)
- (21) a. John jumped over the puddle for/\*in a minute. (SVC)
- b. John made a jump over the puddle \*for/\*in a minute. (LVC)
- (22) a. Mary kicked John for/in a minute. (SVC)
- b. Mary gave John a kick \*for/\*in a minute. (LVC)

All the SVCs are compatible at least with a durative phrase whereas none of the LVCs are compatible with either a durative phrase or a time-point phrase. In 20) the SVC with the verb *cough* in a) is compatible with a durative phrase but not with a time-point phrase, as discussed above. With the *for*-phrase the sentence denotes a series of coughs. The LVC, on the other hand, is not compatible either with the *for*-phrase or with the *in*-phrase. In 21) the SVC with the verb *jump* is not compatible with a time-point phrase but only with a durative phrase, as in a). With the *for*-phrase the sentence describes a repetition of jumping over the puddle. The LVC, on the other hand, is not compatible with either a durative phrase or a time-point phrase. In 22) the SVC with the verb *kick* is compatible only with a *for*-phrase, which expresses a series of kicking John while the LVC cannot occur either with a *for*-phrase or with an *in*-phrase. Moreover, the iterative interpretation is not possible with the LVC.

Considering the phenomena of the so-called punctual verbs observed above, we may say that SVCs with punctual verbs such as *cough* usually denote a single act (that is, have a semelfactive interpretation) but express a series of acts (that is, have an iterative interpretation) when they occur with a durative phrase. The corresponding LVCs, on the other hand, do not occur either with a durative phrase or with a time-point phrase. The reason why they cannot occur with a *for*-phrase is because a noun with which a light verb forms a LVC is modified by the indefinite article *a* and gives only a semelfactive interpretation, and LVCs cannot provide an iterative interpretation with a *for*-phrase either, unlike SVCs which have both a semelfactive and an iterative interpretation. Furthermore, LVCs cannot occur with an *in*-phrase because they express a momentary situation with no process

(durative). Here, the modification of a noun by the indefinite article *a* also plays a key role in aspect of LVCs.

#### 4. Conclusion

We have discussed three types of LVCs and the corresponding SVCs in terms of aspect, and have shown aspectual differences between the former and the latter because the LVCs have a noun modified by the indefinite article *a*. First, we have discussed that there may be two types of nouns modified by the indefinite article *a* occurring in LVCs. In some LVCs a noun modified by *a* with a light verb (such as *do a dance*) has a natural endpoint while in other LVCs a noun modified by *a* with a light verb (such as *have a sleep*) does not have a natural endpoint, although the noun in both cases is modified by the indefinite article *a*. Second, we have discussed that in some LVCs a noun with which a light verb forms a LVC is not modified by the indefinite article *a* because the noun is an uncountable/mass noun. Those LVCs with a bare noun have no natural endpoint and give an imperfective sense. Since they do not have an endpoint, they express an Activity situation. Third, we have discussed that although SVCs with a so-called punctual verb such as *cough* are compatible at least with a durative phrase, the corresponding LVCs are not compatible either with a *for*-phrase or with an *in*-phrase. The reason may be that LVCs with nouns such as *cough* have an instantaneous and semelfactive meaning because the associated verb also has an instantaneous and semelfactive meaning. The semelfactivity also comes from the modification of a noun by the indefinite article *a*. Thus, a LVC with a noun modified by *a* is incompatible with a durative phrase because it does not have a durative meaning nor can it have a repetitive meaning either, probably due to the modification by *a*. The LVCs are not compatible with a time-point phrase either, because they express an instantaneous meaning with no process.

We have suggested that modification by the indefinite article *a* of a complement noun in LVCs plays a key role in giving rise to aspectual differences. Wierzbicka studies LVCs in English, especially those with the light verb *have*, and states (1982:791) that in LVCs a noun ‘in combination with the indefinite article carries aspectual meaning’ and ‘it delimits the duration of the action or event’. Wierzbicka is right in that the modification of a noun by *a* plays a key role in LVCs. However, we may say further that in LVCs the modification of a noun by the indefinite article *a* limits the number of activities (denoted by a complex predicate) to one. Furthermore, in some cases, as seen above, a LVC with nouns such as *dance* modified by *a* show a natural endpoint and is aspectually bounded (telic) while a LVC with nouns such as *sleep* modified by *a* does not show a natural endpoint and does not delimit an event (atelic). Compared with aspect in general, we may have the following three conclusions.

(1) LVCs express a telic situation when a noun is modified by the indefinite article *a*, and is bounded while they denote an atelic situation when the noun is unmodified.

(2) Aspect in LVCs is compositional, as seen in 3.1. LVCs with a noun such as *dance* modified by *a* express a telic situation but in 3.2 those with a bare noun express only an atelic situation.

(3) Like non-LVCs with verbs such as *drive (a car)* which do not show aspectual boundedness even with a bounded noun, some LVCs with a modified noun do not show aspectual boundedness (that is, a telic situation). However, it does not seem that (at least) in some LVCs (light) verbs are totally responsible for the atelic situation, contrary to one generalisation about aspect in which some verbs do not express a telic situation even with a bounded noun, because the same light verb occurs in both telic and atelic LVCs, as can be seen with the light verb *take* in 10b) and 13b). In other words, in some LVCs a noun with which a light verb forms a LVC may be responsible for whether the LVC is aspectually bounded (telic) or not (atelic). We have seen this in 3.1 with LVCs with nouns such as *dance* (telic) and *sleep* (atelic) and in 3.3 those with noun such as *cough* associated with so-called punctual verbs.

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## THE METRICS AND PROSODY OF THE BIBLICAL PROVERB - EQUIVALENCE LOST PARTS

Raluca Felicia TOMA<sup>1</sup>

***Abstract:** Biblical utterances are organized in micro-contexts, in which the evocative power in the significance of words and morpho-syntactic structures is supported by rhythmic character, and even in the rhyming of the text. Concerning the phases that the texts will pass through, in the translations and the successive linguistic constraints, we cannot expect great performance in this regard. This article examines some suggestive, outstanding equivalents, as well as, the mnemonic value of versified forms, rhythmic ones, etc., as an essential element of the communication performance.*

***Keywords:** biblical statements, paremiological structures, metrics, prosody.*

The paremiological structures based their significance not only on the form of words and combinations, but also the „musical” harmonies that they emit: rhythm, metric sequence of the syllables and utterances / sentence units, rhyme. It turned out that the semantic prestige of a word or several words highlighted best by „rhyme units” which Roman Jakobson understood by metrics and prosody [1].

The evidence of forming the proverbs in rhythmic and rhymed patterns consists in all collections of proverbs, in any culture of the world. Regarding Romanian proverbs, the information was even quantified. Thus, C-tin Negreanu, the author of one of the collections from which we extracted some examples of „laical” proverbs (also the author of several other studies), proves that a number of „4 paremiological units investigated, in 2235 (i.e. 41.40%) we meet different types of rhyme” [2]. Mostly, the rhymes are part of the simplest categories – „sufficient” rhymes (i.e. only group sounds pronounced from the last vowel), assonant (imperfect), mono-rhyme or pair rhyme – regarding the place. However, the variety of such expressive values is so great that sometimes it can go to scholarly forms [3].

Biblical statements are organized in micro-contexts in which the evocative power of words and the significance of morpho-syntactic structures are supported by the rhythmic character, if not the rhyming text. Since the phases that the texts will pass, in the translations and in the successive linguistic constraints, we cannot expect great performance, in this regard. However, we may remark suggestive equivalence:

*Always the lawless lusts, and the lawful gives to many (21, 26);*

*By wisdom a house is built, by good deliberation strengthens (24, 3).*

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Sometimes, what one of the translators succeeds, the other one achieves. Thus, the verse of B:

*As is cold water for the thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country (25, 25);*

Becomes:

*As is cold water for the thirsty soul, so is good news from a far land (25, 25) in BA, BC, etc.*

A minimum change in lexical and semantic implications that do not produce any loss in denotative plan may, conversely, contribute immensely to the creation of harmonic context that shapes the memorable utterance.

The mnemonic value of versified, rhythmic forms, etc. has long been emphasized as an element of communication performance, as we say today:

*Words, altering and rhyming at the same time, make lyrics to easier print in our memory [4].*

Cezar Tabarcea considered that the very formal qualities - simplicity, musicality, rhyme - provide the switching proverbs from one language to another:

Only the proverbs penetrate which by simple adaptation or translation satisfy the internal, structural conditions, generating poetic significance of the language that lends them. [5]

Some researchers think that many „popular”, „laical” proverbs come from the biblical text (without knowing, that the biblical text has taken them from the popular circuit). There is also a thematic approach, but never formal, although it states that „(biblical) proverbs had roots” only where they replaced a perceptive substrate and favourable thinking background”, thus entering the new oral circuit, becoming folkloric good [6]:

*What I had and what I lost.*

is placed in the descendance of Job’s verse 1, 21:

*The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.  
Whoever digs a pit will fall into it.*

vs.

*He who digs a pit will fall into it, and one that traps will catch it. (Wisdom of Jesus Syrah, 27, 27)*

See: *Who digs a pit may fall into it and who tear down a wall may be bitten by the snake. (Ecclesiastes 10, 8)*

*A live dog is better than a dead lion. - vs. Eccl, 9, 4.*

*The right hand does not know what the left hand does. - Matthew, 6, 3-4.*

*Better to lose a finger than the whole hand.* - according Matthew, 5, 30, etc.

In most cases, the processing is done in the referential (theme, subject), lexical-semantic and possibly, the grammatical structures. The pace is hard to pick up as such, but there are, generally, universal prosodic forms that facilitate equivalences. And when the rhyme is given, we are dealing with a philological performance. Metric harmony and the accounting of Job's verse 1, 21: „The Lord gave, the Lord took, and blessed be the name of God”, in which recreates (in the written text!) including the rhyme in prose is a manifestation example of „compensating virtues of translation”. However, these issues are re-created only after the paremiologic units come into the common use (cf. the popular version „What we had and what we lost!”), Which returns to the simplified proverb and wisdom phrase, restoring the rhythm and rhyme), while benefiting from polishing made by the anonymous and collective of local variants' author, which have become „specific” to their place and time.

#### **Notes:**

- [1] R. Jakobson, „Lingvistică și poetică. Precieri retrospective și considerații de perspectivă”, în: *Problemele de stilistică*, București, E.L.U., 1964, p. 108.
- [2] Constantin Neagreanu, „Rimă și aliterație în proverbe”, în: *Limba și iliteratură*, București, S.S.F., I, 1981, p. 78-79.
- [3] *Ibidem*, p. 79-89.
- [4] Ovid Densusianu, „Aliterațiunea în literatura română populară”, în: *Opere*, vol. I. Ediție îngrijită de J. Byck, București: Editura Științifică, 1968, p. 110, n. 98.
- [5] C. Tabarcea, 1982, p. 30.
- [6] M. Ivăniș-Frențiu, 2001, p. 203 – 204.

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# STUDY ON ERROR ANALYSIS IN L2 ACQUISITION

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**Abstract:** *Error Analysis (EA) is the third of the major theories dealing with errors in L2 acquisition. The present article aims to define the domain of Error Analysis, summarize its goals and compare it to the CAH and Interlanguage theory. It outlines its brief history and the related discussion on the importance of learners' errors and concepts of ignorance and deviance. The main focus will be on various linguists' interpretations of the error-mistake difference, procedures of the EA itself and finally, the possible sources of errors.*

**Key-words:** *applied linguistics, L2 acquisition error analysis, learner errors*

## 1. Definitions and Goals

Error Analysis is a theory replacing Contrastive Analysis, which was abandoned by linguists and teachers due to its ineffectivity and unreliability. EA also belongs to applied linguistics but it has no interest in explaining the process of L2 acquisition. It is rather “a methodology for dealing with data” (Cook, 1993 cited in James, 1998).

At the very beginning of his *Errors in Language Learning and Use*, Carl James defines Error Analysis as “the process of determining the incidence, nature, causes and consequences of unsuccessful language” (James, 1998). Later he goes on explaining that EA “involves first independently or ‘objectively’ describing the learners’ IL ... and the TL itself, followed by a comparison of the two, so as to locate mismatches” (James, 1998).

There is one difference which distinguishes EA from the CA and this is the importance of the mother tongue: when doing EA the mother tongue does not enter the picture at all and therefore has no importance. In the CA, as I have explained earlier, the mother tongue is of vital importance. However, this does not mean that EA is not comparative. It is, because it describes errors on the basis of comparing of the learners’ interlanguage with the target language. It actually builds on the Interlanguage theory, but the distinction between them is that the IL theory remains wholly descriptive and avoids comparison (James, 1998). At the same time EA acknowledges L1 transfer as one of the sources of errors, which makes it related to the CAH. James (1998) also refers to Error Analysis as the study of linguistic ignorance which investigates “what people do not know and how they attempt to cope with their ignorance”. The fact that learners find ways how to cope with their ignorance makes a connection between EA and learner strategies, which we divide into learning strategies and communication strategies.

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Corder suggests that Error Analysis can be distinguished from ‘performance analysis’ in that sense that “performance analysis is the study of the whole performance data from individual learners, whereas the term EA is reserved for the study of erroneous utterances produced by groups of learners” (Corder, 1975 cited in James, 1998).

## **2. Development of Error Analysis**

Early works in EA dealing with L2 data were taxonomic, i.e. they focused on collecting and classifying errors. On the other hand, early analyses dealing with native speakers’ data were mainly interested in searching for the causes of errors (James, 1998). In the 1960s EA was acknowledged as an alternative to the behaviourist CA and in the 1970s it became so popular that Schachter and Celce-Murcia could call it “the darling of the 70s” (Schachter and Celce-Murcia, 1977 cited in James, 1998). EA and CA were competing to establish supremacy of one over the other.

H. V. George (1972) and M. Burt and C. Kiparsky (1972) published two of the most significant taxonomic works. George concludes that the main causes of L2 learners’ errors are (a) redundancy of the code, (b) unsuitable presentation in class, and (c) several sorts of interference. In *The Gooficon* by Burt and Kiparsky the authors argue that the learners’ MT has no effect on the errors they make in the L2. They categorized errors into six groups: (a) clausal, (b) auxiliary, (c) passive, (d) temporal conjunctions, (e) sentential complements and (f) psychological predicates (James, 1998).

In 1987 J. B. Heaton and N. D. Turton published *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* which lists alphabetically the 1,700 most common errors in English made by foreign learners. They collected the data from Cambridge First Certificate in English answer papers (James, 1998).

## **3. The Importance of Learners’ Errors**

The most important and innovatory feature of EA is that it is quite error-friendly, meaning that errors are not seen as something negative or pathological anymore, but as Corder claims, “a learner’s errors ... are significant in [that] they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned or acquired, what strategies or procedures the learner is employing in the discovery of the language” (Corder, 1967 cited in Brown, 1980).

At the very beginning of *Errors in Language Learning and Use* James stresses the uniqueness of human errors: “Error is likewise unique to humans, who are not only sapiens and loquens, but also homo errans” (1998). He supports the idea of the importance of learners’ errors by claiming that “the learners’ errors are a register of their current perspective on the TL” (1998).

James (1998) gives Corder’s five crucial points, originally published in Corder’s seminar paper titled ‘The significance of learners’ errors’:

1. L1 acquisition and L2 learning are parallel processes, they are ruled by the same mechanisms, procedures and strategies. Learning a L2 is probably facilitated by the knowledge of the L1.
2. Errors reflect the learners' inbuilt syllabus or what they have taken in, but not what the teachers have put into them. So there is a difference between 'input' and 'intake'.
3. Errors show that both learners of L1 and L2 develop an independent language system – a 'transitional competence'.
4. The terms 'error' and 'mistake' shouldn't be used interchangeably.
5. Errors are important because they (a) tell the teacher what he or she should teach, (b) are a source of information for the researcher about how the learning proceeds, and (c) allow the learners to test their L2 hypotheses.

#### **4. Linguistic Ignorance and Deviance**

In James's opinion, there are two ways in which the ignorance is usually manifested: silence and substitutive language. Silence means that the learner makes no response and we can distinguish between cultural silence, referring to the fact that some cultures are from the nature more silent than others, and silence as a consequence of ignorance which is labeled 'avoidance'. However, the focus of EA is the other category - substitutive language, which is, in fact, a learner's interlanguage (James, 1998).

Another issue related to EA is Incompleteness which James defines as the "failure to attain full NS-like knowledge of the TL" or, similarly "an overall insufficiency (compared with NS competence) across all areas of the TL" (1998: 63). It is different from ignorance in that sense that a learner can be ignorant of a particular structure, irrespective of his or her proficiency in the TL.

There are four categories of learners' ignorance of TL: (1) grammaticality, (2) acceptability, (3) correctness and (4) strangeness and infelicity (James 1998: 64-65).

(1) When an utterance is grammatical it means that it is well-formed in terms of a particular grammar. So a piece of language is ungrammatical if there are no circumstances under which it could be used in this way. We judge grammaticality of a sentence out of context and regardless of it.

(2) According to Lyons (1968 cited in James, 1998) "an acceptable utterance is one that has been, or might be, produced by a native speaker in some appropriate context and is, or would be, accepted by other native speakers as belonging to the same language in question". The word 'context' is the key word in this definition, since we have to contextualize the utterance so that we could judge its acceptability.

On the basis of grammaticality and acceptability, Corder (1973 cited in James, 1998) divided errors into covert and overt errors. A covertly erroneous utterance is superficially well-formed and can be revealed only when referring to the context. This utterance is grammatical, but unacceptable. On the other hand, an overtly erroneous utterance is ungrammatical, so it cannot be used in any context.

EA is principally concerned with utterances which are both ungrammatical and unacceptable (James, 1998).

(3) An utterance is correct when it is in concordance with prescriptive normative standards of the language in question. Utterances that are acceptable but incorrect at the same time are common (James, 1998).

(4) Allerton (1990 cited in James, 1998) introduced four categories of “linguistically strange word combinations”: (a) inherently strange combinations, (b) semantically disharmonious combination, (c) combinations that are simply ungrammatical and (d) instances of locutional deviance which are common in foreigners’ English since they result from violating occurrence restrictions of English (James, 1998).

Infelicities refer to errors on pragmatic level (Austin, 1962 in James, 1998). Austin differentiates between four kinds of infelicity: (a) a gap appears if the L2 speaker lacks “the linguistic means for performing the desired speech act” (James, 1998); (b) we have a misapplication when a speech act is performed correctly but the speaker, the addressee or the circumstances are inappropriate for this speech act; (c) a flaw appears when the linguistic execution of the speech act is imperfect; and (d) a hitch means that “the execution of the speech act is cut short” (James, 1998).

## 5. Defining Mistake and Error

Brown (1980) insists that “it is crucial to make a distinction between mistakes and errors” because they are “technically two very different phenomena”.

The concept of intentionality plays an essential role when defining an error since “an error arises only when there was no intention to commit one” (James, 1998). So an erroneous utterance is that which was made unintentionally, whereas when there is an intention to produce a deviant utterance, we simply call it deviance. A good example of a language deviance is an advertising jingle (James, 1998).

The basic distinction between a mistake and an error is also based on the concept of corrigibility.

If the learner is able to self-correct after using an incorrect expression or utterance, we are talking about a mistake. On the other hand, when the learner produces an unintentionally deviant utterance and is not able to self-correct, he or she committed an error (James, 1998).

Corder (1967, 1971 in James, 1998) associates the error vs. mistake distinction to the issue of competence vs. performance. In this way, errors are seen as failures of competence and mistakes as failures of performance. Corder argues that „mistakes are of no significance to the process of language learning since they do not reflect a defect in our knowledge” and “they can occur in L1 as well as L2”. On the other hand, errors “are of significance; they do reflect knowledge; they are not self-correctable; and only learners of an L2 make them” (James, 1998).

Distortions are, in Hammerly's opinion (1991 in James, 1998), “unavoidable and necessary, occur even with known TL forms, and should be

ignored by the teacher” (James ,1998). He further distinguishes between learner distortions and mismanagement distortions and this distinction is based on the fact whether or not the item has been taught in the class. Learner distortions appear when the item has been “adequately taught ... clearly understood and sufficiently practiced” (Hammerly, 1991 cited in James, 1998), whereas mismanagement distortions are consequences of inadequate teaching and practice of the item in question.

Hammerly’s second category, faults, appear when the learners “attempt to express freely ideas that require the use of structures they haven’t yet learnt” (Hammerly, 1991). He again distinguishes between learner faults and mismanagement faults, the former being consequences of learners’ overextension without being encouraged by the teacher, and the latter appear when the teacher connives with the students’ overextension.

As we can see, Hammerly’s view is quite extreme and he has been criticized for his constant search for someone to blame, either the learners or the teacher. On the other hand, Edge’s ideology is completely different because he “applauds learners who ... keep trying and taking risk rather than playing safe or avoiding error” (James, 1998).

## **6. Sources of Error**

Identifying sources of errors can be, in fact, considered a part of error classification. Error Analysis is innovatory in respect to the CAH in the sense that it examines errors attributable to all possible sources, not just negative L1 transfer (Brown, 1980).

Among the most frequent sources of errors Brown counts (1) interlingual transfer, (2) intralingual transfer, (3) context of learning, and (4) various communication strategies the learners use. James (1998) similarly classifies errors according to their source into four diagnosis-based categories with the difference that he terms category (3) induced errors.

(1) Interlingual transfer, i.e. mother-tongue influence, causes interlingual errors. They are very frequent at the initial stages of L2 learning since the L1 is the only language system the learner knows and can draw on and therefore negative transfer takes place (Brown 1980). Brown also argues that when one is learning L3, L4 etc., transfer takes place from all the previously learnt languages but the degree of transfer is variable.

(2) Intralingual negative transfer or interference is the source of intralingual errors. Brown gives only overgeneralization as a representation of negative interlingual transfer, but James (1980) goes into more details.

(3) Context of learning refers to the setting where a language is learnt, e.g. a classroom or a social situation, and also to the teacher and materials used in the lessons. All these factors can cause induced errors (Brown,1980). As Brown explains, “students often make errors because a misleading explanation from the teacher, faulty presentation of a structure or word in a textbook, or even because of a patent that was rotely memorized in a drill but not properly contextualized”.

(4) Communication strategies are consciously used by the learners to get a message across to the hearer. They can involve both verbal and non-verbal communication mechanisms (Brown, 1980). We distinguish among the following communication strategies:

- Avoidance arises when a learner consciously avoids certain language item because he feels uncertain about it and prefers avoiding to committing an error. There are several kinds of avoidance, e.g. syntactic, lexical, phonological or topic avoidance (Brown, 1980).

- Prefabricated patterns are memorized phrases or sentences, as in 'tourist survival' language or a pocket bilingual phrasebook, and the learner who memorized them usually doesn't understand the components of the phrase.

- Cognitive and personality styles can also cause errors. For instance, Brown (1980) suggests that "a person with high self-esteem may be willing to risk more errors, in the interest of communication, since he does not feel as threatened by committing errors as a person with low self-esteem".

- Appeal to authority is a strategy when the learner, because of his uncertainty about some structure, directly asks a native speaker, a teacher or looks up the structure in a bilingual dictionary (Brown, 1980).

- Language switch is applied by the learner when all the other strategies have failed to help him or her. So the learner uses his or her native language to get the message across, regardless of the fact that the hearer may not know the native language (Brown, 1980).

## **Conclusions**

Acquiring and learning a second language is very important in today's global world. In fact, a lot of students, teachers, specialists and politicians find themselves in a bad need for learning foreign languages.

The need to evaluate errors comes where the purpose of error analysis is to help the learners in L2 acquisition. Some errors can be considered more serious than others because they are more likely to interfere with the understandability of what someone says. Teachers will want to focus their attention on these ones.

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# THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS LOCAL VARIETIES

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**Abstract:** *The grammar of the Romanian dialects from outside the Romanian boundaries is resilient, unaltered, unitary, being identified with the grammar of the common Romanian language. Influences have not intervened at all in the morphology of our language. This reality might be triggered by the fact that in Romanian, grammatical oppositions are expressed by a large number of positive markers, which makes grammar resilient in a context of bilingualism. The new sounds appeared early in Romanian - affricates and fricatives, the vowel ă - are used in the end of the words in morphological distinctions and assure internal possibilities in Romanian for an easy adaptation of the huge number of words borrowed from the languages with which the Romanian language has come in touch during history, first of all with the southern Slav languages. The contact between the Romanian language and the Balkan or near-Balkan languages (Slav, Turkish, Hungarian, and Greek) was a test for the resilience of its Latin structures and the fact that it passed this resilience test, despite its development in isolation from the other Romanic idioms, is something that must be understood as a proof of the vitality of the original Latin tendencies, of the capacity of assimilation of the non-Latin elements. The same conclusion can be reached by examining the features of the late Romanian dialects from foreign environments.*

**Key words:** *Eastern Roman world, linguistic communities, Romanian spiritual unity, original Latin tendencies, literary language, bilingualism.*

*Dar nația românească are o singură șiră a spinării și un singur creier. Ceea ce se întâmplă dincolo ne doare pe noi, orice injurie făcută naționalității noastre dincolo e o injurie asupra sângelui și numelui nostru. Nu cuceriri urmărim sau am urmărit vreodată... Dar voim respect pentru poporul românesc pretutindenea unde se află, și nu ne este amic acela care se preface a măguli susceptibilitatea mare și energică a întregului popor romanic din Răsărit. (Eminescu, mss. 2264)*

Different researches have been carried out on the dialects spoken by the Romanian communities outside the borders of the country, and also on the literary language used by some of them in the written press and in different literary and scientific publications. Grigore Brâncuș distinguishes between three types of Romanian linguistic communities outside the border of Romania: the first, made up of the populations that exist in Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia and Hungary (territories neighboring Romania), the second, made up of the Romanian populations established in different areas, through emigration, in a territory very far away from Romania (USA, Canada etc.) [1]. These populations have maintained, directly or indirectly, the contact with their country of origin. In both of these groups, the evolution of the

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language occurred almost in the same way: the peculiarities of the original Daco-Romanian dialect (or from the immediate vicinity) have been preserved and the literary aspect generally followed the sense of the literary national Romanian (such is the case of the language in the newspapers and publications of the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, USA, Canada etc.).

Meant to be used with a foreign status, the Romanian of these communities is submitted to continual influences from the official idioms: it borrows words, operates numerous loan translations, takes over linguistic clichés, is lured into different peculiarities of articulation, yet it preserves intact the flexion, the grammatical features and the core vocabulary inherited from Latin. All these communities are aware that they speak Romanian and that they are Romanian populations, so they admit that they are part and parcel of the Romanian spiritual entity.

The third group of Romanian dialects used in a foreign environment is represented by those in the Republic of Moldova (Grigore Brâncuș explains the use of the syntagm “foreign environment” by the fact that the Romanian language was not the official language of the state for a long time). Its literary aspect, characterized, among others, through the promotion of certain peculiarities of the local dialects, experienced, just like the vernaculars, a certain pressure from the part of the Russian language.

These Romanian communities have settled in different epochs and for different reasons in the areas in which they live today, and their dialects are almost totally identified with the local Daco-Romanian dialects from the nearby areas. The Romanians from Bulgaria established in the area of Vidin speak a type of Oltenian language (for instance, they express the past tense preferring the “perfect simplu” rather than the “perfect compus”) [2]. The Romanians in the former Yugoslavia present peculiarities similar to those from Banat and, incidentally, from Transylvania and Oltenia (for example, the optative expressed by *(v)reaș*) [3]. The dialect of the Romanians in Hungary keeps close to the Daco-Romanian dialects from the neighboring areas: Banat, Criș, Maramureș [4].

Naturally, the Romanian spoken by the Romanian minorities from the neighboring countries has been influenced by the official national languages: Bulgarian, Serbian-Croatian and Hungarian. Naturally, the vocabulary was affected first and foremost. The phonetics was influenced more rarely, and it generally remained within the limits of the variants tolerated by the phonological systems of the neighboring Daco-Romanian vernaculars. The morphology, which assures the individuality of the language, has remained intact. The Academician Grigore Brâncuș observed: “the Romanians from the neighboring countries have no non-Romanian morphological norm” [5].

There are several Romanian communities as well in the USA, especially in Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and in the prairies and the large Canadian cities. They were built up as a result of the successive migration of waves of peasants from Transylvania, Banat, Maramureș and even Bucovina, beginning with the last decennia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, until around 1930. Usually established in urban centers, almost all the American Romanians have passed from agriculture and sheep breeding to industry and trade. In the dialect of these communities, both spoken and written, one can recognize slightly archaic peculiarities of the Daco-Romanian dialects from the trans-

Carpathian area. The influence of American English is strong, especially among the younger generations. Beside the general Romanian or regional vocabulary (known in Transylvania and Banat), numerous English words have been adopted, denominating objects and notions that were new for the speakers (from the technical and urban civilization domain, from the social, economic, cultural life etc.).

In Serbia, there are Romanians in two distinct areas, unfortunately dealt with differently: in Belgrade: 38.000 inhabitants in Voivodina (called the Serbian Banat), who enjoy all the rights a national minority should, and about 300.000-400.000 inhabitants in Timoc (or Eastern Serbia). The political stake here is particularly hostile. Coming from the South-Danubian Balkan Roman world and joined, over the decades, by Romanians from the north of the Danube (Vasile Pârvan affirmed: “the Danube has never been a mean enemy, keeping brothers apart, but a good friend, one that kept them together”), the Romanians from Timoc ask for minimal rights: to use their maternal language in Church, school, administration, press. They are loyal citizens of the Serbian state, do not want to modify the frontiers or to join Romania: “It is not the union with Romania that people want, but full harmony”, as Eminescu wrote in *Timpul*, no. 100, May 5, 1883), referring to the South-Danubian Romanians. It was just a particular case when three Romanians from Timoc (Dr. A. Butoarcă and the priests Gh. I. Suveică and Adam Fistea) asked the Marshal I. Antonescu, on April 29, 1941, to solve the problems of the Romanians from Serbia by the union with Romania. With an exemplary political correctness, the marshal entrusted to several specialists (Victor Papacostea, Vasile Stoica) the mission to elaborate an ample scientific study in relation to this demand and, after analyzing it, he did not accept the union of these territories, but requested the creation of a Romanian Orthodox Bishopric for the Romanians from the Balkan Peninsula and respect for the minimal rights of our co-nationals [6].

After 1989 and especially after the juridical regulations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the European Council and of the Framework Convention for the Protection of the National Minorities, the issue of the national minorities has become a concern for the governments in each matrix-country, on one condition: the respective minority should be part (as an ethnic group and as terminology) of a country of the actual configuration of the world that is a UN member.

Through the interruption of the relations between the Romanians on both sides of the Danube, beginning with 1941, and more markedly after WW2, the Romanians in the south were submitted to an ample and insidious process of assimilation; they were confused, so as to no longer know their ethnic and cultural identity, their origin and their traditions. Is there any country called Walachia (Valahia, Vlahia) today?! They were repeatedly told that they are Walachians (vlahi, valahi, vlași), of unknown or Slav origin, and not at all Romanians. They remained at the stage of the medieval knowledge. It is known that during the Middle Ages the term Walachians (vlahi /valahi) was used by foreign travelers for the Romanians of the Romanian countries, or for the South-Danubian Romanians. The Romanian Medieval rulers did not call themselves “ruler of Walachia” but “ruler of the Romanian Country”. In Iași, in 1643, there appears a Romanian (and not Moldovan!) *Carte românească de învățătură* addressed to the whole Romanian nation. Râmnic in Vâlcea becomes, in 1726-1761, a

strong printing center for Orthodox and Serbian books, a fact acknowledged by the historians in the neighboring country.

The term *vlah* is of Celtic origin and was used by the Non-Romanic European peoples (Germans, Slavs, Turks, Greeks, Hungarians, Albanians) in the Medieval writings and it referred to the Balkan Roman world, being the equivalent of “*Roman (romanized) and Romanic (often used especially for French, Italian, Dalmation or Romanian)*” [7]. Its ethnic meaning evolved during history and in certain geographic regions it has come to have a social or religious sense (nomadic shepherd or bondman; Orthodox). The linguists from before the 20<sup>th</sup> century used the sense of the name *vlah* as an equivalent for Romanian or in a restrained sense for the South-Danubian mountain dwellers [8]. Flavio Biondo wrote, in 1453, that “the Walachians show their origin through their language that they are proud of as one would be of an adornment and which they proclaim Romanian”. Here are other statements of different foreign medieval scholars:

The Romanians come from the Romans [...]. Though under different waves of barbarians, they still speak Romanian and in order to never leave it and to keep it untouched, they are so determined that you see them fighting not so much for their lives as for their language. (A. Bonfini, 1434-1503)

They call themselves Romanians [...] and when someone asks if anyone knows their Walachian language they say: «știi românește?» [Can you speak Romanian?] (Fr. della Valle, ?-1545)

This Walachian people is called Romanian. (Al. Guagnini, 1535-1614)

The Romanian Academy, as a scientific institution, with no political coloring, organized, on October 31, 1994, a scientific session on the topic: *Limba română și varietățile ei locale* (The Romanian Language and Its Local Variants), by which it confirmed that “the unity of the Romanian language spoken in the north and south of the Danube is so conclusive that one can say not just that Aromanian (just like Megleno-Romanian) and Daco-Romanian are alike, but they are even identical in their fundamental features, constituted along the centuries (some exceptions being perceivable in the vocabulary, which is the most sensitive to the contacts with other languages)”.

A delegation of the Romanian Academy (which has good scientific relations with the Serbian Academy), made up of Acad. Eugen Simion, Acad. Marius Sala, Acad. Mihai Cimpoi, Răzvan Voncu, undertook, on September 5, 2005, a documentation visit to Timoc Valley, on the invitation of the Forum for the Romanians' Culture from Bor. On this occasion, Eugen Simion wrote about the Romanians from Timoc: “They are Orthodox Christians, they speak an old Romanian language, with a lot of Serbian words (a natural process), they keep their traditions (related to wedding, funeral, baptism), their songs (some of them splendid)”, and their desires “seemed reasonable to me. They are faithful citizens of the Serbian State. They just want their Romanian language, and access to the means of communication.” [9] The visit of the representatives of the Romanian Academy (joined by Serbian writers: Adam Puslojić, Srba Ignatovici, Radomir Andrić) was only meant, as Eugen Simion highlighted, to signal something: namely that our entry in Romania (i.e. the Romanians' and the Serbs') supposes, among other things, respect for the minorities' right to have a school and to be able to pray in their own language” [10].

Following this visit, *The Linguistic Atlas of the Timoc Valley Region (Atlasul lingvistic al Regiunii Valea Timocului)* was elaborated, in 2006, by the researchers of Cluj: Petru Neiescu, Eugen Beltechi and Nicolae Mocanu, who demonstrate, with purely scientific arguments, that the Romanians from Timoc speak a language that blends the dialects of Banat and Oltenia. [11]

Stalin directed the linguistics of the satellite-countries of Moscow, by means of his “famous” work *On Marxism in linguistics (Cu privire la marxism în lingvistică)*, inventing the “Moldavian language”, which his followers continued to impose in Chişinău and Cernăuţi after the fall of the Red Empire as well. [12]

The unity of the Danubian Latin, favored by the political unity of Dacia, the unity of the common Romanian (the stage that preceded the dialectal separation), the unity of the Daco-Romanian dialects actually reflect the Romanians’ spiritual unity. Regardless of the place in which they were destined to live, the Romanians, by speaking their maternal language, remain aware of their ethnic origin. The factor awareness – in the broad sense of the word – is determining in the preservation of the language. As long as the Romanians from outside the Romanian boundaries remain aware of their real ethnic belonging, one cannot talk about the disappearance of the language, however strong the pressure of the official idiom may be.

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# LINGUISTIC CONTACTS AND THE MODERNIZATION OF THE AUTOCHTHONOUS VOCABULARY. INTER-INFLUENCES – SPECIALIZED LANGUAGE (IT VOCABULARY) AND EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

Dana Camelia DIACONU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *As we all know, a major problem of scientific terminology is the exact correspondence of technical terms from one language to another. Thus, studying the formation of computer vocabulary, we need to know tendencies, stages of the process and the conditioning elements. Regarding the etymological aspect, recent Anglicisms, in general, and the Anglicisms of computers language, in particular, are loans from English (adapted or not) and loan translations from an English model. The terminology import from English to Romanian, as in other languages, involved some problems of linguistic integration and standardization<sup>2</sup>. The extension of the Internet, e-mail, chat, messenger - and the access of a growing number of people, influenced the development of contemporary language, adapting to situations of communication, emerging from IT language, going back and forth between the standard and the familiar language.*

**Key-words:** *specialized language, IT vocabulary, everyday language, English/Romanian language.*

## 1. Scientific terminology formation

An important source in forming any terminology, is the creation of the common lexicon of the current language, for that a terminology, as part of the vocabulary, has common elements with the general vocabulary, and, also specific elements of a defined terminology. The base of any terminology includes internal derivative words and terms resulting from current words reinterpretation. This may be done by semantic loan translations and, in this case, building a terminology is the effect of transfer of a technical sense and / or restoration of a derivative or syntagmatic model, associated with specialized meanings from one language to another, specialization resulting from including into a terminology<sup>3</sup>.

Current terminologies borrowed massively from international languages, neologisms having the advantage of convenience, as well as accurately defining the

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<sup>2</sup> Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Gabriela Pană-Dindelegan, 1997, p. 5-13.

concepts they described. The terms created internally, but especially those translated, came in conflict with terms from the common language and needed an additional strength, requiring a longer period of time to assert as specialized terms. Second, there is a psychological explanation: the informatics expert feels that having the foreign term provides accurate and complete information<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, it is lent the non-verbal part of the code (diagrams, graphics, annotations), each with its own semantics, as dark as semantic terms themselves. There are several reasons for this type of loans<sup>2</sup>:

- a) The need for graphic economy and for understanding effort;
- b) A trend towards code internationalization, the same type of graphical notations appearing simultaneously in different materials;
- c) A temptation to individualize the model used, which is distinguished not only terminologically, but also by non-linguistic expression of the code<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, there is, an interaction movement between these two aspects of language – the words of the everyday language specialize, and those specialized came in the common language. Thus, it occurred a continuous process of determinologisation / terminologisation of the words of a language<sup>4</sup>. Determinologisation process is moving an item from a specific language into the common language. This appeared both in interlingual translation and, also, in intralingual translating or reformulating<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, the ability to draw on specialized language was not limited to linguistic competence, but is, especially, a need for specialized professional competence.

For that matter, the terms of scientific fields also have two particularities:

- a) must be language units to integrate into sentences and have syntactic functions, even if their morphology is not in accordance with the rules of good lexical formation;
- b) need to be, at the same time, knowledge units containing stable content and, therefore, more independent than common words. The first requirement undertook the coherence of linguistic analysis; the second applied the scientific principle of reflexivity, i.e. constant identity of the considered units<sup>6</sup>.

A major problem of scientific terminology is the exact correspondence of technical terms from one language to another. Thus, studying the formation of computer vocabulary, we need to know tendencies, stages of the process and the conditioning elements.

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriela Pană-Dindelegan, *loc.cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>3</sup> Gabriela Pană-Dindelegan, *loc.cit.*

<sup>4</sup> Mariana Pitar, 2006, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Georgiana Lungu, 2008, p. 142.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem.*

## 1.1. Language Explanatory Dictionaries versus IT Dictionaries

Searching the language explanatory dictionaries, the dictionaries of recent words, the neologisms dictionaries, but also, the specialized dictionaries, we find that in the first three types, there were very few specialized words from computer science. The definitions from *Dicționarul de cuvinte recente (DCR)*<sup>1</sup> had, indeed, the reference, but, *Dicționarul Explicativ*<sup>2</sup> did not offer it; in the description of specific differences, the accessibility criterion is not observed in *DCR*, the details were not regarding the computers language, for example, (we are talking about, words like: *bit* („unitate de informație” - „information unit”), *program* („totalitatea acțiunilor propuse a se îndeplini pentru a ajunge la rezultatul dorit” - „all actions proposed to achieve the desired result”), *flow* („pe bandă, industrial” - „on flux, industrial”), *flash* („foto – blitz” - „photo - flash”), *gadget* („obiect mic, amuzant și, uneori practic” - „small object, funny and sometimes funny”), *scanner* („med. – aparat medical modern de radiografie completat cu un ordinator” - „a modern medical device of scanning completed by a computer”) etc.

On the other hand, the definitions from *Dicționarul de calculatoare*<sup>3</sup> were largely accessible only to the specialist: *accumulator* („acumulator, registru pentru efectuarea de calcule în CPU” - „accumulator, register for performing calculations in the CPU”), *accelerator chip* („cip de accelerare al adaptorului video” - „chip for video acceleration adapter”), *acoustic coupler* („cuplor acustic, tehnologie a modemurilor” - „acoustic coupler, a modem technology”), *controller card* („placa de controler, adaptor de controler” - card controller, controller adapter”), *crack* („spargerea codurilor de protecție la jocurile electronice” - „cracking protection codes on electronic games”), *Courier* („font monospațiat care îl simulează pe cel al mașinilor de scris” - „mono-spaced font that simulates that of typewriters”), *courtesy copy* („copie CC, în e-mail” - „CC copy, e-mail”), *cover page* („pagină de gardă” - „coverpage”) etc. Given all this, we may say that computer terminology faced many problems, especially related to polysemantic words, which developed specialized meanings in the different scientific discourses.

The relation between terminology and lexicography is a real issue, the interdependence among different definitions of computer terms and their interpretation by the uninitiated, ordinary people, places the general explanatory dictionaries (with their semi-open codes) between the specialized language and the common language.

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<sup>1</sup> Florica Dimitrescu, 1997, *Dicționar de cuvinte recente (DCR)*.

<sup>2</sup> *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române (DEX)*, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> DC, 2005.



## **2. The linguistic contacts and modernizing the autochthonous vocabulary**

### **2.1. Inter-influences – the speciality language and the common language**

As we know, the Romanian IT field owed its modernization to the most specialized English terms, although the first translations of treaties and specialized textbooks were made in French. The dominance of an English terminology in specialized vocabulary of IT technology fitted into a broader phenomenon of English influence, which materialized in a massive entry of words and sentence structures in all branches of Romanian language: economic and socio-political - economy, government, politics, science and arts in general. The manifestation of this phenomenon proved that we dealt with a quite rapid evolution of the language. It is, in fact, that Romanian is a Romance language and English is a German language, which means that the grammatical, the lexical and the phonetic structure are different.

Modern loans are, often, received, directly from English, British English or American English, by writing, speaking or various electronic sources. The channels of previous loans were often indirect: loans depended, mainly, on written sources and were done by the predominant languages in the most prestigious schools and in the society. Therefore, the French model had come in the most of Europe, at least until 1930, and the German model was seen for a big part of northern and eastern Europe, before the Second World War<sup>1</sup>.

This mediation had left unmistakable traces in the spelling, the pronunciation, the morphology, and in the significance of certain Anglicisms. Thus, often, all of English particularities faded in their form. In addition, some English words are pronounced as if they came from French, even when the intermediary input language was not French.

On the other hand, a major source of contact between the two languages and perhaps the most important for receiving this large number of Anglicism, for their integration and adaptation is foreign languages teaching and learning, in this case English language. It would, therefore, be very important for correct analysis of loans to determine the status of English<sup>2</sup> as the language of study in school (compared to other taught languages such as French, German or Russian), the methods used, and the proportion of students and, also, the learning demands of English in higher education.

The influence of the specialized language and the common language is mutual. The relations between the common lexicon and the specialized one play an important role in the transition from one register to another. As we said, the

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<sup>1</sup> Manfred Görlach, 2002, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*.

specialized language took words from the current language, and extended their meanings by metaphor<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, referring to the metaphorical connotations, Rodica Zafiu stated:

The metaphorical source of terminology remains transparent in the language it has developed, mainly - in computers language, in English. Transpositions in other languages may consist of taking the word itself as a lexical loan, hiding its metaphorical origin, or by loan-translating its meaning, through recovering its metaphorical path.<sup>2</sup>

Many metaphorical terms have been partly translated, thus coming into the autochthonous specialist language, by semantic loan translations. In Informatics courses and textbooks we found plenty of common lexicon terms, but which have enriched their meaning: *arhitectură* / *architecture*, *a accesa*, *acces* / *access*, *biblioteca virtuală* / *virtual library*, *block* / *block*, *character* / *character*, *câmp* / *field*, *cod* / *code*, *fereastră* / *window*, *hartă* / *map*, *rădăcină* / *root*, *magistrală* / *bus*, *meniu* / *menu*, *mod* / *mode*, *mașină* / *machine*, *a naviga* / *surf*, *orfan* / *orphan*, *pachet* / *package*, *poartă* / *gate*, *a salva* / *to save*, *văduvă* / *widow*, *virus* / *virus*, *a vizita* / *to visit* etc.

Another interesting characteristic observed by the researchers of this language<sup>3</sup> is that the specialized terminology (re)entered, by semantic extension, often using familiar speech, in everyday language. The verb *to access* is a typical Anglicism for computers language: „*Acest site este accesat de sute de oameni*”, / „*This site is accessed by hundreds of people*”, „*căsuța poștală nu a mai fost accesată de mult timp*” / „*your mailbox has not been accessed for a long time.*” The verb *to reset* also occurs frequently in everyday language: „*resetează-te!*” – „*pleacă, dispari, ascunde-te!*” / „*reset yourself*” - „*go, disappear, hide!*”; it seems to have been all about a metaphorical application, which has recently appeared in colloquial and young people language and that of computer users. Let's remember the famous advertising spot for a famous brand of chips: „*Vrei să ne downloadăm la prima?* / *Eroare! Dă restart, poate îți iese data viitoare!*” / „*Would you like us to download at the first station?* / *Error! Restart, maybe next time!*” Many of the cited forms are ephemeral creations, but they are the proofs that metaphorical expression in IT language is normal, that through this process IT terms enter in the common language usage.

If we compare the general and specialized vocabulary, we see that the latter uses more neological loans, facilitating direct communication among specialists. In the common vocabulary only the specialized language elements entered, which are part of the literary language as neologisms, and are used occasionally by unspecialized people.

Other process influencing specialized languages, in general, and computers language, in particular, is grouping the terms into isolated lexical systems of common vocabulary, but which is mutually linked with other object-notional

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<sup>1</sup> Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 89.

<sup>3</sup> Vezi Rodica Zafiu și Radu-Nicolae Trif, *op. cit.*

fields<sup>1</sup>. Thus, there is homonymy between terms belonging to the specialized vocabulary and words in the common vocabulary. In IT language, there are semantic loan translations, formed by adding some additional, loan-translated meanings to the old words in the common language. The translation process faced larger reserves than the loan itself, thus, appearing the association with the term from the common language and the difficulty of rendering to the current term the characteristics of a specialized one. This transformation involves the total loss of the word's history, obtained by removing all the textual and contextual use of the common word (detextualisation and decontextualisation).

## 2.2. Etymological issues

Many Anglicisms have, actually “multiple etymology”<sup>2</sup> or “dual etymologies”<sup>3</sup>, especially Anglo-French, observing a competition<sup>4</sup> between the two sources, like: *ordinateur* and *computer*. There are terms that have been created or translated from French following an English model, Romanian language taking, in turn, the terms in French:

*birotică* (fr. *bureautique*, engl. *office automation*)

*ordinator* (fr. *ordinateur*)

*calculator* (fr. *calculateur*, engl. *calculator* nu are același sens cu *computer*)

*imprimantă* (fr. *imprimante*, engl. *printer*) etc.

Although the direct influence of French in Informatics is small, we may not say the same about the indirect one, exercised by the French on the English language; many words have specialized during crystallization of IT terminology<sup>5</sup> and acquired the status of IT term, with a dual etymology. We include here examples such as:

*bit* (< fr., engl. *bit*)

*capacitiv* (< fr. *capacitiv*, engl. *capacitive*)

*cluster* (< fr., engl. *cluster*)

*dischetă* (engl. *diskette*, fr. *disquette*)

*digital* (engl., fr. *digital*)

*decodor* (engl. *decoder*, fr. *décodeur*)

*fading / feding* (< engl., fr. *fading*)

*flash* (engl., fr. *flash*)

*biocibernetică* (engl. *biocybernetics*, fr. *biocibernétique*)

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>2</sup> The notion and the term *multiple etymology* were introduced in linguistics by Al. Graur, 1950, p. 22-34.

<sup>3</sup> The notion of *double etymology*, as a type of *multiple etymology* was proposed and discussed by Theodor Hristea, 1973, p. 3-7.

<sup>4</sup> Mioara Avram, 1997<sup>2</sup>, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> Radu-Nicolae Trif, 2006, p.15.

*gadget* (engl., fr. *gadget*)  
*microprocesor* (engl. *microprocessor*, fr. *microprocesseur*)  
*scaner* (engl., fr. *scanner*) etc.

There are other IT terms with uncertain or multiple etymology, which entered the Romanian and, implicitly, IT language, from other languages than English:

*analogic* (< fr. *analogique*, cf. și lat. *analogicus*)  
*compila* (< fr. *compiler*, cf. și lat. *compilare*)  
*compilator* (< fr. *compilateur*, cf. și lat. *compilator*)  
*fotocopier / fotocopiator* (< germ. *Photokopier*)  
*program* (< fr. *programme*, cf. și germ. *Programm*)  
*programatic* (< germ. *Programmatisch*, cf. și fr. *programatique*)  
*salt* (< lat. *saltus*, cf. și it. *salto*)  
*simula* (< fr. *simuler*, cf. și lat. *simulare*)  
*spațiu* (< lat. *spatium*, cf. și fr. *espace*, engl. *space*)  
*tastatură* (< germ. *Tastatur*, cf. și it. *tastatura*)  
*virus* (< fr., lat. *virus*)  
*vocabular*<sup>1</sup> (< fr. *vocabulaire*, cf. și lat. *vocabularium*) etc.

### 3. Conclusions

Regarding the same etymological aspect, recent Anglicisms, in general, and the Anglicisms of computers language, in particular, are loans from English (adapted or not) and loan translations from an English model. Thus, on the first category, more visible, we may say, yet, that this can be classified, in turn, into the following Anglicism subtypes:

a) unadapted:

- simple: *bug, patch, slot, bus, wizard, rabbit, widow* ș.a.
- derived: *antipishing, antispam, antivirus, antispyware, blogger, gamer, developer* etc.
- phraseologic units: *peer-to-peer, high-technology, high-definition, sleep mode, safe mode* etc.
- para-tax compounds: *headset, Inkjet, minilaptop, off-line, on-line, SmartPhone, weblog, wild-card* etc.
- abbreviation compounds: *LCD, GPS, PDA, CD, HD* etc.
- truncations: *Hi-Fi, Wi-Fi, hi-tech, low-tech* etc.
- combinations among these methods: *antispyware* (derivation and compound), *mini PC* (prefix and abbreviation compound), *(unitate) CD-ROM* (abbreviation, truncation, annexation) etc.

b) partly adapted or adapting:

- compounds: *cyber-infractor, cyber-sabotor, cyberfobia* ș.a.
- derived: *a digitiza, digitizare, gadgetizare, logare, share-ui, shar-uit, a upgrada, a zooma* etc.

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<sup>1</sup> MDN, 2007, *vocabular* – (inf.) „mulțime de simboluri cu care se pot forma cuvinte” / .

*Marele dicționar de neologisme (MDN)*, listed the IT terms with French etymon, as opposed to any specialized computers dictionaries, where the IT terminology was presented as an absorption of words and expressions of American English. Thus, in the MDN, 2007, from 176 entries in the field of informatics, 130 terms are fully adapted (phonetic, graphic, morphological) as: *adapter, analyzer, automatic, automation, computer, cyber, compact disk, compatible compiler* etc., and 45 are adapting Anglicisms: *chip, chipcard, click, e-mail, fading, floppy disk, flow-chart, hacker, hacking* etc.

In terms of etymology, 84 terms in this dictionary are listed as coming from French, 75 are English, 16 had double etymology (of which 8 English-French, German- French - 2: *program, programatic*, 5- French-Latin: *spațiu, virus, analogic, a simula, vocabular*., 1 - Latin-Italian: *salt*, 1 - German-Italian: *tastatură*), and one is of German origin (*fotocopiér - fotocopiator*). Comparing these entries to the total inventory of new terms, we consider that the fund of Romanian IT terminology from English is about 90%.

The terminology import from English to Romanian, as in other languages, involved some problems of linguistic integration and standardization<sup>1</sup>. The extension of the Internet, e-mail, chat, messenger - and the access of a growing number of people, influenced the development of contemporary language, adapting to situations of communication, emerging from IT language, going back and forth between the standard and the familiar language.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodica Zafiu, 2001, p. 86.

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