



Universitatea  
Transilvania  
din Braşov

## **HABILITATION THESIS**

### **LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**

#### **Language, Discourse, and Nonverbal Communication**

Domain: HUMANITIES

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## A. REZUMATUL TEZEI DE ABILITARE

Teza de abilitare intitulată *Language Acquisition and Intercultural Communication* este structurată în două părți majore: prima parte (B-i) este dedicată realizărilor științifice în cele două domenii de cercetare de interes pentru mine, și anume *achiziția limbii române* (Capitolul 1) și *comunicarea interculturală* (Capitolul 2), a doua parte (B-ii) cuprinzând planul de dezvoltare a carierei profesionale.

Prima secțiune a capitolului întâi este o prezentare succintă a tezei de doctorat, intitulată *Relating Events in Narrative: A Case Study of Romanian*, o lucrare de pionierat în domeniul achiziției limbii române ce urmărește modul în care copii de diferite vârste, vorbitori de limbă română, reușesc să construiască o poveste pe baza unor imagini (din cartea lui M. Mayer, 1969: *Frog, where are you?*). Realizarea povestirilor presupune atât achiziția și utilizarea categoriilor verbale de *timp* și *aspect*, cât și înlănțuirea propozițiilor prin intermediul *conectorilor*, ce conferă narațiunilor coeziune. Această teză de doctorat a reușit să umple un gol existent în lingvistica românească de la începutul secolului al 21-lea și, în același timp, să contribuie cu date de limbă română la cercetarea trans-lingvistică în domeniul achiziției limbii materne.

Activitatea mea de cercetare după obținerea titlului de doctor în lingvistică s-a axat, cu precădere, pe achiziția limbii române, principalul meu domeniu de interes până în anul 2011. Astel, secțiunea a doua a **capitolului 1** prezintă contribuțiile mele la acest domeniu, începând cu achiziția fonologiei, trecând apoi la achiziția vocabularului și a unor aspecte de gramatică ale limbii române, încheind cu dezvoltarea deprinderilor narrative ale copiilor vorbitori de limbă română. Dacă achiziția gramaticii, în special a sintaxei, este abordată frecvent de către lingviștii bucureșteni, domeniul foneticii și fonologiei a fost foarte puțin investigat din această perspectivă (singurul cercetător care s-a aplecat asupra acestui domeniu fiind profesorul Andrei Avram și, mai recent, fiul acestuia, profesorul Andrei A. Avram), astfel încât am avut șansa de a descoperi dacă copiii români parcurg aceleași etape de învățare a sunetelor limbii materne și se confruntă cu aceleași probleme ca majoritatea copiilor ce învață alte limbi, precum engleza, franceza, ebraica, turca, etc. În ceea ce privește achiziția vocabularului, de interes pentru mine a fost modul în care teoria prototipurilor (introdusă de Eleanor Rosch în 1973) poate explica erorile produse de copii în utilizarea anumitor cuvinte (cum ar fi, de exemplu, folosirea cuvântului ‘noapte’ în loc de ‘întuneric’). La nivelul narațiunii, am continuat și extins cercetarea întreprinsă în cadrul lucrării de doctorat, investigând maniera în care copiii români introduc un personaj și continua să facă referire la el în decursul povestirii. De asemenea, m-a interesat cum evoluează de la o vârstă la alta tehnica de combinare a elementelor ce descriu un eveniment. Rezultatele cercetărilor mele în acest domeniu au fost diseminate la conferințe și ateliere de lucru, iar o parte

a articolelor au fost adunate, actualizate și publicate într-un volum intitulat *The Acquisition of Romanian*, apărut în 2017 la Editura Universității *Transilvania* din Brașov. De menționat este faptul că unele dintre aceste articole sunt prezente în diverse baze de date sau în biblioteci din țară și străinătate.

În **capitolul 2** sunt reunite articolele ce vizează a doua arie de interes, și anume comunicarea interculturală, un domeniu pe care am început să-l îndrăgesc ca urmare a predării cursului de *Diferențe culturale în comunicarea nonverbală*, oferit studenților masteranzi, dar în care nu am avut suficientă experiență pentru a cerceta decât începând cu anul 2010, când procesul de globalizare a devenit din ce în ce mai evident, aducând cu sine intensificarea contactelor interculturale. Înțelegerea diferențelor culturale între popoare se poate realiza abordând cultura dintr-o multitudine de perspective, folosindu-ne de opere literare, muzică sau filme, cât și de experiențe interculturale proprii. Astfel, în câteva articole abordarea diferențelor culturale s-a făcut din prisma comportamentului nonverbal, culturile care au fost comparate fiind cea britanică, persană și indiană, subliniindu-se atât asemănările, dar mai ales diferențele dintre acestea, care în comunicarea interculturală pot cauza disensiuni, sentimente de frustrare sau stereotipuri. De asemenea, în alte lucrări abordarea diferențelor culturale s-a făcut din prisma celor 6 dimensiuni propuse de Hofstede (1980) și Hofstede *et al.* (2010): ecartul puterii, individualism vs collectivism, masculinitate vs feminitate, evitarea incertitudinii, orientarea pe termen lung și privilegiu vs restricție. În același timp, am extins și sfera culturilor investigate la Coreea de Sud, o țară cu o cultură mai puțin cunoscută românilor.

**Capitolul 3** prezintă activitățile didactice pe care le desfășor, ce constituie o mare parte a muncii oricărui cadru didactic universitar. Prin schimburile de cadre didactice la care participăm prin programele Erasmus încerc să-mi îmbunătățesc atât maniera de predare, cât și structura cursurilor. De asemenea, am în vedere adaptarea cursurilor pe care le predau la cerințele pieței muncii. A doua parte a capitolului cuprinde o trecere în revistă a altor activități, cum ar fi organizarea conferinței internaționale de lingvistică *Structure, Use, and Meaning* ajunsă în 2018 la cea de-a 4-a ediție, editarea volumelor acestei conferințe și participarea în diverse comisii în calitate de membru al comunității academice.

Partea a doua a tezei de abilitare (B-ii) este consacrată planurilor de dezvoltare în cariera profesională, științifică și academică. În ceea ce privește activitatea didactică, voi continua să-mi actualizez cursurile și să le adaptez la cele mai noi cercetări în domeniile de studiu și, de asemenea, să propun cursuri noi. Totodată, voi încerca să-mi diversific metodele didactice și să le adaptez la necesitățile studenților. Menținerea unei bune relații cu studenții și îndrumarea în continuare acestora atât în activitatea didactică, cât și în cea de cercetare este un alt obiectiv al

meu. Nu în ultimul rând, mi-aș dori să continui cooperarea cu cadre didactice din alte universități din țară și din străinătate în vederea consolidării unei comunități profesionale.

Privitor la domeniile de cercetare, acestea vor rămâne cele abordate în prezent, intenția mea fiind de a le dezvolta, de a le aborda interdisciplinar, dar și de a atrage în ele tineri cercetători care să ducă mai departe ștafeta. De asemenea, îmi doresc să-mi completez paleta cu un nou domeniu de cercetare, cum ar fi cel al achiziției bilingvismului, care este mai puțin explorat în țara noastră și care poate avea o aplicabilitate practică, având în vedere multitudinea etnică a României și posibilitatea ca în curând, datorită fenomenelor politice din lume, bilingvismul să sporească, oferind noi date de cercetare.

Pe termen scurt, îmi doresc să-mi îmbunătățesc o mai veche propunere de proiect de cercetare științifică, axat pe achiziția fonologiei limbii române, pe care să-l lansez și derulez cu sprijin financiar național sau european și, de asemenea, să particip ca membru în proiecte inițiate de alți cercetători. Și pentru că studiul foneticii și al fonologiei îmi este foarte drag, pe termen lung, intenționez să public un volum despre modelele fonologice apărute de-a lungul timpului.

Ultima parte (B-iii) cuprinde o listă selectivă a surselor citate, care trimit la aspectele prezentate în primele două părți (B-i și B-ii) ale tezei de abilitare.

## A. SUMMARY OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

The habilitation thesis entitled *Language Acquisition and Intercultural Communication* consists of two main parts: the first part (B-i) comprises my scientific achievements in the two research domains that are of interest to me, namely *child language acquisition* (Chapter 1) and *intercultural communication* (Chapter 2). Here I also offer an outline of my teaching-related work and other academic activities. The second part (B-ii) covers the plans for my main future research areas and academic career.

The first section of Chapter 1 is a brief presentation of my doctoral thesis entitled *Relating Events in Narrative: A Case Study of Romanian*, a pioneering work in the field of Romanian child language acquisition, aimed at showing the way in which Romanian-speaking children of different ages manage to construct a narrative on the basis of a wordless picture book (M. Mayer, 1969: *Frog, where are you?*). Creating a narrative presupposes the acquisition and mastery of the verbal categories of *tense* and *aspect*, as well as the ability to link clauses into a cohesive discourse by means of *connectors*. This doctoral thesis came to fill a gap in the field of Romanian linguistics at the beginning of the 21st century and, at the same time, to contribute with Romanian data to cross-linguistic studies in the field of child language acquisition.

After getting my PhD degree, my research activity focussed mainly on the acquisition of Romanian. Thus, section 2 of chapter 1 presents my contributions to this domain, starting with the acquisition of phonology, moving on to the acquisition of vocabulary and various aspects of grammar, and finishing with the development of the narrative skills of the Romanian-speaking children. If the acquisition of Romanian syntax is extensively covered by colleague linguists from Bucharest University, there has been extremely little research concerning the acquisition of phonetics and phonology (the only scholars to investigate this field being Professor Andrei Avram and, more recently, his son, Professor Andrei A. Avram). This gave me the chance to discover whether Romanian children follow the same stages and are confronted with the same problems in acquiring the sounds of their mother tongue like the majority of children learning other languages, such as English, French, Hebrew, Turkish, etc. With respect to the acquisition of vocabulary, of interest for me was the way in which the prototype theory (introduced by Eleanor Rosch in 1973) can explain the errors produced by the Romanian children in using certain words (such as *noapte* ‘night’ in lieu of *întuneric* ‘darkness’). As far as the narrative skills are concerned, I have continued and extended the research carried out in my doctoral paper by investigating the manner in which young Romanian speakers introduce a referent, maintain reference or switch it throughout the narrative/story. At the same time, of interest was also the way events are conflated. My research findings were disseminated at various national and



international workshops and conferences; most of my articles have been updated and gathered in a volume entitled *The Acquisition of Romanian*, which was published by *Transilvania University Publishing House* in 2017. Also worth mentioning is that some of these articles appear in various data bases.

**Chapter 2** contains the research articles I have authored or co-authored in the field of *intercultural communication*, a domain I came to embrace after starting teaching a course on *Cultural Differences in Nonverbal Communication* in 2004 to the master students. Until 2010, I did not feel I had enough expertise to pursue research in this field. I started being more interested when the phenomenon of globalization became increasingly obvious bringing about lots of intercultural encounters. Insight into the cultural differences among peoples can be obtained by approaching culture from various perspectives, using as analysis data literature, music, movies or from personal intercultural experiences. Thus, in some of my papers I investigated cultural differences in terms of nonverbal communication, by comparing the English, Persian, and Indian cultures, bringing to light similarities, but more importantly differences between them, as the latter can cause embarrassment, feelings of frustrations or could lead to stereotyping in intercultural encounters. In other papers, I have approached cultural differences from the vantage point of the 6 cultural dimensions put forward by Hofstede (1980) and Hofstede *et al.* (2010): power distance, individualism vs collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence vs. restraint. At the same time, I also extended the range of investigation to South Korea, a country whose culture is less known by Romanians.

**Chapter 3** is a presentation of my teaching activity, which is an extremely important part of any university teacher's life. The Erasmus exchange programs enabled me to improve my teaching activity by observing what foreign professors do in class to motivate their students. At the same time, I also had the chance of identifying new topics or trends and methods in the subjects I teach, and I have updated my course materials accordingly. Moreover, I also try to adapt the courses I teach to the demands of the work market.

The second section of this chapter pinpoints other academic activities, such as organizing the international linguistics conference *Structure, Use, and Meaning*, which reached its fourth edition in 2018, editing the volume of proceedings of this conference, and research dissemination and recognition.

Part two (B-ii) of the habilitation thesis is devoted to my plans for the professional, scientific, and academic activities. With respect to the teaching-related activity, I will continue to upgrade my courses and to adapt them to the newest trends in the domain and, at the same time, I intend to propose new courses. I will also try to diversify and improve my teaching methods, in agreement with my students' needs. Maintaining a good relationship with my students and

helping them in both their academic and research activities is another objective of mine. Last but not least, I intend to continue my cooperation with colleagues from other native and foreign universities with the aim of establishing a professional community.

As for the research-related activities, they will be continued in the domains I am currently investigating, my intention being to extend the range of topics of research, to approach the domains in an interdisciplinary manner, as well as to motivate young researchers to collaborate with me and then to do research on their own. Moreover, I intend to pursue research in a new field, namely bilingual acquisition, which has been underinvestigated in our country. The multi-ethnic character of the Romanian population and also the large waves of migrants invading Europe may provide interesting research data in this respect.

My short-term aim is to improve an older research project on the acquisition of Romanian phonology and to submit it in a grant competition, but also to participate as a member in research projects initiated by other researchers. And because the study of phonetics and phonology is very dear to me, my long-term objective is to publish a short book on the phonological models that have emerged in time.

The last part of the thesis (B-iii) contains a selection of the sources cited in the first two parts (B-i and B-ii).

## **(B) SCIENTIFIC AND PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND EVOLUTION. CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLANS**

### **(B-0) Career development path before the doctoral studies**

Before embarking on the presentation of the scientific and professional achievements, it would be in order at this point to briefly sketch my professional development until the moment I received my PhD title, highlighting my interests in research and teaching activities.

In 1983 I received my Bachelor Degree in English and German from the Faculty of Letters, “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca, where I was enrolled in undergraduate studies for 4 years (1979-1983). Though we had been trained for a teaching career, on graduating from the university, I was given a job as a translator in the technical field, at Machine-Tools Factory in Bacău (Intreprinderea de Maşini-Unelte). For about 7 years, I worked as a translator in this field and in 1990 I decided to go into the teaching profession. The Braşov County Inspectorate offered me a teaching position in School no. 5, in Braşov, where I taught English and German to pupils ranging from the second to the sixth grade. A colleague of mine from this school, who simultaneously worked as a part-time professor at *Transilvania* University of Braşov, invited me to join her in this activity, as the university was short of foreign language staff. This was my ‘entry ticket’ to the academic world, where I became fully employed as an assistant lecturer in 1992, after taking an examination.

As a full-time teaching staff member, I first taught English for Specific Purposes to students from the technical and economic faculties of the university. As the Faculty of Letters started expanding its educational offer, I felt tempted to teach courses in linguistics, so that in 1995, when I became a lecturer, I was already teaching 3 courses in this domain (*English phonetics and phonology, English lexicology, and Semantics*) and 2 practical courses (*Conversation and Translation*). Both as an ESP and also as a linguistics teacher, I have tried to focus more on practical issues, meant to enhance my students’ motivation and to develop their communication skills.

Having been in the system for four years and having acquired some teaching and research experience, in 1996 I applied for a PhD scholarship at the Institute of Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, where I was accepted, so that in September 1996 I was enrolled in the doctoral school of the afore-mentioned institution. For three years I attended the doctoral courses in various fields of linguistics, wrote assignments, and participated in various workshops and conferences. This period ended with a very encompassing examination (*rigorosum/zsigorlat*), which I took in 2010.

During my doctoral studies, I was advised by the Doctoral School director, Professor Ferenc Kiefer, to contact Professor Zita Reger, a specialist in child language acquisition, a field of study that was completely unknown to me and, as I was later to find out, that was in an incipient stage in Romania. With very much patience and dedication, Professor Reger helped me gain some insight into the field and encouraged me to investigate some issues related to this domain in my doctoral paper. Once the domain was decided on, I started reading extensively in order to get more knowledge about child language. This is how I came across the large-scale international study carried out by Ruth Berman and Dan Slobin (1994) on children speaking various languages (English, German, French, Hebrew) but not Romanian, and I decided to try their method of investigation on Romania-speaking children. In 2011, I started collecting my corpus which ended up having 47 narratives produced by subjects of different ages and in 2003 I finished writing my PhD paper. This was sent to two opponents, Dr. Tibor Pólya (Institute for Psychology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) and Dr. Andrea Remeny (ELTE), who read it and wrote reports containing suggestions for improvement. I defended my PhD Paper in June 2005, at the Institute for Linguistics in Budapest, the examination board being made up by the two opponents mentioned before and Dr. E. Kiss Katalin (board president), and I was awarded the title of *Doctor in Theoretical Linguistics*. In 2006, my Hungarian PhD certificate was validated by the Ministry of Education, Research, and Youth, the titled being changed to *Doctor in Philology*.

## **(B-i) Scientific and professional achievements and evolution**

### **Chapter 1. RESEARCH IN ROMANIAN CHILD LANGUAGE ACQUISITION**

In this chapter, I will first provide an outline of my doctoral research, followed by a brief presentation of the other studies I carried out in the field of the acquisition of Romanian, after the completion of my doctoral studies and the defence of my dissertation, which earned me the PhD title in linguistics.

#### **1.1. DOCTORAL RESEARCH: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND, PROCEDURAL PRELIMINARIES, AND FINDINGS**

My doctoral paper, entitled *Relating Events in Narrative. A Case study of Romanian*, is a small-scale research on the acquisition of the verbal categories of *tense* and *aspect*, on the one hand and of *connectives*, on the other hand, along with the acquisition of *narrative skills*. The paper comes to fill a gap in the Romanian linguistics of the early 2000 and to contribute with data to cross-linguistic research on child language.

##### **1.1.1. Theoretical background**

Following Berman and Slobin (1994), for my research I have adopted a form-functional approach to language development, which is based on the assumption that language develops in relation to the communicative function it serves. More specifically, for language to become an abstract formal system, it needs to have its origins in a functional base. The relationship between the language forms and the functions they serve is systematic and of utmost importance. Another important aspect revealed by the functionalist literature is that the pairings between forms and functions undergo a developmental change. Actually, it is a change in the whole linguistic system, such that ‘old forms are given new functions and old functions are related to new forms’, echoing Slobin (1973, 1994). The advantage presented by this approach consists in the fact that the correct grammatical use need not be equated with a system that corresponds with adult usage.

The paper is structured in two major parts, a **theoretical** one (Chapters One and Two) and an **analytical** one (Chapters Three and Four). Chapter One offers a general theoretical perspective on the issues that constitute the object of the research. It starts by defining the narrative, goes on to consider the trends and developments in the field and then concentrates on the narrative structure and narrative discourse organization, focusing on the way in which

narrators choose to present given/new information or to foreground/background events. Adopting a top-down approach, the following sections deal with three issues that have a tremendous impact on the narrative discourse organization and that are interrelated. For each of the issues under investigation, the major concepts and models of analysis are presented, followed by an overview of the major contributions of various foreign linguists to the study of the acquisition and development of the tense/aspect forms and connectives. The information offered by this chapter represents the theoretical input for Chapters Three and Four of the paper.

### 1.1.2. Procedural preliminaries

This section addresses the following methodological issues: the process of data collection, the transcription of the recordings and glossing, and the establishment of the text units.

To create the corpus necessary for my analysis, I employed Mayer's (1969) picture book *Frog, where are you?*, on the basis of which I was able to elicit 47 narratives from Romanian-speaking subjects divided into three major age groups: pre-school children (aged 3–5), schoolchildren (aged 9), and adults (ranging from 19 to 53), with the first group being further sub-divided into 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds. The pre-school children were nursery school or kindergarten goers; all the schoolchildren interviewed belonged to the same class (they were in their third grade), whereas the adult subjects were either friends or students of mine. All subjects came from the same socio-economic background. Except for the 3-year-old group, for which I had only 7 transcripts, for all the other age groups I had 10 transcripts each.

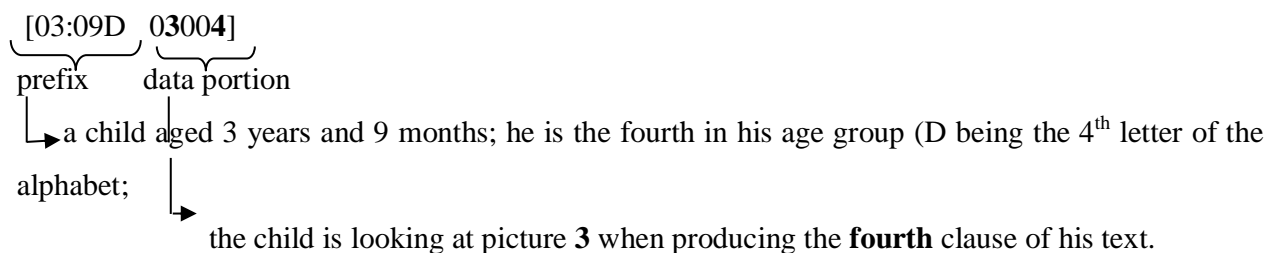
For the purpose of the research, I have used a **cross-sectional study** (a study of a set of variables in a group of children of different ages, using different subjects at each age) based on some kind of **naturalistic sampling** (which implies the recording of a child's production of language in a familiar environment and the analysis of the information obtained with respect to speech production). The cross-sectional study was absolutely important, as one of my main concerns was to trace the development of narratives since early childhood throughout adulthood and the emergence of particular tense forms and connectives. My sampling was representative for the research purpose, in that it offered me the means of analysing the meaning of patterns of frequency and distribution of certain items, as well as of analysing the function of certain syntactic units/forms in the narratives. This is very much in line with the British tradition in text analysis, represented by Firth (1957) and Halliday (1992) who have set the basic principles in British linguistics, covering aspects like:

- **'the nature of data for linguistics:** language should be studied in authentic instances of use (not as intuitive, invented sentences); language should be dealt with as whole texts (not as isolated sentences); texts should be studied comparatively across text corpora.

- **the essential subject of linguistics:** linguistics should study meaning; form and meaning are inseparable; lexis and grammar are interdependent.
- **the nature of linguistic behaviour:** language in use involves both routine and creation; language in use transmits culture' (Stubbs, 1996: 23).

Once I finished recording my subjects, the next step was to transcribe the recordings in order to extract the necessary data for the analysis. I have chosen to use the standard orthographic transcription system for two reasons: a) at the time I did my doctoral research, I was not really familiar with the CHAT transcription conventions (Higginson & MacWhinney, 1990) and, as I was constrained by time, I had to find the easiest, but also the most suitable transcription system; b) in keeping with Ochs (1979), Edwards (1995), and Cook (1995), I opted for a “clean text”, one that would help me identify patterns of interest, ‘free of the distraction of irrelevant detail’ (Edwards, 1995: 19). The system of transcription conventions I employed is largely based on the one used by Berman and Slobin (1994), with minor changes and additions, which would allow a range of possible analyses, and which would facilitate the representation of a range of phenomena (such as phonological, morphological and lexical errors).

In line with Berman and Slobin (1994), an ID code precedes each clause of the texts. This code consists of **two parts**: the first part, called ‘**the prefix of the ID**’ provides information about the age of the subject and his/her position in the age group. It consists of 6 digits for children and 3 digits for adults. The second part, referred to as ‘**data portion**’, indicates the number of the picture the subject had in front of him/her while producing the clause entered on the text line, as well as the number of that clause out of the total number of clauses in the text. Here is an example of an ID code:



Another important issue was to find the best means of segmenting the text into grammatically analysable units. Out of the possibilities available, i.e. the *utterance*<sup>1</sup> (Harris,

<sup>1</sup> Harris (1951:14) defines the utterances as ‘any stretch of talk by one person, before and after which there is silence on the part of that person’. This definition points out that utterances may have different sizes (varying from a single lexical item to longer speeches) or different structural complexities (i.e. a simple sentence or a complex one); what matters most is that before and after the utterance there is silence.

1951), the *functional sentence* (Payne, 1995) determined by intonational and pragmatic factors, or the *production units* (Edwards, 1995) bounded by space, I opted for the *clause* (determined by discourse-functional criteria) as the minimum unit of analysis. The reason for this option was, in keeping in line with Berman and Slobin (1994:29), that ‘the clause is more linguistically structured than an utterance, and less determined by syntactic criteria than a sentence’. Slobin (1993:211) defines the clause as ‘a unit containing a *unified* predicate. By *unified* we mean a predicate that expresses a single situation (activity, event, state)’. This predicate may be expressed by an adjective or a verb, the latter being finite or non-finite.

The method of data collection and the analysis of the data set the present study within the paradigm of both quantitative and qualitative research. From the *qualitative* point of view, a comparison of the variety of language acquired by children with the variety used by adults of the same ethnic group and social class revealed linguistic change in progress. On the other hand, by recording the frequency of occurrence of certain patterns, the study also offered a view of the time span between the **emergence** (the first use) and **acquisition** (the result of learning) of certain forms.

### 1.1.3. Findings

The aim of my doctoral study was to offer a thorough account of some of the processes that contribute to the making of the child’s grammar. The investigation has focussed on two domains of grammatical development, namely the development of connectives and the development of tense forms. Not all connectives and tense forms encountered in the narrative productions were included in the analysis. I have focused only on those forms that were typical of and predominant in the discourse mode of *picture book narration*, being aware that they represent a very modest area of grammar. By way of compensation, I have tried to offer a detailed analysis of the functions these forms have in discourse, in an attempt to bring to the fore motivations for the use of a particular form to serve a specific function. Furthermore, the analysis also aimed at identifying a certain *developmental path* in the acquisition and use of connectives and tense/aspect forms.

Underlying the study of the form-function relationships is the assumption that *macro-linguistic* knowledge (i.e. knowledge about the structural characteristics of the narrative discourse) and *micro-linguistic* knowledge (in this case, knowledge of different kinds of connectives, as well as of how to adjust tense) influence each other, or better said, ‘feed each other’. Thus, the general level of discourse organization determines the use of certain forms, which, in turn, fulfill certain functions, and these functions will determine the overall shape of



discourse. In other words, the linguistic devices develop in connection with increasing narrative proficiency.

The analysis revealed striking age-related differences between the three basic age groups in the study (i.e. the pre-schoolers, the schoolchildren, and the adult narrators) in terms of both the macro-structural organization of the narrative texts, and of the micro-structural properties of narratives, such as the cohesive relations established by means of tenses and connectives. The findings concerning each of these issues will be presented in what follows.

#### a) **Narrative organization**

Though the narrative organization has been, in a way, a ‘marginal’ concern with the dissertation, the issue could not have escaped consideration since the aim of the study was the investigation of the use of tense/aspect forms and connectives in narrative discourse.

The analysis of the texts produced in response to the frog-story picture booklet (Mayer, 1969) revealed an age-related development of the overall narrative structure, starting from the youngest subjects, aged 3 years, and on to the third-grade schoolchildren and adults. An evaluation of the narratives of the youngest children in terms of the criteria of general narrative ability yields the following picture. The 3-year-olds do not recognize any ‘high point’ at all; to do so requires that they should have command of the structure of a canonical narrative, with a complicating action leading up to a high point and culminating in a final outcome/resolution. Consequently, at the most global level of narrative structure they are yet incapable of organizing their according to an overall action-structure. At a local level, children aged 3 can describe the content of static pictures using dynamic verbal expressions, but they fail to realize that the elements depicted in pictures are to be interpreted as sequences of events which are related temporally or/and causally. Furthermore, at the local level of individual scenes, the youngest subjects cannot consistently distinguish overtly between the foreground, plot advancing events, and background states/actions. Additionally, the narratives of the 3-year-olds lack many of the basic constituents of a story. That is why they more closely resemble event descriptions. As a result, the texts of the 3-year-olds do not meet the standards of a narrative, and lack coherence and cohesion.

Among the older pre-school children (aged between ages 4 and 5), we witness the emergence of narratives that follow the temporal sequence of experienced events, but which end prematurely at the high point of the story. At this age, children overmark the temporal sequencing of events (which is the default feature of narratives) by initiating almost every clause with the sequential expression *după aia* (‘after that’).

Soon (at around the age of 4:6), another stage follows when children start relating events causally; this seems to be motivated by the overall action-structure, but it is still to be encountered locally. More constituent elements of narratives become obvious in the texts of the 4-year-olds. Thus, three of the 10 subjects in this age group provide a setting/orientation for the listener, which is initiated by the temporal term *odată* ('once'), identifying the text as a narrative genre. Additionally, more than half of these subjects also provide the resolution, while only one child ([04:05C]) also produces some kind of a coda: *și gata* ('and it's over'/'and that's it').

Towards the end of the preschool period (at about the age of six), the majority of children are capable to tell narratives that conform to Labov's (1972) description of what makes a good narrative. In other words, seven of the children aged 5 years oriented their listeners to *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when* something happened. They marked the beginning of the setting with a fairy-tale opener, mentioned complicating actions that built to a climatic event, went on to resolve the action, and sometimes (twice) provided a coda updating the events in the narrative. The fact that more than half of the narratives of this age group included a problem indicates that there was some early appreciation of the structural requirements of narratives.

Despite the obvious progress in narrative skills, the 5-year-olds seemed unable to depict a chain of events, covering a set of 2 or 3 pictures, as a unified whole, as a single unit (i.e. an episode), this constituting a difficult cognitive task, which is beyond the capacity of pre-school children.

Schoolchildren, in contrast, present a very stable picture. All maintain an anchor tense, and use temporal markers with a global, theme-related motivation. They seem to have improved in all structural elements, indicating that they are in command of the narrative structure. Thus, all refer roughly to the major components of the plot: setting elements, problems, resolutions, and endings were encountered in more than 75% of their stories (though they still lacked explicit reference to internal states and reactions). Seven of the ten third-graders began their narratives with a typical fairy-tale opening (*a fost odată / era odată* 'there was once'). But unlike in the narratives of the 5-year-olds, where these openers have a restricted function, specifying that something happened, and it happened prior to the present, among the schoolchildren the use of such expressions seems to be well-motivated in terms of the semantics of temporality.

The 9-year-old texts reflect a narrative pattern in their basic structure, adopting the time axis of events as the organizing factor. The sequence of pictures has been changed into an abstract representation of a temporally sequential chain of events. Additionally, schoolchildren explicitly mark the boundary between the background setting information and the foreground

plotline by means of episode markers like *într-o noapte* ('one night'), *cînd<sup>2</sup> a venit seara* ('when the evening came') or by specific markers of duration, *cînd el dormea* ('when he was sleeping'), *în timp ce dormea* ('while he was sleeping'). Moreover, their narratives reflect a clear distinction between foreground and background events in the complicating action, which is achieved by the use of gerundial and relative clauses, on the one hand, and by temporal / aspectual variations on the other. Episodes are also clearly delimited either by means of markers of sequentiality (*după aceea / după aia / apoi* 'then'), or by tense shifts - from Perfect Compus to Imperfect (*Cînd s-a sculat* (PC) *băiețelul, broscuța nu mai era* (I) *în borcan* ([09:04C]), or by a combination of these (*A căutat-o peste tot, dar nicăieri nu era* [09:04C]). Nevertheless, one can notice that schoolchildren's texts are still organized linearly by local chaining, with little reliance on looking back to earlier and forward to later moments in the unfolding of events.

Adult narrators' texts illustrated a hierarchical organization at the level of action-structure. In contrast to the school-aged children, only one of the mature narrators made use of the typical fairy tale opening, all the others plunging straightforwardly in the setting, which presents the participants, the time and place of the events. All the subjects, in this age group marked overtly the inception of the narrative event. As compared to the older children's texts, the adult productions showed an increased number of evaluation clauses as well as codas. But these are very different from the typical fairy tale ending *și-am încălecat pe-o șa, și v-am spus povestea așa* ('I have got on a saddle, and I have told you the story like this'), or from the mere *și gata* ('and it's over' / 'that's all') that I encountered among the younger subjects. Adults' codas contain a moral like *și s-au întors acasă cu gîndul ca niciodată să nu mai ia pe cineva din pădure și să-l oblige să trăiască cu ei în aceeași încăpere* [20B] ('and they returned home with the thought/intention never to take anyone from the forest again and force him to live with them in the same room'). Additions in the adult narratives involve the use of a formally varied language to create a tightly coherent and cohesive story.

## b) **Connectivity**

As far as the use of connectives is concerned, the analysis revealed that the repertoire of linking elements increases steadily from one age to the next. The new, more specific connectives that emerge make the 'all-purpose' *și* ('and') narrow down its meaning and functions.

The youngest subjects in the study favour the coordinating conjunctions, out of which *și* ('and') has been used with a variety of meanings that develop in a certain order: additive,

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<sup>2</sup> In the body of the habilitation thesis I employ the new spelling (e.g. *cînd*), whereas in the examples taken from the corpus collected for my doctoral dissertation I will preserve the old spelling of words (*cînd*), as the dissertation had been written before the new spelling reform was introduced, in 2005.

temporal (simultaneity / temporal sequentiality) (between 3 and 4 years of age), and causal (around 4:6). But very frequently, especially among the young narrators, it has been used as a filler (as illustrated by the prolonged vowel or the bracketed dots following it in the transcripts - *A furat o broa:scă (..) {și: .. } s-o ducă acasă*. ‘(He) stole a frog {and ...} to take it home’. [03:07C]), giving the children the time to formulate the utterance in connection with the picture in front of their eyes. The use of connectives among the 3-year-olds is predominantly a device of signalling to the listener that a shift from one picture to another is taking place (*Și câțelul are borcanul pe cap. Și aicea câțelul a căzut de pe geam*. ‘And the dog has the jar on its head. And here the dog has fallen out of the window’ [03:06B]).

The mid-pre-schoolers seem to avail themselves of the same range of connectives, with the difference that new functions are attributed to the coordinating *și* (‘and’). Thus, due to the fact that at this age the idea of temporal sequence has emerged, the conjunction is used more frequently as a marker of sequentiality, in combination with the adverbial phrase *după aia / după aceea* (‘after that’): *Și a sărit câțelușul și după aia a sărit și băiețelul*. ‘And the dog jumped and after that the boy jumped, too’ [04:06J]).

In the narrative productions of the 5-year-olds clauses are linked **causally** and **temporally**. This is reflected by the overuse of the markers of sequentiality (in some texts nearly every pair of adjacent clauses is marked by these forms) and, simultaneously, by the emergence of almost all subordinating temporal conjunctive phrases and of the adverb *cînd* (‘when’), which are, nevertheless, employed quite sparingly. The latter starts being used felicitously, in contrast to the faulty occurrences encountered in the text of a 3-year-old child. The marker of anteriority (*înainte să* ‘before’) is not yet accompanied by the anaphoric *Mai Mult ca Perfectul* (MMCP) (pluperfect). This confirms two findings: first, even if children have recourse to this concept / temporal relation, they are not fully capable of verbalizing it; second, it provides additional evidence for the fact that the MMCP (pluperfect) is a much later acquisition, in spite of its emergence at this age.

One further developmental step is represented by the new function the conjunction *și* (‘and’) acquired among the 5-year-olds. I have termed it the ‘relative function’ by analogy with the relative pronouns the conjunction *și* (‘and’) seems to replace, until the use of *care* (‘that / which’) becomes fully established. The joint use of these connectives for elaborating on the subject or object of a clause is an indicator of the developing narrative skills of the narrators, in that they seem to start differentiating between background descriptions / states (sometimes rendered by means of relative clauses) and foreground, plot line events.

In stark contrast to the narratives of the older pre-schoolers, those of the 9-year-olds show a considerable decrease in the use of the coordinating and sequencing connectives on the

one hand, and an increase of occurrences of the subordinating conjunctive phrases, pronouns, and adverbs, on the other. Though the prototypical sequencers *după aceea* ('after that') and *apoi* ('then') become less frequent, school-age children expand their repertoire with other markers of sequentiality like *seara/dimineaza următoare* ('in the evening' / 'the next morning'), that basically mark the boundary between the setting and the narrative event inception or the complicating action.

In general, children aged 9 perform much better than pre-schoolers with respect to the use of connectives for the purpose of structuring the narrative. Thus, some of the texts illustrate a clear delimitation of the episodes of the narratives by means of connectives. Episodes are usually initiated by a marker of sequentiality; the purpose clause describing an attempt on behalf of the protagonist is very often introduced by means of a predicate in the Subjunctive (*să* or *ca să* + verb) ('in order to'); then, the outcome leading to another attempt is prefaced by the conjunctions *și* ('and') or *dar* ('but'). This is, nevertheless, a restricted pattern among the third-graders, as at this age children are not consistent in organizing longer stretches of integrated ongoing discourse, the way adults do. It seems that this skill develops gradually into adulthood.

Generally speaking, it seems that the development of narrative structure is closely related to that of the cohesive devices employed by the subjects in this age group. Thus, children who have mastered the structural requirements of the narrative tend to use more and more advanced connectives.

Adults show the widest variety of forms than any of the other age groups, and they employ them extensively, contrary to my expectations. The most evident contrast between the adult narrators and the pre-school children in the study concerns the markers of sequentiality and the relative pronouns / adverbs. While the former occurred sparingly, due to the fact that adults may have realized that asyndetic conjunction is a default of the narrative, conferring it a certain degree of dynamism, the latter have been employed more frequently and for more purposes than in the texts of schoolchildren. Among the adults, connectives do not function only locally, to bind clauses into sequences, but also globally, to join the episodes into a logical and coherent whole.

### c) **Tense/aspect**

The analysis of tense / aspect in the Romanian narratives focused on two specific issues: the *cohesive* function and the *grounding function* of the tense/aspect forms.

In the domain of temporal relations, the analysis revealed that the youngest narrators show an incipient expression of *sequentiality* and *simultaneity*, but not *anteriority*. The first two relations originally hold at a very local level, between events/states presented in adjacent clauses

that are usually encoded by verbs in the same tense. The chronological unfolding of events, if it does occur, is sometimes additionally marked by the additive conjunction *și* ('and'). The same adverb *și* ('also/too'), which functions as a marker of recurrence, is also employed to express simultaneity. Towards the end of the preschool period, children start having recourse to the concept of *retrospection*, which they are not yet capable of rendering by means of anaphoric tenses, but rather by means of subordinating temporal connectives and absolute tenses to which they ascribe a retrospective value. New means for expressing simultaneity appear at this age. Thus, more advanced children might package the protagonists into a multiple subject like *Băiețelul și cățelul au căzut în apă* ('The boy and the dog fell into the water'). The most mature expression of the notion of simultaneity contains an overt temporal conjunction, semantically specified for co-occurrence with the durative state / action rendered by an imperfective tense, or combines a non-finite (gerundial) subordinate clause with a perfective (punctual) predicate in the matrix clause. Such instances were encountered only in the texts of schoolchildren and adult narrators.

As far as discourse grounding is concerned, this requires mastery of both tense forms and contrastive use of tenses, as well as knowledge of types of aspect and of devices of expressing them. And since the basic aspectual contrast (i.e. perfective / imperfective) is expressed in Romanian grammatically, by means of tenses, this means that they function to demarcate the background/foreground distinctions. What has to be pointed out is that initially children are incapable of differentiating between the two narrative planes. They veer back and forth unsystematically between tenses, focusing on local cues provided by the verb semantics (i.e. whether a verb is punctual rather than durative). The Perfect Compus (PC) tense is used by very young children not as a narrative tense, but rather as a linguistic device to distance themselves from the narrative time, which prepares the ground for the later grounding of events in each other, which ultimately contributes to the establishment of the plot.

By the age of 5, the contrastive use of tenses is eventually (but not entirely) discourse-motivated by the function of grounding. At the age of 9, children start using other means of marking the foreground / background distinction, such as temporal subordination by means of *cînd* ('when'), *în timp ce* ('while'), relative clauses or gerundial constructions. This range of grounding devices is also made use of by adults, who additionally show mastery in the so-called 'reversed temporal' construction, by means of which a 'formal' subordinate temporal clause introduced by *cînd* ('when') is brought into the foreground, on equal footing with its matrix clause. The temporal adverb, in this situation, is a marker of narrative surprise, rather than a marker of subordination.

In an attempt to bring the strands together, it is important to underline the fact that both connectives and tense / aspect interact strongly in creating a cohesive and coherent narrative text. Moreover, both systems are determined by *local* and *global* discourse constraints. Thus, the forms under investigation are employed multi-functionally. Additionally, the range of expressive options for the same function extends, and, with age, becomes conventionalized. This applies to both dimensions investigated in the research (i.e. connectives and tense / aspect forms) which are involved in the narrative discourse.

#### 1.1.4. Impact of my doctoral work

My PhD dissertation was positively evaluated by one of my opponents, Professor Tibor Polyá (Institute of Psychology, Hungarian Academy of Science - Budapest), and also by Professors Mihaela Gheorghe from *Transilvania* University of Braşov and Larisa Avram from the University of Bucharest, the leading Romanian researcher in the field of child language, who wrote the reviews needed for the validation of my PhD diploma by the Ministry of Education. Dr. Polyá stated that ‘the dissertation gives a precious contribution to the study of the development of narrative construction during childhood’. Both Romanian professors were of the opinion that my doctoral study represents pioneering work in the field of Romanian linguistics, as until the moment of its defence, no Romanian linguists had approached the acquisition of tense and aspect and the development of narrative skills related to Romanian-speaking children.

After the defence in 2005, my PhD thesis was published in two editions, with the same title, *Relating Events in Narrative: A Case Study of Romanian*, in 2008 (Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House, ISBN 978-973-598-337-6, 331 pages) and in 2009 (a refined version: Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Dr. Müller Verlag AG & Co.Kg, 400 pages, ISBN 978-3-639-16552-4). The 2008 edition is available in the following Romanian university libraries:

- Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Mihai Eminescu”, Iaşi, III-34.416
- Biblioteca Centrală Universitară „Lucian Blaga”, Cluj, LEGAL200907688,

As the WorldCat site reveals, my 2008 book edition is also available in some libraries abroad:

- National Library Information System, Maribor, Slovenia
- University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Central Humanities Library, Slovenia
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University Libraries , USA
- University of Washington Libraries, USA

[http://www.worldcat.org/title/relating-events-in-narrative-a-case-study-of-romanian/oclc/852717045&referer=brief\\_results](http://www.worldcat.org/title/relating-events-in-narrative-a-case-study-of-romanian/oclc/852717045&referer=brief_results)

The fact that my doctoral paper brought new information in the field of Romanian child language is also confirmed by a request from a Canadian linguist, Maria Petrescu to send her my PhD dissertation as reference for the discussion of her results on the acquisition of narrative skills by Romanian-English bilingual children (see [https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68416/1/Petrescu\\_Maria\\_C\\_201411\\_PhD\\_thesis.pdf](https://tspace.library.utoronto.ca/bitstream/1807/68416/1/Petrescu_Maria_C_201411_PhD_thesis.pdf)).

At the same time, the book based on my doctoral dissertation was quoted in an article and in a published PhD paper:

- Anca Sevcenco, Larisa Avram. 2012. **Romanian-speaking children's comprehension of relatives**. RRL, LVII, 2, p. 219–239, București, 2012 (quoted on page 235 of the article)
- Ioana Stoicescu. 2013. **The acquisition of tense and aspect in Romanian**, Editura Universității din București (quoted on pages 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 101, and 108).

Also worth mentioning is the fact that the corpus I had collected for my study was included by Brian MacWhinney in CHILDES: <http://childes.talkbank.org/media/Frogs/Romanian-Buja/>

## 1.2. STUDIES ON THE ACQUISITION OF ROMANIAN

Since there was a dearth of data related to the acquisition of Romanian after the completion of my doctoral studies and since the corpus offered me the possibility to exploit it to the maximum, I felt the need to continue investigating this field. Below is an account of the research papers directly related to my doctoral research, which were published and/or presented at various national and international events. They aimed at expanding on the topics approached in the doctoral thesis and also at bringing to the fore new information about how Romanian-speaking children acquire their mother tongue. Each subsection begins with a short outline of the sub-domains of language acquisition I contributed to, followed by brief presentation of my research findings.

### 1.2.1. The acquisition of phonology

As phonology is considered the basic building block of any language (Ullmann, 1957), and as infants first learn the sounds of their mother tongue before they come to combine them to create words and larger structures, I considered it appropriate to start by presenting a general picture of this domain, as contoured by various scholars in the field, and then to try to complete this picture with data coming from the acquisition of Romanian phonology.

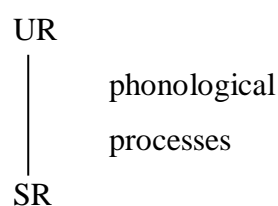


### A) Theoretical background

When infants face the task of learning their mother tongue, they first have to identify its sounds. ‘This involves learning how to distinguish all the linguistically important differences and also how to produce them’ (Radford *et al.*, 2009: 96). Radford’s quote highlights the fact that there are two activities involved in acquiring a language, namely *perception* and *production*, and research in the field has demonstrated that perception (whether it is phonological, lexical or grammatical) precedes the infant/children’s productive abilities.

As a branch of linguistic analysis, phonology deals with the sound inventory of a given language and the rules that govern the combination of its sounds and the processes underlying variation in the pronunciation of those sounds. In the past, phonological analysis of child speech consisted in looking for the phonological differences between the forms produced by children and those produced by adults, where child forms were viewed as deficient (Smith, 1973). Nobody believed that children could have a phonological system of their own through which they must naturally go until they master the adult phonological system. A child’s phonological system includes a set of phonological rules operating on a set of phonemes and abstract representations that the child builds based on the language he/she is exposed to. Given the limited linguistic input the child experiences, his/her phonological system is not an ideal form of the adult form but a separate system of its own.

An influential theory about the way children pronounce the words of their language is the generative theory of phonology according to which words have got two forms: an *underlying representation* (UR), an abstract form, and a *surface representation* (SR), the actually pronounced form (or the phonetic representation) which obtains by applying phonological rules / processes to the underlying representation. The relation between these two forms may be used to account for aspects of child phonology. We could assume that the child perceives and stores the adult forms of the words more or less correctly; then, he will apply various phonological rules to these adult forms to simplify their pronunciations. The forms the child actually pronounces would be equivalent to the surface representations. The advantage presented by this theory is that the distorted forms produced by children could be considered the consequence of phonological rules, some of which are similar to the ones that appear in adult speech.



As children develop, these processes by means of which they simplify adult forms may change or may disappear altogether (the children's forms becoming, in the long run, identical to the adults ones). The most frequently encountered phonological processes (Radford *et al.*, 1999) in child phonology are consonant cluster simplification (CC - C), prevocalic voicing (a voiceless consonant becomes voiced when it is immediately followed by a vowel), stopping (a process by which a fricative or an affricate turns into its corresponding stop consonant, vowel and consonant harmony (an assimilation process in which one sound, i.e. the "target of assimilation", acquires some features from a neighbouring sound, i.e. the "trigger of assimilation", becoming more similar to it).

The phonological phenomena observed during L1 acquisition provided sources of evidence for subsequent theories of phonology starting with the generative theory as outlined in Chomsky and Halle (1968), and continuing with modern theories which compete to explain child language phenomena. An important finding of previous work is that a child's phonology progresses during the preschool years. The child needs to acquire the phonemic inventory of his mothertongue, its combinatorial regularities, and its phonological processes. A key observation is that a child's phonology develops gradually as his/her other cognitive abilities develop.

### **B) Studies on the phonological acquisition of other languages**

The first important studies of the acquisition of phonology were targeted at the English language and were focused on individual children. From among such studies worth mentioning is Neil Smith's (1973) diary study of the phonological development of his son Amahl between 2;2 and 4 years. Smith provided a generative account of the infant's phonological development, suggesting that his deformations did not result from the fact that the child misperceived the words, but rather from the rules Amahl created for himself. In his study, the British linguist identified a number of phonological processes occurring at the level of segments, such as final *stopping of fricatives* ('see' > [di]), *fronting* ('top' > [bɔp]), *consonant harmony* ('yellow' > [lelo]), *final consonant devoicing* ('big' > [bik]), or *weak syllable deletion* ('away' > [wei]).

Other studies have considered whether children follow similar or different developmental paths, focussing on the order in which phonemes were acquired, on the acquisition rate, as well as on error patterns (Prather *et al.*, 1975, Stoel-Gammon & Dunn, 1985). These studies revealed that plosives, nasals, and glides were among the first acquired consonants, while liquids, fricatives, and affricates were acquired later by the English-speaking children.

In the late 70s and early 80s, we witness a movement away from segments to the word as an important unit in children's early phonological organization. Thus, Waterson (1987) (quoted in Demuth, 2011:574) was of the opinion that 'children's early phonologies could be best

characterized by a holistic, non-segmental-prosodic approach'. On the other hand, Allen and Hawkins (1980) (quoted in Demuth, 2011), proposed that the initial words of the children acquiring English usually consist of disyllabic trochaic feet (i.e. feet made up of two syllables in which the first one is stronger than the second). They noticed that the early words produced by children were either shortened / truncated (e.g. *banana* > [ˈnænə]) or augmented (CVC → CVCV), the outcome of both processes being a disyllabic trochaic foot. George Allen and Sarah Hawkins were of the opinion that such word forms could be considered universal, being the default, or the unmarked shape of children's early words.

Starting with the 90s, linguists focused their attention on other languages with the aim of examining comparable data from children acquiring different languages in order to trace developmental universals. From among these cross-linguistic studies on phonological acquisition, only a few will be presented in this section, highlighting the similarities between the English-speaking children and children speaking other languages.

In 1998, Amayreh and Dyson, working on data from Arabic children aged 2:0 – 6:4, found that consonants in medial position were produced more accurately than consonants in initial or final position. The age of acquisition of the Arabic consonants was similar to that of the English ones, the exceptions being /f, t, l/, which were acquired earlier in Arabic than in English, whereas /h, dʒ, ð, j/ became stabilised later in Arabic than in English. Fox and Dodd (1999) studied the phonological development of German children aged 1:6 – 5:11, showing that by the age of 4:0, most of the children acquiring this language could produce all the phonemes appropriately, while the majority of English speaking children of the same age (i.e. 4:0) still had problems with the fricative and affricates sounds /v, z, θ, dʒ/. From among the language-specific errors observed by them was the lack of preference of the German-speaking children for either the first or the second consonant when reducing clusters such as /kv/ and /kn/.

As far as Spanish-speaking children are concerned, one important study on their acquisition of phonology was carried out by Mann & Hodson (1994) who found that by the age of 4, most of the Spanish phonemes were acquired, the ones that still pose problems to the children being /r, s, l, ʃ/. Very frequently, Spanish children substituted the liquids and the affricates, they reduced word-initial clusters, deleted unstressed syllables, and turned fricatives into stops.

An important contribution to the acquisition of Chinese phonology was brought by Zhu Hua (2002) who investigated normally developing Putonghua-speaking children aged 1:6 – 4, children with atypical development, as well as a set of identical twins. Her findings indicated that Putonghua-speaking children first acquire tones, then syllable final consonants (i.e. /n, ŋ/)

and vowels, the syllable-initial consonants being a later acquisition. In terms of error-patterns, the ones that were encountered in the study were diphthong and triphthong reduction, final consonant deletion, stopping (/ts/ → /t/), gliding (/ɪ/ → /j/), and affrication. The findings of the longitudinal study showed that the acquisition of vowels was relatively error-free, the central, open vowel /ʌ/ and the back, close vowel /u/ occurring earlier in the children's production of the first words. The consonants that seemed to be stabilized earlier were the unaspirated stops /p, t/ and three nasal sounds /m, n, ŋ/, the /n/ sound being acquired first in syllable-final position and later in onset position. With respect to the acquisition of tones, the longitudinal study revealed some errors produced by the Chinese children, the most frequent of them being the substitution of the high falling tone with the high level one. The patterns of tone substitution indicated inter-children variability, the explanation provided by Hua being 'an incorrect association between a tone and a segment on a lexical basis' or such errors 'were the result of children's simplification strategies' (Hua, 2002: 98).

Let us now turn to the findings related to the acquisition of phonology by the Romanian-speaking children, as they emerge from my own research.

### C) My contributions

The paper entitled:

**Phonological development in Romanian monolingual children** (2015a), in Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics, vol. 8, no.1, pp. 23-42, <http://bwpl.unibuc.ro/vol-xvii-nr-1/>

aims at presenting the errors that children produce in their early words, at the same time trying to identify the phonological processes employed by young learners of Romanian to simplify the adult targets. The investigation is restricted to the phonological processes affecting the sound segments (Ingram, 1976) and the data employed for this purpose has been extracted from sporadic recordings and diary records of 6 Romanian-speaking children, aged between 1:7 and 2:10 years, whose utterances (mainly simple, individual words) were shared with me by their parents (colleagues and friends of mine). Diary records proved useful in detecting the differences between adult targets and children's erroneous realisations and in identifying whether they are universal or language- or child-specific. But since the number of children was quite small and as the information was not very rich, diary records were supplemented with four longitudinal corpora from monolingual Romanian-acquiring children: Child S, Child M, Child L, and Child I. From among these longitudinal corpora, only the one for Child I has been collected (audio-taped) with a linguistic purpose and transcribed by Ioana Stoicescu (2013) for her doctoral dissertation. The child was recorded once a month, at home, in spontaneous interaction with his

mother or other adult persons, the investigation starting when he was 1:10 and finishing when he was 3:4 years of age. The corpus, thus, extend over 18 recording sessions of different lengths, all being employed in the analysis.

The other three corpora were more like ‘family albums’, the recording sessions differing from one child to another in a number of respects, such as the age when the children started being recorded (Child M – 1:2 , Child L - 1:6, and Child S – 1:1), frequency (Child L – monthly, Children M and S at irregular time intervals), number of recording sessions (Child M – 58, Child L – 32, and Child S 10), and length (a couple of seconds – Child M to 35 minutes – Child S).

In spite of some inconsistency in the data collection, the corpora have brought to light a large number of the error patterns. In analysing the data available, I tried to provide answers to the following questions: a) what phonological processes<sup>3</sup> do young learners employ?; b) which are the target phonetic classes and the phonological processes likely to affect them?; and c) are these processes universal or language specific?

The analysis revealed that the sound segments in the speech of young Romanian children are affected by a number of phonological processes subsumed under two broad categories: *assimilation* and *substitution*. Thus, from the first category I have identified *consonant harmony* (a long-distance type sub-type of assimilation) that targeted all consonantal features (i.e. manner of articulation, point of articulation, and voicing), *vowel copying* (a process consisting in the literal copying of the whole vowel segment from one syllable to another and which may occur even within the same morpheme), and *reduplication* (the repetition of similar structures). Examples of these processes are provided below:

**Consonant harmony:**

- Manner: *stafide* > [statide] ‘raisins’ (Alex 2:4) (the voiceless fricatives /f/ turns into the voiceless plosive /t/), *noroc* > [nonok] ‘cheers’ (Ștefan 1:9), where the fricative /r/ is replaced by a nasal sound (/n/).
- Place: *mănuși* > [məmofʃi] ‘gloves’ (Ștefan 1:9) (the alveolar /n/ changes into the bilabial /m/), *guma* > [buma] ‘eraser’ (Child S 1:8) (the velar plosive /g/ is assimilated into a bilabial stop /b/ under the influence of the m-sound in the onset of the second syllable). The two examples show that the harmony process can be bidirectional (i.e. regressive and progressive).
- Voicing: *biblioteca* > [bipotekə] ‘bookshelf’ (Child I 2:7) (b > p / \_\_\_\_ [-voicing]); *coboară* > [kopǎrə] ‘s/he descends’ (Child I 2:7) (b > p / [-voicing] \_\_\_\_).

<sup>3</sup> Different other terms have been used for such processes. Hua (2002) calls them ‘error patterns’ while Stampe (1969/1979) refers to them as ‘natural processes’ due to the fact that they are so regular and encountered in a number of languages. Cruttenden (1979) considers them ‘phonemic substitutions’, as the a ‘phoneme in the adult system not yet present in a child’s system will be replaced by a phoneme which shares features with the adult phoneme and which is already present in the child’s speech’ (Cruttenden, 1979: 22).

**Vowel copying:** *grădiniță* > [g'ininitsə] 'kindergarten' (Child I 2:1), [gənənitsə] (Child I 2:7).

**Reduplication:** *tu'tu* 'car' and *ba'ba* 'grandad' (Child S 1:8) *kolka-kolka* 'coca cola' (Child I 2:1) (total reduplication).

The second category of phonological processes, *substitution*, covered phenomena like: *stopping* (i.e. the replacement of affricates or fricatives with stops), a process reported to occur in the acquisition of other languages, too (English – Ingram, 1976, Chinese – Hua, 2002), *affrication of fricatives*, *prevocalic voicing* (a kind of regressive vowel-to-consonant assimilation, where a voiceless consonant preceding a vowel sound receives voicing from it, turning into its voiced counterpart), and *fronting*, examples for which being provided below:

**Stopping:** *gagici* /gʌdʒiʃi/ > [gaditsi] 'chicks' (Child L 1:8), *ceai* /tʃaĩ/ > [tai] 'tea' (Ștefan -1:9), *focu* > [poku] 'the fire' (Child I 2:2), *vino!* > [dino] 'come' (Alex 2:4);

**Affrication of fricatives:** *mov* > [modz] 'violet', *Florin* > [tsorin] (Maria 2:11);

**Prevocalic voicing:** /pisikə/ > [pizikə] 'cat' (Child M 1:8), *nasul* > [nazu] 'the nose' (Child I 2:0): [voiceless] > [voiced] / \_\_\_\_\_ [vowel];

**Fronting:** *face/fatʃe/ baie* > [fatse] 'he is taking a bath' (Child S 1:10), *ce* /tʃe/ 'what' > [tse] (Child M 1:11), /gata/ > [data] 'ready' (Child I 2:0).

Worth mentioning is the fact that most of these processes are common cross-linguistically (as is the case of consonant harmony or prevocalic voicing); others seem to be language specific (fronting, for instance), whereas still others (such as affrication of fricatives) seem to be specific to a single child (Maria 2:11). Also, it is important to emphasize that 'by the age of 4, most of the patterns presented in this paper will have disappeared little by little in normally developing children. The deformations discussed could be considered a link between babbling and adult like speech, reflecting the creative role of children as language learners' (Buja, 2015: 41).

The article entitled:

**Syllable structure processes in child Romanian** (2015b), in *East European and Balkan Studies*, Vol 39, no. 6, pp. 3-3-, <http://dx.doi.org/10.19170/ebs.2015.39.6.3>

extends the investigation of the acquisition of Romanian phonology to the suprasegmental level, focussing on the processes that affect syllable structure, such as *cluster reduction*, *weak syllable deletion*, *metathesis*, and *epenthesis*. The data employed come from the corpora described in Buja (2015a) and have been analysed within the framework of 'developmental universals and particulars' (Slobin 1985:5), in comparison with data coming from English-speaking children<sup>4</sup> (Smith 1973, Allen and Hawkins 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Most of the data in the field of child language acquisition comes from English-speaking children.

The analysis revealed that the Romanian children, just like the English ones, *reduce onset consonant clusters* containing liquids, but the manner in which this occurs is different. Thus, adult targets containing such clusters will be pronounced by English children with [plosive+glide] onset combinations: *bread* > [bwed], *place* > [pweis], *prince* > [pwints], *free* > [fwi] (Goss-Grubbs 2007, Owens 2008), whereas the Romanian-speaking children will completely drop the liquid sounds: *plek* > [pek] ‘I am leaving’ (Child L 2:7), /fri.dʒe/ > [fi.dʒe] ‘it’s hot’ (Child I 1:11). When the onset consists of a sibilant (/s/, /z/, or /ʃ/) followed by a stop or a nasal sound, in most of the cases the children in my study will drop the fricative: /spun/ > [pun] ‘I say’ (Child I 2:7). All these examples lead to the conclusion that children tend to preserve the least sonorous segment of the cluster, which is in line with the finding of Barlow (1997) and Ohala (1999).

*Syllable deletion* is also common both among the English-speaking children and the Romanian-speaking ones. But while the English children mainly delete the weak syllables of a polysyllabic word, the Romanian children may also happen to delete the stressed syllable of the word: /klo.'ti.-te/ > ['ti.te] ‘pancakes’ (Vlad 1:7), /ku.'ti.ia/ > ['ti.a] ‘the.box’ (Child S 2:2), /bu.'ni.ka/ > ['bu.ka] ‘grandma’ (Paula 2:1), /pi.'si.ka/ > ['pi.ka] ‘the.cat’ (Vlad 1:7). The last examples contradict Gonzales’s (2001:155) opinion that ‘it would be unexpected to find a language where deletion targets stressed syllables’. But there could be two possible explanations for the omission of the stressed syllables by the Romanian monolingual children: a) the syllable in question contains a liquid, which the child has not come to master yet: /bu.'ri.ku/ > ['bi.ku] ‘navel’ (Child S 2:2); and b) omission could be due to haplology, i.e. the loss of a syllable when it is adjacent to a phonetically identical or similar syllable, as in /ʃo.'se.te/ > ['ʃo.te] ‘socks’ (Vlad 1:7). For this phenomenon to be considered rule-governed or random, more examples of stressed syllable deletion would be needed.

*Initial consonant deletion*, though frequent among the English children, is less represented in the Romanian data, only one child making recourse to it. This process seems to affect onset consonants with continuant airflow (/s/, /h/, or /v/): *săpun* /sə.pun/ > [u.'pun] ‘soap’, *hîrtie* /hir.'ti.ie/ > [i.'ti.ie] ‘paper’, *vaporul* /va.'po.rul/ > [u.pu] ‘the.ship’ (Ştefan 1:9).

*Long-distance metathesis*, which involves the reversing of non-adjacent sounds, was frequently encountered in the Romanian corpus: /'miki 'maus/ > ['ki.mi 'maus] (Child I 2:1), while *adjacent metathesis* was rather scarce: /'pa.tru/ ‘four’ > [par.tu] (Child I 2:3), the child using it as a means of breaking the onset consonant cluster **tr-**. Another cluster simplification strategy employed by the same child (Child I) was *anaptyxis*, the insertion of a vowel (an epenthetic *i*<sup>5</sup>) between the consonantal sounds: /kre.ion/ > [ki.li.on] ‘pencil’ (Child I 2:1), /plim.ba.re/ > [pi.lim.ba.re] ‘walk’ (Child I 3:0).

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<sup>5</sup> Tsakosta (2009) found that the default epenthetic vowel in Greek children’s attempts to simplify clusters is /æ/.

Many of these processes seem universal (such as onset cluster reduction or weak syllable deletion), others are language specific (the omission of the liquids in two-consonant onset clusters or the deletion of stressed syllables). Moreover, one can also come across preferences of the children for certain processes. This is the case of Ștefan, who was the only one to delete initial consonants. Also worth mentioning is the intra-child variation: the same child may have a number of means of dealing with problematic speech, such as deletion, metathesis, or vowel epenthesis (Child I).

The next article,

**The acquisition of liquids by Romanian-speaking children: a longitudinal study**, 2014. In *Structure, Use, and Meaning in Intercultural Settings*, Brașov: Editura Universității Transilvania, pp. 51-70, ISBN 978-606-19-0466-2 (volume indexed in ISI Thomson Reuters - Proceedings),

is meant to contribute to the cross-linguistic studies on the acquisition of liquids (Dodd *et al.* 2003, Owens 2008 – for English, Amayreh and Dyson 1998 – for Arabic) with data from Romanian. The findings of the afore-mentioned studies indicate that the acquisition of these two sounds differs from language to language. Thus, Arabic- and Quiché- speaking children acquire the liquids much earlier than their English peers. But, irrespective of the language, in all of them the liquids are among the last consonants to be acquired. This could be attributed to factors such as the articulatory complexity (Demuth, 2011) or phonological saliency (Hua, 2002). The focus of my study was on the emergence and stabilization of the liquids, on the order of their acquisition, on the error patterns, and on tracing a developmental path, in an attempt to see the extent to which the Romanian-speaking children are similar to or differ from children acquiring other languages. The data employed came from the 4 longitudinal corpora described above, which presented the advantage of offering a clear image of the development of a certain child at various stages in the process of linguistic development.

The two liquids were investigated in different contexts: as initial and final singletons and as members of initial and final syllable clusters.

The results of the data analysis revealed striking differences between my four subjects. Thus, in what concerns the age of **emergence** of the liquids, in Child M, they emerged as early as 1:4 (the /r/ sound) and 1:6 (the /l/ sound), while this happened much later with the other three subjects. Also interesting is the order of the emergence: in the case of the girl (Child M) it was the rhotic liquid that emerged first, while for the boys (Child L, Child I, and Child S) it was the lateral one. Individual variability also appears in connection with the **age of stabilisation** of the liquid sounds. For Child M, /l/ seems stabilised at the age of 1:10, whereas the /r/, despite its early emergence, underwent a U-shaped development. At the age of 2:8, Child L still had problems with both liquids; he could pronounce the /l/ adult-like only as initial and final



singletons, but not in clusters, while the /r/ was glided. For Child I, the lateral liquid was stabilized at around the age of 2:10, while the rhotic at the age of 3. For Child S, from among all children, stabilisation of liquids took longer: /r/ was acquired at 3:11, while the /l/ was in place at the age of 4:3 (when the recordings ceased).

The **patterns of acquisition** identified are both *common* and *individual*. Thus, ‘all children had the tendency to drop the problematic sounds at an early age, in all positions, just like the children acquiring English’ (Buja, 2014:67). Little by little, they were pronounced more frequently as singletons in syllable initial position, and then in coda position. Consonant clusters, in general, and the ones containing liquids, in particular pose a challenge to the Romanian children; thus, they are pronounced appropriately after the age of 3.

Besides these common features, each and every child handled the liquids differently. Child M, for instance, presented a straightforward development of the liquids in the sense that once these emerged, they were never substituted with semivowels or one with the other. Child S, on the other hand, seems to have the most complicated development of liquids, in that he glides both of them when they appear as initial singletons (/r/ → [i] *mare* [maïe] ‘big’, and /l/ → [ũ] *acolo* [akoũə] ‘there’) and drops them in onset or coda clusters. Interestingly, in word-medial cluster, the child replaces the approximant /l/ with a nasal sound – [n]/[ŋ], depending on the point of articulation of the following consonant (e.g. *alta* [anta] ‘another’).

At an early stage in their development, two children in the study, Child I and Child S, substituted the rhotic liquid with the pharyngeal fricative [ħ] (*mere* [meħie] ‘apples’ – Child S 2:9-2:11, *doctor* [doktoħ] ‘doctor’ – Child I 2:9), with the difference that Child I mainly resorts to this substitution when the sound occurs in word final position.

A developmental path regarding the rhotic liquid can be noticed in Child S, who between 2:9 and 3:1 substituted the /r/ with [ħ] in all contexts except for the final consonant clusters, where it was dropped altogether. From 3:2, the child produced the r-sound adult-like as initial and final singletons and in initial clusters.

By comparing the four Romanian subjects with children speaking other languages, both universal, as well as language- and child-specific patterns have been identified. A universal pattern would be the gliding of the liquids, also reported for English and Spanish children (Goldstein & Citron, 2001), but language-specific seems the fact that the Romanian children never substituted the rhotic liquid with the glide [ũ] in pre-vocalic position (like the English children), but with [i]. A child-specific pattern is the substitution of /l/ with [n], encountered in some examples of Child S.

## 1.2.2. Lexical-semantic acquisition

### A) Theoretical background

Apart from the acquisition of the sounds of their mother tongue, the children's linguistic competence also involves their ability to construct and understand new words, as these are the building blocks of any language. Thus, it is of utmost importance in language acquisition to understand how children learn words.

Children start producing their first recognizable words around the age of 1;6 – 2. This stage is then followed by the production of more complex words and utterances, as the young learners become active participants in the conversation with their parents / caretakers. The lexical-semantic development studies 'the changes that occur in vocabulary knowledge over childhood' (Merriman, 2014: 344). More specifically, it focuses on how children build their vocabulary and on how they assign meaning to words in different stages of their linguistic development.

As far as the **building mechanisms** are concerned, from an early age (2 years) children start creating new words by means of conversion (or zero-derivation). O'Grady (2005), Clark (1973), and others, report the use of this process by the English-speaking children, who produced non-adult forms like *to needle* (for 'to sew'), *to blade* ('to cut with a blade'), or *to wave in* ('to come in via waves'). The reason behind the multitude of such verbs seems to be "the simplicity of form" (Clark, 1993:120), i.e. children tend to create new words from words they already know, without changing their form. Another productive word-formation process among the young learners is *derivation* (the attachment of affixes to a root). In creating words by this process, children often rely on suffixes they encounter in a large number of words in their mother tongues. Thus, among the most frequently employed suffixes are *-er* (to create nouns denominating the doer of something or instruments, as in *cooker* – for a cook, *officer* – for someone who works in an office, or *sawer* for a saw), *-ie* (employed to create diminutives), *-ing* (for activities), and *-ness* (for states - *bigness*) (O'Grady 2005). Derivation has been reported in the acquisition of other languages such as Polish (Haman 2003) and French (Aimard 1975, quoted in Müller *et al.*, 2015:2129). A third way of creating new words by children is composition (combining two words, which otherwise could stand alone, into a new form). In creating compound, children are guided by the "transparency of meaning" (Clark, 1993:116) of the lexical items they combine, producing words like *washman* (for somebody who washes something), *cup-egg* (for boiled egg), or *plant man* (for gardener) (O'Grady, 2005:33).

In considering the way children acquire the **meaning of words**, most scholars have focused primarily on the meaning of object nouns, due to the fact that children show an early

preference for this class of words. This preference is triggered by factors such as a) the parents' tendency to *name* objects / things for their children and b) the meaning of nouns is easier for the children to grasp, because these lexical items denote objects that are solid, have a certain shape and colour, and can be "explored" by the little ones by means of their senses (seeing, touching, tasting). In learning nouns, children sometimes overextend the meaning of one word to cover other referents for which they have had not yet acquired a form. Thus, English-speaking children very often employ the term *kitty* to refer to all four-legged, furry felines.

Alongside nouns, young learners also acquire other classes of words, such as verbs (usually "general purpose" verbs, such as *do, get, put, give, go, make*), adjectives (*nice, small, big*) numerals, and prepositions (*up, in, on, down*). While in learning the meaning of nouns children are aided by their parents / caretakers, this is not that case with verbs: adults do not name actions. Moreover, 'most of the time that adults use verbs, the actions that the verbs refer to are not taking place' (Bloom, 2000:7). Help in learning the meaning of verbs, which is more abstract than that of nouns, comes from the syntactic structure of the clause the verbs appears in (syntactic bootstrapping). Thus, 'if a child hears a sentence like *The rabbit ziffs the ball to the elephant*, s/he is likely to hypothesize that *ziff* is a verb of transfer such as *give* or *throw*; a verb of placement (put) or perception (see) would not fit the syntactic frame' (Bavin, 2009:221).

The adjectives acquired first by children describe *size* and *colour*. Their meaning is easily grasped by the young learners if they are presented with 'an object that differs from another object in just one way or with two objects that are alike in just one way' (O'Grady, 2005:68).

By way of concluding, it is important to emphasize three factors that help children learn word meanings: first, it is the attention they pay to their parents / caretakers who point to the referents they introduce in the discourse, then the presence of the objects adults talk about, and finally the syntactic context in which the words appear.

## **B) Cross-linguistic studies**

Though most of the studies related to the acquisition of vocabulary were initially conducted on English-acquiring children, little by little linguists have expanded their range of research to other languages as well, such as Italian, Korean, French, Slovene, or Bantu, to mention just a few. In what follows I will offer an overview of these research studies.

D'Odorico and Fasolo (2007) studied the acquisition of nouns, verbs, and closed class words (adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and articles) by 24 children acquiring Italian, at two stages in the development of their vocabulary: a) when the size was about 200 words and b) when their vocabulary ranged between 400 and 650 words. The authors considered that the vocabulary size is a better criterion of evaluation than age, because 'age-dependent cross-

sectional measures, if used to investigate style differences, could confuse true differences with variations in the developmental level, which is controlled' (D'Odorico and Fasolo, 2007:894). The results of their study indicated that nouns were predominant in the vocabulary of the subjects in both stages and that the percentage of nouns increases only slightly from one stage to the other in comparison with that of verbs and of the function words, which increases significantly.

Two cross-linguistic studies related to the acquisition of Korean and English (Choi and Gopnik 1995 and Kim *et al.* 2000) by children aged between 1;2 and 1;10 years indicated that at the 50-word stage, young learners of both languages had more nouns than verbs in their vocabularies. But around the age of 1;7, there is a spurt of verbs in Korean, which is not paralleled in English. This difference could be accounted for in terms of input factors (Korean mothers emphasize verbs rather than nouns in that they produce more activity-oriented utterances), language specific factors (Korean is a verb-friendly language as opposed to English, a noun-friendly language – Choi, 1998), as well as cognitive factors.

A study conducted on children acquiring Tzeltal (a Mayan language) (Brown 1998) showed that verbs appeared in the vocabulary of the young learners quite early, this being due to the numerous meanings carried by the lexical items in this word class. The author noticed that when the children in the study were at the one-word stage, they produced utterances consisting of verbs whose meanings were similar to the meanings which in other languages are expressed by nouns.

The same topic was investigated in connection with some African languages, such as Ngas (Childers *et al.* 2007), spoken in Northern Nigeria, or Kishwahili and Kigirama (two Bantu languages spoken in Kenia) (Alcock 2017). These studies employed different methods of data collection (the former – parent-completed inventories, the latter the MacArthur-Bates Communicative Development Inventory – Words & Gestures) and also focused on different aspects of acquisition: Childers *et al.* considered only the comprehension of the first words, while Alcock offered a more encompassing picture, by comparing comprehension to production of the first words, as well as by comparing the 'parent report of comprehension with children's communicative behaviour (gesture and object name comprehension)' (Alcock, 2017:4). While the former study revealed a high ratio of verbs in comprehension, the latter showed that, both in production and comprehension, the children speaking the two types of Bantu languages exhibited the same categorization of the first words. Moreover, there also seems to be a similarity in the total number of words these children understood and produced.

Apart from the acquisition of nouns and verbs, researchers have also considered the acquisition of other classes of words, such as adjectives. Again, these have been investigated

mainly in connection with English-speaking children (Nelson 1976, Maratsos 1973, Soja, 1994), but there are also studies tackling the way in which children speaking other languages acquire adjectives: Quebec French (Royle and Valoise 2010), Korean (Kim 2012), or German and Japanese (Matsuo and Eisenbeiss 2003). More recently (2015), an entire volume has been dedicated to the acquisition of adjectives in a number of languages (Austrian German, Italian, Croatian, Slovene, French, Russian, Greek, Finnish, and Yucatec Maya): *Semantics and Morphology of Early Adjectives in First Language Acquisition*, edited by Tribushinina, Voeikova, and Noccetti (2015). As the editors state, it is '[a] first attempt at a systematic cross-linguistic analysis of adjective form, function and meaning in child language (...)' (Tribushinina *et al.*, 2015: 3). Two of the studies will be briefly presented below.

By using both spontaneous speech corpora (CHILDES – 2 children) and data elicited on the basis of puzzles describing colour and size adjectives (from 32 children), Royle and Valois (2010) aimed at investigating the acquisition of variable adjectives by Quebec-based, French-speaking children, with ages ranging between 2 and 5 years. The focus of the study was on identifying the approximate age when children understand and produce Determiner Phrase internal adjectives in a rule-governed manner. The results of the analysis indicate that while the determiners in the DP emerge quite early and come to be mastered rapidly, variable adjectives will be acquired at a later stage in the linguistic development of the young learners, due to the variable forms of the feminine gender. The four production tasks (colour names, colour DPs, size DPs, and colour and size DPS) showed that the French children had difficulties in naming variable adjectives related to colours, especially the item *brown*, the difficulty being attributed by the authors to the low frequency of this adjective. When it came to the colour DPs, French-speaking children showed more problems with the feminine variable adjectives than with the invariable ones, and also with the feminine adjectives in general, in comparison with the masculine ones (variable or invariable). Size adjectives seem to be affected by the gender of the nouns they collocate with, the feminine adjectives being produced less accurately than the masculine ones. When children had to produce syntagms containing both size and colour adjectives, the former were more accurately produced than the latter. In comprehension, the French-speaking children scored over 91% in all the tasks, the highest percentage (98) being reached on the size DPs.

The acquisition of adjectives in Slovene, a language with three morphological genders, like Romanian, was investigated by Petrič *et al.* (2015). Their data come from one child only, P. (a girl), whose speech production between the ages of 1:5 and 2:8 was recorded by her father in the form of a diary. Of interest for the researchers was the way the semantic and morphological characteristics of the Slovene adjectives influence the acquisition, as well as the relationship

between the input provided by the father and the child's speech, the focus being 'on the order of emergence and productive use of inflectional forms' (Petrič *et al.*, 2015: 168). The findings indicate that the first adjective (actually a noun used as an adjective – *kaka* – employed by children to describe something dirty) emerges at the age of 1;11; around age 2, more adjectives emerge, the masculine singular form *mali* ('little'), being correctly employed attributively 5 times. A month later (2;1), colour adjectives appear, which, at this age, are employed in a holophrastic manner, the attributive and predicative uses being rather limited. The predicative and attributive uses increase with age, while holophrastic adjectives decrease considerably. At age 2;8, the child starts using antonymic adjectives (little - much, clean – dirty). On the whole, child P employs more inflected forms for the feminine than for the masculine, and initially in the nominative case.

The studies summarized above highlight a series of important issues for the study of child language acquisition. First, scholars need to investigate other languages than English in order to get an overall picture of the process. Second, the range of topics covering the acquisition of vocabulary should include not only nouns and verbs, but also other lexical classes, such as adjectives, adverbs or prepositions. More importantly, since the literature highlights the precedence of comprehension over production, it would be profitable to investigate both facets of the acquisition process. Also important is to extend the investigation of the acquisition of vocabulary from children with normal linguistic development to children with specific language impairments, with Down syndrome, or to autistic children, and from monolingual to bilingual children, all with the purpose of offering an encompassing perspective on vocabulary acquisition.

### C) My contributions

As we have seen above, children often coin new words in order to express meanings for which they have learned no lexical item or cannot recall conventional ones. They do not do so randomly, but appear to use their knowledge of word-formation and their capacity of identifying similar semantic features of particular referents. 'Innovations are assumed to reveal productive, general knowledge of these processes (...), because children have not heard those usages previously' (Bryant, 2014: 350). In the paper entitled

**Lexical-semantic innovations in early Romanian child language**, 2009, in the *Proceedings of the Conference on British and American Studies*, Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania, pp. 53-65, ISSN 1844-7481,

my objective was to describe the phenomenon of lexical innovation and to provide data coming from Romanian pre-school children. The data collected for this purpose has been drawn from (1)

a collection of random observations of children's innovations; and (2) from the corpus of narratives gathered for my doctoral dissertation (only the 27 narratives of the pre-schoolers, divided into three age-groups: 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, and 5-year-olds). In the data sources, the children's age varied between 2;6 and 6 years, this being considered the most productive period for coining new words. The data base being limited, the analysis was rather tentative. Nevertheless, the findings are in agreement with the general tendencies observed in children speaking other languages. At the same time, they indicated differences which could be attributed to the morphology of the Romanian language.

In my data, two word-formation processes have been encountered: *derivation* and *blending*. Derivation is the most productive means of creating new words among the Romanian-acquiring children. Within the category of derived words, two subgroups have been identified. The first is represented by derivational verbs, more specifically denominal verbs ( $N > V$ ), such as *a limbă'i* (literally 'to tongue' instead of *to lick*) – Sebastian, 2:10, *a becu'la* (literally 'to bulb' instead of *to flash*) – Andrei, 3:6, or *a se înzdrăni* (literally 'to enrag' instead of *to break into small pieces*) – Paula, 3:10. All these were derived from a familiar noun (*limbă* 'tongue', *zdreață* 'rag', and *bec* 'bulb') to which the children attached the suffixes that characterize the infinitive of two of the four classes of verbs in Romanian, i.e. *-a* (first conjugation class verbs) and *-i* (fourth conjugation class), and also the verbal prefix *în-*, with the meaning of "to cause something to be in". The derivational nouns, on the other hand, have been obtained from verbal roots, such as *ciugulete* (literally 'pecker' for *sparrow*, from the verb *a ciuguli* 'to peck' + what the child assumed to be a noun-forming suffix *-ete*) – Vlad, 3:3, or from noun roots, as in *volanist* (literally 'steering-wheeler' for *driver*, from the noun *volan* + the noun-forming suffix *-ist*) – Andrei, 4:0 and *hingherie* (literally 'flayer's place' for *dog shelter*, from the noun *hingher* + the noun-forming suffix *-ie*) – Doris, 3:5.

Blending, functioning as a memory aid that enables the young learners to link up words containing similar sounds, is also frequent among the children in the study, being productive especially in the case of one child (Ilinca, 5:9): *ce răscocęști* (a blend between *a răscoli* 'to rummage' and *a scotoci* 'to search', both constituents being synonymous) or *șinie de tren* (a blend of *șină* 'rail' and *linie* 'line').

While in English and German composition outnumbered other word-formation processes (Müller *et al.* 2015:2126), in the Romanian corpus no example of compounds have been encountered. Compound words have also been reported to be scarce in French (Müller *et al.* 2015:2130). The difference between Romanian and French (Romance languages), on the one hand and English and German (Germanic languages), on the other hand could be explained in terms of the morphological type of the language: in English and German, composition relies

heavily on the combination of two words, while in Romanian sometimes additional changes are needed, like attaching the enclitic definite article to the first noun and the genitive suffix to the second one (compare *sunflower* with *floarea soarelui*).

Apart from investigating the word-formation processes by means of which children fill certain gaps in their vocabulary, of interest to me was also the way in which they acquire certain lexical classes, as for example the class of adjectives. Together with Gabriela Cusen, I wrote a paper entitled

**On the acquisition and development of adjectives in Romanian child language**, 2007, in *Pro-Active Partnership in Creativity for the Next Generation*, 2007, Proceedings of the 31st ARA Congress, Editura Universității Transilvania, Braşov, pp. 825-828 ISBN 978-2-553-01412-3.

The paper looks at three types of adjectives present in Romanian (i.e. *descriptive*, *pronominal*, and *quantificational*) and at the way in which Romanian-speaking children of various ages (pre-schoolers – subdivided into 3-, 4- and 5-year-olds – and school-aged children) employ them in narratives elicited on the basis Mayer's (1969) picture book, *Frog, where are you?*. The premises we started from in our investigation were that a) the number and range of adjectives is smaller in the narratives of the youngest subjects (i.e. the 3-year-olds), but they gradually increase with age; b) within each age group there would be differences among children as regards the use of adjectives; and c) school contributes to the enrichment of the repertoire of adjectives of children and also to the levelling of the differences in the deployment of these lexical items. Our analysis revealed that the two basic groups of children investigated differed in their use of adjectives: the younger children were more heterogeneous in the sense that some of them employed adjectives in their narratives, some others not at all. A more homogeneous picture emerged from the narratives of the schoolchildren (aged 9), who employed all three types of adjectives, sometimes even in combination.

In considering the *qualitative adjectives*, we have found that there is a gradual transition from the bipolar ones (*mic – mare* 'small – big') describing size, encountered among the 3-year-olds, to some items that present the protagonists' inner states (*supărat* 'angry/sad', *bucuros* 'happy', *disperat* 'desperate'), employed by the children aged 5 and 9. *Quantificational adjectives* were almost equally employed by all the children in the study, the difference being that the youngest ones made use of only two types (*două* 'two' - *Ăstea două mari se uitau la ele* 'These **two big** ones were looking at them', Mădălina 4:2, and *multe* 'many' - *Și aicea sînt mai multe broscuțe* 'And here there are **more** frogs', Delia 4:9), whereas the repertoire of the oldest learners has been enriched with new forms (*toate* 'all', *niște* 'some', and *amîndouă* 'both'). The *pronominal adjectives* presented a U-shape development, in that in the texts of the 5-year-olds only 5 uses were encountered, as opposed to the 8 occurrences in the narratives of the children



aged 4. Worth mentioning is that while the pre-schoolers favoured the deictic demonstratives *ăsta, asta*, ‘this’ *ăstea* ‘these’, the school-aged children showed a preference for the possessive type, which is indicative of the fact that the concept of possession develops between the ages of 5 and 9.

As opposed to the English-speaking children, but similar to young learners acquiring French or Spanish, the Romanian children have to know that the morphosyntax of our language requires that the determiner, the noun, and the adjective have to agree in gender and number (*două broscuțe frumoase* ‘two beautiful frogs’ – plural feminine).

The class of adjectives in the linguistic development of Romanian children was the topic of another paper:

**Adjectives in acquisition: on the semantic and syntactic development of Romanian adjectives**, 2011, in the *Proceedings of the Conference of British and American Studies*, Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania, Braşov, pp. 77-88, ISSN-1844-7481.

Here the focus was only on the qualitative adjectives, which express various characteristics of the referents, such as aspect, weight, size, taste, etc., which may occur in different degrees of intensity, and are placed, as a rule, in post-nominal position. The morpho-syntactic characteristics of these adjectives are homogeneous. Morphologically, qualitative (qualifying) adjectives can obtain by means of *derivation* (*a speria > speriat* ‘to frighten > frightened’) or *composition* (*dulce-amar* ‘bitter-sweet’). Syntactically, they inflect for number and most of them for gender, too and they can function either as attributes (noun modifiers) or as predicates. From a semantic viewpoint, this class of adjectives was divided by Peters and Peters (2000) into *intensional* and *extensional*, each of these groups being further subdivided into more specific types.

The analysis focused on the *semantic classes of adjectives* and of their *syntactic functions* in a corpus of 47 narratives, produced by monolingual speakers of Romanian of various ages (see the detailed description of the corpus in section 1.1.2). The research hypothesis that guided the investigation was that Romanian children cannot master all the semantic classes and syntactic functions of the adjectives in their L1 at a very early age. Derived from this, the analysis tried to provide answers to the following research questions: a) what qualitative adjectives are initially employed by children and how does the semantic range expand?, b) which is the first syntactic function attributed by children to the adjectives and when do the others emerge?, and c) is there a relationship between the semantic class of adjectives and their syntactic function?

The results of the analysis indicate first of all that not all the subjects in the study made use of adjectives in referring to the characters / settings in the narratives, but that there is,



I also identified a relationship between the semantic class of adjectives and their syntactic function, namely that size and physical property adjectives occur earlier and in most of the cases as attributes in post-nominal position. Evaluative and psychological characteristic adjectives appear later and in predicative position.

The field of child language acquisition can be investigated by multiple disciplines. Thus, concepts pertaining to sociology or psychology could explain certain linguistic behaviours of children. One such concept, i.e. the *prototype*, was launched in the 1970s by Eleanor Rosch, an American psychologist, whose experiments carried out on her students revealed that in their attempts to categorize common objects, people do not expect them to be similar; nevertheless, they do consider one such object to be “an ideal exemplar” or the prototype of a category in that the respective object embodies a larger number of relevant features than the other members of the category, which are perceived to be marginal. Later on, Lakoff (1987:59) pointed out that, in linguistics, the study of prototypes focuses on ‘asymmetries within categories and gradations away from a best example’, this being known under the term of *markedness*. The marked elements are considered to be marginal exemplars of the category, while the unmarked ones (i.e. the default situations) represent the ‘prototype’. According to Lakoff, prototypes are present at all levels of language.

A study tackling the concept of prototypes in Romanian child language is:

**The prototype theory and semantic relations in early child Romanian**, 2010, in *Annales Universitatis Apulensis, Series Philologica*, nr.11, Tom 2/2010, Language Series, pp 133-145, ISSN-1582-5523 ([www.uab.ro/sesiuni2010/limbi\\_moderne/index.htm](http://www.uab.ro/sesiuni2010/limbi_moderne/index.htm)), <https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>

The aim of my paper was to show how this concept could explain the *untypical* examples of semantic relations employed by pre-school children. The discussion focuses on two semantic relations: hyponymy and antonymy, which subjects employed more or less correctly. The erroneous uses can be explained in terms of prototype effects: the children’s mental lexicon is organized in such a way that the prototypical member of a category pops up first. In what the use of hyponymy is concerned, it is assumed that children first acquire the nouns belonging to the basic-level categories (Ungerer & Schmid 1999, Aitchinson 1999). This was confirmed by the children’s frequent use of the term *pasăre* ‘bird’ to refer to the owl in Mayer’s (1969) picture book. But apart from this basic-level term, I also encountered hyponyms such as *bufniță* (‘owl’), \**pupăză* (‘hoopoe’), \**vultur* (‘eagle’), the last two examples being inappropriate for the context (this is why they are starred), but acceptable. We may assume that the use of these terms could be the outcome of the children’s numerous exposures to these members of the category of birds.

This also reinforces Aitchinson's idea that 'prototypes (...) represent mental models of the world we live in, models which are private and cultural architectures (...)' (1999:70).

Most of the erroneous antonyms come from the same child (Ilinca), at various stages in her linguistic development. One example is worth mentioning:

*Întoarce-mi bluza pe față, că-i pe spate.* 'Turn my blouse inside out, because it is backwards.' (Ilinca 5:8)

The comic effect of the girl's utterance is due to the cross-over between the antonyms of the word *față*, which may mean either the 'front part' or the 'outer part' of something. Psychologists are of the opinion that 'in cases where more than one meaning is plausible, subjects are likely to activate all of them (...)' (Aitchinson, 1999:214) and cause ambiguity.

### **1.2.3. The acquisition of grammar**

This subsection of the habilitation thesis presents my contributions to the Romanian children's acquisition of grammar, this being the most remarkable and mysterious achievement of childhood.

#### **A) Theoretical background**

Once children have started producing their first words (around the age of 1), they employ them in a number of contexts, to denominate objects or to interact with their caretakers, but their messages consist in uttering one word after another. These single-word utterances mark the beginning of a long journey into discovering the language. Another milestone is reached at the end of their second year, when children start combining words into sentences. Even a clause made up of two lexical items reveals that young learners do not combine words randomly, but according to the syntactic rules of their mother tongue. What is remarkable is that the acquisition and development of these rules happen imperceptibly, without any explicit instruction: adults usually teach children new words and concepts, but never grammar rules.

The parents' lack of "interest" in grammar is compensated by the linguists' quest for offering a detailed perspective on the grammar of the children acquiring English (Brown 1973, de Villiers and de Villiers, 1985), Finnish (Bowerman 1973), Italian (Beletti and Guasti 2015), French, Italian and Spanish (Clark 1985), Hebrew (Berman 1985), and Romanian (Avram 2002, Stoicescu 2013, and Buja 2009), to mention just a few. In their endeavour, scholars pointed out that despite the relatively different structures of these languages, the children who acquire them present similarities in their linguistic behaviour, confirming to a large extent the hypothesis about universals of language.

According to Clark (1998:375),

languages differ in the extent to which they rely on inflectional morphology to mark grammatical distinctions and grammatical relations. In essence, languages range from *analytic* (with virtually no inflection morphology, like Chinese) to *synthetic* (with fairly extensive reliance on inflections, some for grammatical relations and agreement, and many marking several distinctions at once, as Spanish), to *agglutinative* (with highly regular and systematic inflections, each marking a separate distinction, as in Turkish). (my emphasis)

The children's production of the first inflectional morphemes is highly dependent on factors like typology and complexity. Thus, simple morphemes will be acquired before more complex ones. In its turn, complexity depends on the number of meanings a morpheme may have (semantics) and on the number of rules it imposes (syntax). Interesting to notice is that when the little ones learn the inflectional morphemes, they may over-regularize some of them, as it happens with the plural marker in English - *toothes* or even *theethes* instead of *teeth*, or the past participle form in Romanian - (*am*) *chiut* instead of (*am*) *scris* 'I have written'. Such forms are proof of the productivity and creativity of children's morphology.

### **B) Cross-linguistic studies**

*The Cross-linguistic study of Language Acquisition* (edited by Dan I. Slobin) is, to my knowledge, the largest collection of studies aimed at revealing uniformities in the process of language acquisition despite the acquisition problems posed by the different types of languages. This large-scale project was published in 5 volumes, starting with 1985 (volumes 1 and 2) and finishing in 1997 (volumes 4 and 5) and it gathered contributions from a large number of scholars. From among the 5 volumes, the first one (*The Data*) contains chapters focussing on the acquisition of a certain language (English, German, Hebrew, Japanese, Kaluli, Polish, Hungarian) or family of languages (the Romance languages), all contributors being asked to approach their language as a case study, in accordance with a common framework. The data presented focused on production rather than on comprehension of language and more on recordings of semi-controlled situations than of naturally occurring speech. The authors also considered the errors produced by the children and tried to offer an explanation of the manner in which these faulty structures differed from the adult ones. As Slobin states, '[w]e are only beginning to glimpse the outlines of general syntactic theories that would lead to interesting developmental questions' (1985: 21).

The second volume (*Theoretical Issue* - 1985) comprises articles on various issues related to the process of language acquisition, such as the close relationship between the cognitive and linguistic development, the interaction between the linguistic input (child directed

speech/caretaker speech) and the output (children's speech), the process of extraction ('recognizing and remembering recurring chunks of speech out of the continuous speech streams present in the environment'- Peters, 1985:164) and segmentation (the analysis of Extracted segments of speech in terms of their constituent elements/morphemes and the awareness of the syntactic information carried by these sub-components), and the mental equipment that aids children's linguistic development, called by Slobin the "Language-Making Capacity"<sup>6</sup> which functions on the basis of a number of Operating Principles that enable the 'perception, analysis, and use of language in ways that will lead to the mastery of any particular input language' (Slobin, 1985: 410).

The acquisition of three other languages, belonging to different language groups, Finnish, Greek, and Korean is presented in Volume 4 (published together with volume 5 in 1997), following the same structural framework as indicated in volume 1, but not necessarily the same theoretical one. The last volume of the series (*Expanding the Contexts*) rounds up the discussion on the acquisition of language and introduces new paths of research that have only been touched upon in the previous volumes and that need to be pursued for the sake of offering a complete picture of this challenging process. Of importance is the influence of the social and cultural factors in the interaction between caretakers and children, the variation between children in terms of types of learners, of the influence of language typology, of phonetic and prosodic factors on the acquisition of grammatical morphemes.

Quite often throughout the 5 volumes, Slobin reiterated the idea that it is of crucial importance for an encompassing theory of child language acquisition to examine data from as many languages as possible. Despite that fact that Romanian was included in this cross-linguistic study, the data are quite scarce. My humble contributions presented below might be considered one small piece in the puzzle.

### **C) My contributions**

In the 1970s, relative clauses (RCs) started to present an interest to scholars, who pointed out that these clauses emerge in children's speech as early as the age of 2:6, with regular use appearing around age 3. In Romanian linguistics, the studies focused on whether there is an asymmetry between subject relatives and direct object relatives in comprehension (Sevcenco and Avram 2012) and in production (Sevcenco *et al.* 2013).

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<sup>6</sup> This term is preferred by Slobin to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) introduced by Chomsky.

My paper:

**Relative clauses in Romanian children's narratives: from coordination to subordination**, 2004, in the *Proceedings of the Conference on British and American Studies*, Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania, pp. 123-133, ISBN 973-635-300-1

addresses the development of the children's capacity to provide additional information to a nominal referent in the narratives based on the so-called frog story picture book. This means that the young learners 'need to acquire command of both language-particular structures for combining clauses (by coordination and subordination) and discursive skills in selecting appropriate options for packaging together different pieces of information' (Berman, 2014:635) (the discursive skills will be tackled in section 1.2.4.).

In my data, the genuine subordinate relative clauses seem to be a late acquisition (they are acquired between the ages of 5 and 9), but even the youngest children in my study, i.e. the 3-year-olds, seem to be able to express the function of relative clauses by a linear construction, linking a clause containing a head noun with a modifying clause initiated by the conjunctions *şi* and *iar* ('and') (e.g. *Aici e un băieţel şi un câţeluş. Şi băieţelul cu câţeluşul au o broscuţă.* 'Here there is a boy and a dog. **And** the boy and the dog have a frog.' – Ramona 3:6). Occasionally, I also came across relative clauses introduced by *care* 'who / that', most of these early relative clauses modifying predicate nominals (*A fost {ăsta ...} un hîrciog care a fost prins de un copil.* 'There was a hamster **that** was caught by a child.' – Ana 3:6), a finding also reported for English speaking children (Berman and Slobin, 1994). Older preschoolers make equal use of linear constructions introduced by *şi* and relative subordination. Between the ages of 5 and 9, the repertoire of relative subordinators increase, including the relative pronoun *ce* 'that / what' (employed as an alternative to the all-purpose *care*) and the relative adverbs *unde* 'where' and *cînd* 'when'. At the same time, the flat conjoined clauses decrease in use.

Another important finding is related to the syntactic position expanded by means of relative clauses. Thus, both the Romanian pre-schoolers and the school-aged children showed preference for the subject position, followed by the object position. This finding accords with the results obtained by Dasinger and Toupin (1994), but is in contradiction with those of Menyuk (1971) (quoted in Berko-Gleason, 1989:157), who stated that in the beginning all the relative clauses specify information about the object of a clause. A developmental aspect worth mentioning is the emergence of relative clauses with central embedding among the subjects aged 9 (*Noaptea, cînd el dormea, broscuţa a ieşit din borcan şi a fugit.* 'At night, when he was sleeping, the frog got out of the jar and ran away' – Andreea 9:10). Such a structure is more complex in the sense that the subordinator has a double role: to initiate the relative clause and to mark a temporal relationship (of simultaneity) that holds between the actions of the matrix and

subordinate clauses. At the same time, the variety of relative clauses produced by the schoolchildren in the study confirms that at this age they have developed full structural knowledge of relative constructions and is also indicative of the development of the children's narrative ability.

In the corpus I gathered for my PhD dissertation I came across numerous sentences containing clitics of various types (pronominal, adverbial, or conjunctive), sometimes employed alone, some other times in combinations. What drew my attention were the combinations of the pronominal and the adverbial clitics, which I tackled in the paper:

**On clitics in Romanian child language**, 2007, in *Bulletin of Transilvania University*, series B5, 2007, vol. 14 (49), pp. 741-747, ISSN 1223-964X

The reason behind analysing these types of clitics is twofold: on the one hand, they are the most frequent in the corpus, and on the other hand, they are the most relevant from a morpho-syntactic viewpoint. My aim was to identify some peculiarities concerning the acquisition and development of these clitics in child Romanian and, if possible, to trace a developmental path.

With respect to the acquisition of pronominal clitics, the analysis pointed out that even the youngest subjects use them, though not always correctly. Erroneous cases involved a mismatch in case between the clitic and the indirect object it anticipated: ....*ca să i-o dea la băiețel* - (Petronela 3:6) - (clitic in the Dative, indirect object in the analytical Dative - preceded by the preposition, instead of the synthetic Dative, with enclitic definite article (*băiețelului*)). Other faulty structures are caused by the omission of the clitic pronouns in situations where they were needed: *să \*[o] găsească pe broscuță* 'to find (her) the frog' (Paula 3:10). The 4-year olds used more frequently and more correctly the weak pronominal forms, but even among them some produced structures that did not comply with the adult forms, in that there was no gender agreement between the clitic and its co-referent. A possible explanation for this mismatch could be that between the antecedent and the pronominal form, another noun - with different semantic information - appeared, this being closer to the clitic. Among the older pre-schoolers, most of the clitic constructions, whether with or without clitic doubling, are correct, showing a developmental trend. Still, a slightly different type of error has been identified with one of these children, namely a Nominative first element followed by a Dative clitic required by the verb: *Și aicea \*acel animal îi părea bine*. 'And this animal was very happy' (Roxana 5:4). Schoolchildren showed mastery of pronominal clitic use, in their narratives emerging new structures, such as gerunds functioning as hosts for the weak pronominal forms (*mulțumindu-le broscuțelor* 'thanking the frogs' - Iulia 9:11), nominal hosts for clitics (*albinele-l fugăreau pe băiețel* 'the bees were chasing the boy), or clitic clusters, the first element being a Dative clitic,



while the second an Accusative one (*Neputând să **și-l** scoată ...* ‘Being unable to take (his) it out...’ – Iulia 9:11)

As far as the adverbial clitics *tot*, *mai* and *și*<sup>7</sup> (‘still’) are concerned, much to my surprise they were the most numerous in the narratives of the youngest children. An interesting finding is that when the clitic adverbs appear in combination with verbs in tenses that do not require auxiliaries, such as the Present or the Preterit, they do not pose any problems for any of the children in the study. But when they combine with a complex tense like Perfectul Compus, with a clitic pronoun, and a clitic adverb, lots of faulty structures appear (*\*Nu mai a văzut-o pe broscuță* (Alexandru 4:6)/ *\*N-o mai a văzut broscuța* (Roxana 5:4) \*‘He not anymore saw the frog.’) in that the clitic adverb is placed outside the verb phrase – either in front or after it – due to the fact that the pre-schoolers perceive the Perfect Compus tense to have a compact structure (i.e. nothing can come in between the auxiliary and the past participle verb). Moreover, it seems that the negative adverb *nu* (‘no’) strongly attracts the clitic adverb. Schoolchildren, on the other hand, prove to have full command of the use of adverbial clitics in combination with any type of tense or pronominal clitic.

A study that somehow emerged from my PhD research and which is at the borderline between grammar and narrative development is:

**On the functions of *și* (‘and’) in Romanian children’s narratives**, 2005, in the *Proceedings of the Conference on British and American Studies*, Brașov: Editura Universității Transilvania, pp. 41-52, ISBN 973-635-660-4

My interest was to find out how Romanian-speaking children avail themselves of *și* (‘and’) in terms of the types of relations it establishes between clauses in narratives, as this ensures narrative cohesion. The 681 occurrences of the conjunction in the 37 narratives produced by pre-schoolers and school-aged children (see a detailed presentation of the corpus under 1.1.2.) were distributed unevenly among 10 meanings / functions (filler, additive, sequencing, continuation of thematic reference, relative, causal, contradiction of expectations, thematic contrast, and narrative surprise). From among these, the pre-schoolers favoured the *filler* and *additive* functions of the conjunction, as the former enables the speaker to formulate his/her next utterance, while the latter introduces next-utterances (Berman and Neeman 1994). Schoolchildren, on the other hand, showed a preference for the *sequential ordering function* of *și*, which is similar to that of the adverb *then*. They also employed more frequently than the younger children the *narrative surprise* function of the conjunction (*Apoi băiatul s-a suit pe buștean. **Și** ce-a văzut? A văzut două broscuțe!* ‘Then the boy climbed on a log. **And** what did

<sup>7</sup> *Tot*, *mai* and *și* can be translated as ‘still’, but depending on the context in which they appear, they may acquire some other meanings, like ‘also’, ‘too’, ‘any longer’, or ‘anymore’.

(he) see? (He) saw two little frogs.’- Cosmin 09:01). Here the presentation of a situation is interrupted by an unexpected event.

The analysis also brought to light a developmental path: while initially *și* is employed as an all-purpose conjunction, little by little new connectives are acquired (adversative, temporal sequentiality, and simultaneity markers), which are employed to serve old functions. For a while, children will employ both the old and the new forms in parallel, but then we notice a decrease in the use of *și* and a higher frequency of the connectives mentioned above. The age of 4 marks the beginning of the chaining of two or more clauses into episodes, which indicates that the conjunction acquires a narrative function. Other functions of *și*, such as that of indicating *causality* and *contradiction* of expectation, appear at around the age of 4, whereas the *relative* function emerges only at the age of 5. The order in which the variety of functions of *și* develops seems to confirm one of my predictions and to accord with the order found by Bloom *et al.* (1980) with respect to the English language, namely: *additive* → *temporal simultaneity/temporal sequentiality* → *causality* → *object specification*.

As Berman and Slobin (1994: 2) opine, ‘the development of grammar cannot be profitably considered without attention to the psycholinguistic and communicative demands of the production of connected discourse’. Thus, the last part of this chapter is dedicated to acquisition and development of narrative skills.

#### **1.2.4. The acquisition of narrative skills**

##### **A) Introduction**

A further step in the acquisition of any language by monolingual children is the capacity to tell stories, a skill that develops on the basis of knowledge of the other subdomains of language (phonology, lexicology, semantics, and grammar). Narrative skills are commonly described in terms of the emergence and gradual sophistication of the child’s ability to sequence a number of events and to provide details regarding the settings and the characters. There are numerous reasons why narrative development would prove worth investigating. First, it is a literary genre that emerges quite early in children’s lives, as they are exposed to conversational stories told by their parents, to story books, or to movies. When children start telling stories (at around 2 years of age), they focus first on events that happen *here* and *now*, relying on the immediate context; later on, as they gain the capacity to talk about past (real or fictional) events or memories, they make use of decontextualized language about *there* and *then*, characterized by syntactically connected structures that discharge an explicit meaning. The more extended narratives produced by children need to be organized at two levels: the *macro-level*, ‘the underlying global structure

that gives the narrative content a schematic organization and relates the different parts of the narrative to each other in a meaningful ways' (Demir and Küntay, 2014:393) and the *micro-level*, i.e. the level where local relations are established among the units of the story by means of connectives and use of pronouns / nouns to identify the story characters (Halliday and Hasan 1976). A second reason would be that narrative skills are considered to be a good predictor of later literacy development. And third, intervention for child language impairments has evidenced that 'narrative-based therapy increases children's grammatical complexity, oral narrative structure, vocabulary, and phonological awareness' (Stokes, 2014:293).

### **B) Cross-linguistic studies**

Research on the acquisition of narrative development is marked by the large-scale international project co-ordinated by Ruth Berman and Dan I. Slobin, which started in 1983 and finished in 1994 with the publication of the book entitled *Relating Events in Narrative. A Cross-Linguistic Developmental Study*. As the title suggests, the study focused on the way children speaking different languages as their mother tongue (English, German, French, Hebrew, Turkish, and Spanish) develop their narrative skills. What the contributors envisaged was to show how factors such as the language employed by the narrators, their age, and the choice of narrative perspective contribute to the development from an 'immature to a fully proficient speakers and frog-story narrators in terms of the interplay between linguistic forms and narrative functions' (Berman and Slobin, 1994:35). The **forms** considered by the scholars range from grammatical morphemes, whether bound (such as inflectional and derivational morphemes; for example, the tense/aspect markers on the verbs) or free (prepositions and conjunctions), to syntactic constructions (as, for example, relative clauses and complement clauses), as well as changes of word order. Also included under the umbrella term "form" were lexical items which encode notions of temporality, manner, and causation (such as temporal adverbs, motions verbs, etc.). A further step was to identify the **functions** these forms served in the narrative discourse, the ultimate goal being that of constructing a story that is cohesive and coherent from the lowest level of organization (i.e. within the clause) to the highest one (i.e. relating larger pieces of text to one another). The researchers contributing to this study considered that:

[t]he developmental history of any given form reflects the expanding range of functions served by that form, and, at the same time, also reflects the "acquisitional complexity" of that form as determined by the local processing constraints as well as the role played by the form in the overall system of grammar (Berman and Slobin, 1994:4).

The five functional categories investigated were *temporality* (how narrators locate the events on the time line, how they express the temporal relations between events), *event conflation* (the way the event components are encoded in relatively compact or expanded expressions), *perspective* (the choice of foreground and background or agent-patient relations), *connectivity* (linking together clauses, sentences, and larger text segments to one another), and *narrative style* (the style adopted by each narrator in telling the frog-story, ranging from picture-descriptions, to colloquial and literary narratives) (Berman and Slobin 1994).

The large-scale, cross-linguistic study was guided by three important themes, namely that a) our experiences are “filtered” into verbalized events by means of various options provided by each language; b) in a structured narrative, events must not be linearly linked in time and space, but should be “packaged” into hierarchical constructions; and c) development implies a complex interaction between cognitive, linguistic, and communicative factors.

The data were collected from subjects speaking the five languages mentioned above, who were asked to tell the frog story by looking at the pictures of Mercer Mayer’s (1969) book, *Frog, where are you?*, a story whose pictorial presentation relied on elements specific to the Western culture. Three age groups were investigated across languages: pre-schoolers (further subdivided into 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds), schoolchildren, and adult narrators, all subjects in all countries being monolingual and belonging to the same socio-economic background.

The findings of the large-scale, cross-linguistic project reflect both similarities, as well as differences among the narrators in the study and among languages. In what concerns the *linguistic forms*, the analysis showed that the younger children made use of fewer expressive means than the older children or the adults, the reason behind this situation being that:

**cognitively**, they cannot conceive of the full range of encodable perspectives, (...) **communicatively**, they cannot fully assess the listener’s viewpoint, and (...) **linguistically**, young children do not command the full range of formal devices’ (Berman and Slobin, 1994: 598, emphasis in the original).

Some linguistic forms are never employed by the pre-schoolers, but appear only occasionally in the texts of the school-aged children and adults, as is the case of the past perfect tense in the languages that have this form (in English, Spanish, German, and Turkish, but not in Hebrew) or the use of gerunds, participles, and nominalizations as means of subordination (except for Turkish where these structures constitute the main means of subordination). Also worth pointing out is that as the age of children increases, individual forms acquire new functions in all five languages under investigation. An example in this respect would be the area of tense / aspect shifting. While the youngest narrators shift tense and aspect at the level of

clause, to mark the contrast between events that are pictured and those that can be identified on the basis of obvious endstates, older narrators, irrespective of the language they speak, avail themselves of this option for narrative purposes, i.e. to make the distinction between the foreground (plot-advancing events) and background (additional information about the setting and characters).

As far as the *functions* are concerned, these are served for a while by old forms, but as new functions emerge, they will determine the acquisition of new forms. This has been obvious in all the five languages investigated. Again, tense shifts can be mentioned as an example in this respect, this time with the function of referring back to a previous event in time. Among the young narrators, retrospection can be expressed by means of a genitival construction „*the dog's head got stuck in the frog's jar*” (when talking about the dog's search for the frog in the jar). But once the function of retrospection develops, to introduce information about a past event in the on-going plot, the narrators employ a new form, namely tense / aspect shifts: “the dog's head got stuck in the jar in which the frog had been kept”.

Most differences among the languages appear in connection with the narrative style. These differences are determined by the grammatical typology (Talmy, 1985) of the five languages in terms of event conflation. Thus, German and English being satellite-framed languages (i.e. languages in which the path of motion is expressed by satellites, such as adverbial particles), some of the pre-school narrators acquiring these languages as L1 are capable of associating certain particles with the verbs, especially in relating the events presented in pictures 16 to 18 of the picture-book, when the boy is thrown by the deer and plunges into the pond. For the children acquiring verb-framed languages (such as Spanish or Turkish), describing the same event is more challenging, as in these languages the verbs suggest only directionality, and thus the narrators need to help the listeners infer the trajectory of the motion verbs by providing them with scene-setting information. Consequently, Spanish and Turkish pre-schoolers have not employed such structures / forms, these forms being present only in the narratives of the schoolchildren and adults.

Since its publication, Berman and Slobin's book has inspired linguists to extend the research to other languages, such as Chinese (Chien-ju Chang), French (Marie-Thérèse La Normand), or even to bilingual children (Turkish-Dutch, Jeoen Aarsen) (for a complete list of frog story corpora of both monolingual and bilingual children, see <https://childes.talkbank.org/access/Frogs/>).

### C) My contribution

As I gained more knowledge and experience in doing research on first language acquisition after finishing my PhD paper, my interest in what skills children need to acquire and develop in order to become proficient narrators made me expand my field of investigation. Thus, the article:

**The acquisition of narrative skills by Romanian children**, In Avram, L. and Sevcenco A. (eds.) 2013. *Topics in Language Acquisition and Language Learning in a Romanian Context*, București: Editura Universității din București, pp. 9-39, ISBN 978-606-16-0261-2

aimed at identifying a route of learning of the macro- and micro-discourse skills on the basis of a cross-sectional study carried out on monolingual Romanian children, with ages ranging between 3 and 9 years, and a group of adult narrators. At the macro-level of discourse, I looked into whether the subjects employ all elements of a narrative, as described by Labov and Waletzky (1967): abstract, orientation, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda. At the micro-level, I was interested in the linguistic devices my subjects employed in order to introduce the characters in the (by now) famous frog-story: the boy, his dog and frog, being aware of the fact that the ability to introduce referents is fundamental to the story coherence and comprehensibility. As pointed out by Küntay (2002:78):

the specific form that a referring expression takes depends on the speaker's assumptions about the addressee's awareness state regarding a referent in the particular context in which the referent is mentioned. Identifiability of referents becomes a major communicative concern, especially in speech situations in which the only access of a listener to a particular universe of discourse is through the language provided by the speaker. Identifiability concerns the ability of the addressee to establish a link between the referring expressions used by the speaker and the concept it refers to.

The results of the macro-structure analysis reveal a lack of most of the core components of a narrative among the youngest children, which gives their production a somewhat asymmetrical shape. At this age, as confirmed by other studies (Berman and Slobin, 1994), pre-schoolers do not have the ability to create well-formed narratives, but are, nevertheless, capable of creating something more than just a description of the pictures in the book. Worth mentioning is an age-related increase in the emergence and employment of almost all narrative components, which contributes to a better structuring of the plot. Thus, orientation in time and the narrative coda emerge only around the age of 4, evaluation is non-existent in the narratives of the 4-year olds, but it surges dramatically in the productions of the adult narrators. Resolution is also mentioned more frequently (80%) by the school-aged children than by the pre-schoolers. On this

narrative component, my 9-year-old subjects come close to the adult narrators, as it is also the case of other constituents, such as the initiation event (90% vs 100%), complication (100% for both groups), and coda (100% vs. 90%), the difference between the subjects appearing in connection with evaluation (20% vs. 100%). Additionally, the subjects aged 9 and those aged 20 also differ in terms of the range of evaluative devices, the latter showing a different level of understanding of the events and of the characters involved in them.

In what concerns the way my subjects introduced the main characters, the findings indicate that the youngest narrators (aged 3 and 4) predominantly used a definite NP, scoring very low for referential adequacy. With age, the ability to clearly refer to a story character increases, so that some of the pre-schoolers aged 5 and most of the schoolchildren made use of the existential expression containing an indefinite referring element, which is the default way of first mention (*Un băiețel avea într-un borcan o broască* – Ana 9:3 ‘A boy had a frog in a jar’). In stark contrast, the majority of the adult narrators in the study introduced the three main characters by using names (*Este seară. Alexandru și Azorel îi spun “noapte bună” prietenei lor, Fanta. Fanta este o broscuță și locuiește într-un borcan.* ‘It is evening. **Alexandru** and **Azorel** say “good night” to their good friend, **Fanta**. Fanta is a little frog and (it) lives in a jar’. - Crina 20). This is in line with Fludernik (2009:45) who opined that this procedure is typical of narratives ‘which show fondness for internal focalization, i.e. those which use reflector figures and offer an account of what happens through the eyes of the reflectors, [which] treat persons and objects (...) as given, known and therefore in no need of being introduced.’

Reference, defined by Martin (1983) (quoted in Toolan 1988:206) as ‘semantic system whereby participants are identified in (...) text’, has been the topic of another paper of mine:

**Referential development in storytelling of Romanian children**, 2010, in the *Proceedings of the Conference on British and American Studies*, Braşov: Editura Universităţii Transilvania, pp. 97-112, ISSN-1844-7481.

In this paper I have extended the area of investigation to other referential acts apart from the first mentioning of a story’s characters (presented in the previous article), namely to *maintenance of reference* to a specific character and *switch of reference*, considering the importance of reference in narrative cohesion. At the same time, I also looked into the repertoire of linguistic forms Romanian monolingual children, aged between 3:2 and 5:10 years, employ to fulfill the three referential acts characteristic of narratives: to *introduce*, *maintain*, and *reintroduce* the three animate entities in the frog story (M. Mayer 1969). Also of interest was to identify the connection between the linguistic forms and their functions in the narratives and to contour a developmental path.

In terms of the referential acts, my findings indicate that that all children (27 in number), without exception, introduced the three main characters of the story. The data also show that the subjects switched reference less than they maintained it.

In what the repertoire of referring expressions is concerned, the analysis showed that for each referential function there seems to be a different predominant form. Thus, for first mention, my younger narrators employed the noun+definite article, while the older children showed preference for the indefinite structures. For maintenance of reference, children prefer the zero pronoun / ellipsis, while in the case of the switch of reference the nominal forms are predominant. Also worth mentioning is that certain referring expressions serve one particular referential function, but not the others. This is the case of the demonstrative pronoun / adjective which occurs only in reference switch and could be a reminiscence of the picture-description mode or could be attributed to the fact that the child and the investigator were looking together at the picture book used to elicit the narrative. On the other hand, the reflexive pronoun (and its clitic) was encountered only in connection with maintenance of reference, but never for reference switch. An explanation for this could be the anaphoric nature of the reflexive pronoun *se*.

The developmental path that emerges from the analysis shows that only the older preschoolers employ nominal forms appropriately to switch reference to new characters and pronominal forms for maintaining reference to the same character in subsequent clauses.

Finally, the paper titled:

**Event conflation in child Romanian**, 2015. In Burada, M. and Tatu, O. (eds.), *11<sup>th</sup> Conference on British and American Studies – Embracing Multitudes of Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 156-174, ISBN (10): 1-4438-7060-9, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-7060-0

attempts to find out how Romanian narrators avail themselves of the elements that exist in their mother tongue to conflate events, with a focus on the encoding of manner and direction of motion. An additional objective was to see whether the Romanian language fits perfectly in Talmy's (1985) classification of languages into *verb-framed* (i.e. the motion path is framed onto the main verb, while the manner is encoded in an optional element) or *satellite-framed* (i.e. manner of motion is expressed on the main verb, while the path is framed in a verb particle or a bound morpheme). This typological difference in encoding motion will be reflected in the semantic properties of narratives:



English narratives, for instance, emphasize the dynamic, action-and process-oriented aspects of motion scenes; Spanish and Romanian, on the other hand, may do away with these kinds of details and emphasize motion destination or resultant states caused by motion (Buja, 2015b: 157).

The data subjected to analysis comes from the corpus of narratives I collected for my doctoral paper, the focus being on a number of spatially constructed scenes that present two types of motion: up and down. The analysis of the data shows that there are more uses of verbs describing upward motion than downward motion (250 vs. 182 occurrences) and also a larger range of verbs or verbal expressions for the former kind of motion. This is not surprising at all, considering the fact that the story book employed for eliciting the narratives contained more pictures depicting ascent.

Worth mentioning is the increase of the **range of motion verbs**, especially among the children aged 4, who in describing ascent scenes employed 12 out of the total of 19 lexical structures in the corpus. In the case of schoolchildren one can notice an increase in the verbs for downward movement, covering 11 items out of a total of 17. When considering the **types of motion verbs** in more details, one can see that the youngest children in the study employed lexical items that conflate *motion* and *causality* (*a da jos* 'to make fall down' 'to push down'). The older pre-schoolers, on the other hand, are capable of conflating *motion*, *manner*, and *path*, this becoming more elaborate and explicit in the narratives of the school-aged children and of the adults, leading us to conclude that such verbs are later acquisitions due to their cognitive complexity. With respect to Talmy's typology of languages, the data investigated indicated the fact that Romanian does not fall neatly in this classification, as it contains motion verbs that encode both *manner* and *path*, as is the case of *a ateriza* 'to land', *a rostogoli* 'to roll down' or *a răsturna* 'to topple over', all of them having been encountered in the corpus. Rather than using Talmy's language typology, a better solution would be to adopt Slobin's (1996) terminology for distinguishing between languages, i.e. 'manner salient' and 'path salient' languages.

Some of the articles presented in this section of the habilitation thesis were updated, grouped according to language sub-domains, and published in a volume entitled *The Acquisition of Romanian* (2017) at Transilvania University Publishing House (215 pages, ISBN 978-606-19-0888-2). The volume was reviewed by Veronica Tomescu, a colleague from University of Bucharest, the review having been published *Bucharest Working Papers in Linguistics*, 2017, Vol. XIX, Nr.2 - <https://bwpl.unibuc.ro/vol-xix-nr-2/>. Note should be made that some of my contributions in the field of the acquisition of Romanian phonology have been cited by Professor Andrei A. Avram in his paper *Issues in the Acquisition of Phonology by an English-Romanian Bilingual Child* (published in 2016 in *Diacronia*).

## Chapter 2. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

### 2.1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Language and culture are inextricably intertwined: they cannot exist independent of each other. Language can be decoded only in strict relationship with a certain context, situation, culture, and the participants involved in the process of communication. As Pennycook (2017:33) states, ‘every language carries the weight of a civilization. The decision to use a certain language means to support the existence of a given cultural matrix. This means that language is not only part of culture, it also reflects culture’. When a child acquires his/her mother tongue, s/he also acquires through language elements that pertain to the culture s/he grows up in. But we have to be aware of the fact that cultures differ to the same extent to which languages do, and an understanding of these differences is of utmost importance for people who get involved in intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication (dialogue) is not a new concept. It has come into being ever since people belonging to one culture started travelling around the world and met people of other cultures. On such occasions, they realized that there were both similarities, but also differences between / among cultures. The differences could be of various kinds: linguistic (appropriate ways of addressing people, of expressing gratitude, of making requests, etc.), religious (some cultures may be more influenced by religion than others), economic or political, positioning the people involved in the process of intercultural communication on different levels. It was the differences that stirred the curiosity of some travellers who became aware of the diversity and complexity of intercultural relationships and who tried to negotiate their position with respect to their interlocutor, in an attempt to pave the path to intercultural dialogue. On the other hand, there were also persons who disregarded the cultural differences and for whom intercultural communication failed.

Failure in intercultural communication is due to two causes identified by Thomas (1983): *pragmalinguistic* and *sociopragmatic*.

Pragmalinguistic failure relates to misunderstandings as caused by the diverse ways different languages express pragmatic intention linguistically. Sociopragmatic failure relates to misunderstandings caused by the different types of behaviour that are considered appropriate in certain settings by different languages and cultures (Thomas 1983, quoted in Hale, 2014:323).

It is the latter type of failures that stirred my interest in the study of intercultural communication, because they are not immediately obvious and, as such, they proved to be a challenge for me.

## 2.2. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION FROM A NONVERBAL PERSPECTIVE

Nonverbal behaviour is an inherent aspect of the process of communication. This means that people belonging to a certain culture learn not only to communicate verbally, but also nonverbally in a manner that is typical of their own culture. ‘Participants make extensive use of this mode, in combination with verbal signals and features of the physical context, to construct meaning’ (Goodwin 2000, quoted in Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2009:92). In intercultural interaction people may attribute different importance to nonverbal behaviour, but, at the same time, the conventions associated with this type of behaviour may also differ considerably. An example of how people belonging to various cultures may misinterpret the others’ nonverbal behaviour is provided by a famous religious joke, presented below:

### *“The Joke about the Pope and the Chief Rabbi*

Several centuries ago the Pope decreed that all the Jews had to leave Italy. There was, of course, a huge outcry from the Jewish community, so the Pope offered a deal. He would have a religious debate with a leader of the Jewish community. If the Jewish leader won the debate, the Jews would be permitted to stay in Italy. If the Pope won, the Jews would have to leave.

The Jewish community met and picked an aged rabbi, Moishe, to represent them in the debate. Rabbi Moishe, however, could not speak Latin and the Pope could not speak Yiddish. So it was decided that this would be a ‘silent’ debate.

On the day of the great debate the Pope and Rabbi Moishe sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Rabbi Moishe looked back and raised one finger.

Next, the Pope waved his finger around his head. Rabbi Moishe pointed to the ground where he sat. The Pope then brought out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine. Rabbi Moishe pulled out an apple. With that, the Pope stood up and said, ‘I concede the debate. This man has bested me. The Jews can stay.’

Later, the cardinals gathered around the Pope, asking him what had happened. The Pope said, ‘First I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there was still one God common to both our religions. Then I waved my finger around me to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground to show that God was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and the wafer to show that God absolved us of our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of the Original Sin. He had an answer for everything. What could I do?’

Meanwhile, the Jewish community crowded around Rabbi Moishe, asking what happened. ‘Well’, said Moishe, ‘first he said to me, “You Jews have three days to get out of here.” So I said to him, “Not one of us is going to leave.” Then he tells me the whole city would be cleared of Jews. So I said to him, “Listen here, Mr. Pope, the Jews .... We stay right here!”

‘And then?’, asked a woman.

‘Who knows?’, said Rabbi Moishe. ‘We broke for lunch.’”

<https://www.cameroonweb.com/CameroonHomePage/fun/jokes.php?ID=2644> (accessed in August, 2017).

The types or codes of nonverbal behaviour are as follows: kinesics (body movement), haptics (touching behaviour), oculosics (eye behaviour), proxemics (use of space), chronemics (use of time), paralanguage, and use or artefacts. As Matsumoto and Hwang (2012:130) put it, ‘[n]onverbal behaviour is part of the “hidden dimension” of communication, a silent language, and not paying attention to it means that one misses many messages that are being conveyed. Thus, although active listening is always good, active observation is also necessary’.

An active observer of the nonverbal behaviour of the Eastern (Persian) people of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was a British writer, James Morier, who had the chance to spend many years in Persia as a diplomatic representative of Great Britain. Such an experience enabled him to understand this Oriental culture and to identify aspects that differed from his own. He presented the cultural differences not through the eyes of a Westerner, but rather from the standpoint of a Persian character, Hajji Baba.

The first paper I authored in the domain of intercultural/cross-cultural communication,

**Cultural differences in diplomacy: Persia vs. Frangistan** (paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International conference *Structure, Use, and Meaning* (September 2012) and published in Măda, S. and E. Buja (eds.). 2012. *Structure, Use, and Meaning: Linguistic Studies*. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Cărții de Știință, pp. 47-62, ISBN 978-606-17-0260-2

was based on Morier's novel *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan* (1824), which depicted the interaction between the West, represented by the British people and the East, represented by the Persians. The object of my investigations was the way in which the differences between the two cultures are reflected at the level of nonverbal behaviour, considering issues such as *use of time, use of space, use of artefacts, and rituals*. My aim was to identify which of these nonverbal codes differed radically in the two cultures and the extent to which such differences could lead to feelings of frustration.

The findings of the analysis revealed differences concerning all nonverbal codes under scrutiny. With respect to the *use of time*, Morier's novel showed that Westerners consider the *past* to be an important component of time to the extent to which they can build their present and future actions on it; for the Persians (as for the entire Islamic world), the past is of utmost importance, and this is reflected in a number of ways: a) in naming their children: the Persians employ a chain of names, indicating the descent / ancestry of the baby. The first name in the chain is the given name, the second is the name of the father, the third the name of the grandfather and the last is the family name; the British people usually give their children one name, followed by the family name; b) in performing certain actions: the British people of the 18<sup>th</sup> century relied on real facts or phenomena (as for example, the existence of fair wind for sailing), while the Persians waited for 'the full sanction of their own astrologers' (Morier, 1824 p. 95); c) In the eastern Muslim culture, coming to an appointment in time is considered an insult. The Persians consider that guests should be given plenty of time to accommodate to the new environment. In the Western world, punctuality is the rule and disobeying it may be insulting.

With respect to *space*, the differences between the two cultures are most obvious in the construction of the houses: while the Muslim harem is flat, all the rooms being on the same

level, the English house may have a number of floors, both above and below the level of the ground, each floor having its particular function. Then, at the level of *appearance*, women's clothes look and are perceived differently by the users: the English women's dresses look too heavy for the Persian women, having a number of layers, while those of the Persian women were much simpler. Additionally, the veil seems to have different functions: for the Persian women, it is a must and it is meant to cover as much of their faces as possible since 'the face is a sacred spot, sacred to modesty, sacred to the gaze of none but a husband; and it should be covered with the most scrupulous delicacy' (Morier, 1828: 275). For the English women, 'it was merely a screen from the wind, dust or sun' (Morier, 1828: 205). Then, with regard to the stockings, the Persian women expressed their astonishment at the English custom of wearing stockings, while the British ladies, on the other hand, considered that their Persian peers' habit of putting shoes on naked feet was utterly indecent.

The differences between the British and the Eastern women were further and more deeply explored in another paper:

**The image of women in James Morier's novels: a non-verbal communicative approach.** In Proceedings of the *Third International Conference Redefining Community in Intercultural Context* – RCIC'13, vol. 2, no.1, 2013, pp 211-219, ISSN 2285-2689. (Indexed in INDEX Copernicus, ICV score 6.2, <https://www.ceeol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>)

By investigating two of Morier's novels ('*The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan in England*' (1828) and '*Ayesha, the Maid of Kars*' (1834)), I have tried to gain more insight into Oriental (Persian and Turkish) alterity, especially in what women are concerned. Thus, I focused on the women's use of *artefacts* (clothing and jewels) and on the use of *space*. The reason behind choosing these two codes was that the former contributes to the delimitation of human identity, while the latter serves to crystallize it and to identify external otherness.

In terms of clothing, the first difference that emerges between the women from the two cultures relates to the veil:

While for the Eastern women covering their faces with a veil had a religious reason (women are perceived as the embodiment of Satan who lure men, and to prevent this they are forced to hide their faces behind veils), for the Western women the veil is simply an accessory (Buja, 2013: 214).

Not only did the Muslim women have to cover their faces, but also their heads (by means of a *hijab*). Consequently, they did not pay much attention to what their hair looked like, unlike the Western women of the 19th century, who proudly exhibited their curls. The small bits of paper they used for curling their hair were perceived by the Muslims as 'talismans placed there

either to guard their beauty, to keep off the evil eye, or to charm away wrinkles or whiskers' (Morier, 1828: 170-171).

As far as jewels are concerned, they were used for different purposes and on different parts of the body: Eastern women employed nose studs and toe rings, which their Western counterparts wouldn't have thought of. The rings, on the other hand, which were so common for women of any age in Europe, would be inappropriate on an Eastern maiden's finger. The necklace was an object of adornment for the English women, while for the Muslim ladies it is an artefact meant to protect them from the evil eye.

Other differences between the women in the two cultures emerge in terms of use of space: while Eastern women were secluded in the harem, far from the eyes of strangers, where they lived separated from men by the *anileroon* (apartments meant only for them), their Western counterparts enjoyed the liberty to live together with men in the same building, their rooms being next to a man's, and to roam their places and the streets to their heart's content.

All these differences can be attributed to the Islamic religion which has a strong influence on the life of the Muslims and imposes strict rules of behaviour for women.

Other differences between these two cultures are brought to light in a paper I co-authored with my colleague, Stanca Măda:

**Cultural differences in non-verbal communication: the Eastern vs. the Western world**, In Burada, M. & Tatu. O (eds.) (2014) *10<sup>th</sup> Conference on British and American Studies – Crossing Boundaries: Approaches to Contemporary Multicultural Discourse*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 256-275, ISBN (10): 1 – 4438 – 5359 – 3, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5359-0

In this paper, we further explored some nonverbal codes along which the people in the East differ from those in the West, the focus being on *proxemics* (use of space), *appearance*, and *habits/rituals*. The data employed to this aim come from James Morier's *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Isphahan in England* (1828), the cultural insights being provided from both perspectives (East and West). In our investigation, we relied on Morier's pertinent observations of the social encounters between the members of the two cultures.

Our analysis showed that the Persians and the Franks (i.e. the English people) differ considerably in the importance they attribute to space in a number of respects: a) *the placement of the seal on official documents* – on the top of the document in the Persian culture, and attached to the bottom of the letter "by certain silken strings" in the English one - this aspect causing some friction between the members of the two cultures; or b) *the spreading of the praying carpet* (by the Persians) *in a new place*, which is an act looked upon as bringing good fortune.

In terms of appearance, we found that while the Franks treasured the hair on their heads, which they powdered at the time the novel was written, the Persians attributed utmost importance to their beards, which were sacred to them, the disgrace of losing one's beard being the worst punishment for a Persian man.

One final area of non-verbal behaviour that has brought about some friction between the two parties is that of eating habits: the use of hands (the Persians) vs. the use of cutlery and specific plates for specific dishes (the Franks).

The paper entitled:

**Travelling to the East: a non-verbal communication account**, In *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 7, 2 (2015), p 59–78, DOI: 10.1515/ausp-2015-0047, <http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-phil/philologica-main.htm> (Indexed in ERIH PLUS, CEEOL,)

extended the geographical area of investigation of the cultural differences to other Eastern countries, namely Turkey and India. At the same time, besides Morier's novels, my data were also collected from two other writers who ventured to these distant places: Pietro della Vale, an Italian traveller of the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, who provided a detailed account of the religious beliefs, rituals and artefacts of the people he encountered along his journey to Turkey and India. The third source of information is a more recent piece of writing - *Behind the Veil in Persia and Turkish Arabia* (1909) – authored by an English female writer, M. E. Hume-Griffith, who accompanied her husband, a missionary doctor, to Persia and who had the opportunity of mingling with Muslim women and getting a deeper insight into their way of living. The focus of the investigation was again the use of *artefacts*, more specifically of means of transportation and the *rituals/practices* in the three cultures.

The analysis revealed some similarities but also many differences among the Persians, Turks, and Indians with respect to the investigated aspects. Thus, in what the *means of transportation* are concerned, in all three countries, wealthy people would benefit from the luxury of “being carried” in a vehicle called *cajaveh* (Morier) / *kajavah* (Hume-Griffith), which consisted ‘of two large cage-like boxes suspended one on each side of the animal’ (Hume-Griffith, 1909: 23) and which was also encountered in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe (*panniers*). Then, the *takhtiravan* (Morier and Hume-Griffith) was employed for transporting high-class Moslem ladies, who were not to be seen by other men except for their very close family male members, and for invalids. In India, as reported by della Vale, the same means of transportation was called *palanquin*. This was not meant only for high-status ladies, but also for important men or for carrying the statues of Indian idols during various religious processions. Europe also made use of this means of transportation which was called *chair/litter*, the difference between Persia and the

other countries consisting in the fact that in the former the *takhtiravan* was carried by animals (mules or horses), while in the other places by slaves.

In terms of *rituals* and *practices*, again we find both similarities and differences. Burial practices were different in Persia and India due to the climatic conditions, but also to the religious beliefs: in Persia, the bodies of the deceased were first washed and then wrapped in cheap winding sheets, being buried in the ground as soon as possible after death. In India, on the other hand, cremation was preferred to burial in the ground. While Indians accepted death with dignity and in silence, in the Persians culture it was customary for the close relatives of the deceased to produce loud lamentations and to tear their clothes.

*Punishment practices* in the countries under investigation may also shock a European reader of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, despite the fact that some of them were also employed in Europe during the time covered by the three novels. Thus, a mild form of punishment for both Persian and Turkish men was the *bastinado* (i.e. getting strong blows on one's feet). A harsher punishment for Muslim men was having their beard pulled out, as for them the beard is sacred. For Muslim women, on the other hand, the forms of punishment were much crueller than for men. They could be tied alive to an animal which was then driven either in the desert or into the water or, even worse, they could be walled up alive. In India, *sati*, the custom of burning the wives of the deceased men, was accepted by most women. The younger, beautiful widows, who could re-marry, were perceived as a danger and were forced to comply with the practice of being burned alive, together with their deceased husbands.

To conclude this section, I would say that it was not language that constituted a barrier between two or more cultures, as their members could have used a *mehmandar* (translator), but rather the different codes of nonverbal communication which are more difficult to sense and interpret. Not being aware of these nonverbal differences 'is a very good way to make a fluent fool of one's self' (Brembeck, 1977: 14), as we shall see in the following subsection.

### **2.3. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND ETHNIC HUMOUR**

One of the many fascinating aspects of James Morier's novels is his way of presenting *ethnic differences* in a humorous way. In his 1834 novel *Ayesha*, the author depicts an intercultural romantic relationship between a Christian English lord and a Muslim Turkish maiden. On this background, Morier satirizes the stereotypes attributed by Christians to Turkish Muslims and vice-versa, also offering the reader an insight into late 18<sup>th</sup> century multiculturalism in Turkey. This made me aware that cultural differences may be approached from another perspective, namely by studying the *humour* that may emerge in intercultural encounters due to the



misinterpretation of various nonverbal behaviours of the interactants belonging to different cultures.

While some genres of humour (jokes, comic strips, cartoons, anecdotes and, more recently, stand-up comedies) were investigated quite often, nonverbal and narrative humour have seldom been approached. Scholars focused mainly on the functions humour serves, and also on the literary techniques (devices) employed to create it. My interest was in finding out how a person can be regarded as funny by being in an unusual place, by behaving in an unusual way or by using objects in a manner that differs from the original /native one.

The paper entitled:

**Ethnic humour in intercultural encounters: an analysis of James Morier's "Ayesha"** (presented at the 5<sup>th</sup> Nitra Conference on Discourse Studies, March 2013 and published in *Bulletin of Transilvania University*, Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies, vol. 6(55), No. 2, 2013, pp. 50-60. <https://www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>)

aimed at exploring the way in which the author organized the humorous narrative fragments in order to elicit laughter and the extent to which the current theories of humour can aid in understanding the cultural pluralism, as well as the feelings and concerns of particular groups of people living in the Middle East at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The paper starts with some general remarks on humour, followed by a short presentation of the major humour theories (incongruity – Lewis 1989, superiority – Hobbes 1650/1999, release – Freud 1905) and the research questions that guided the analysis. The bulk of the paper consists in the analysis of a number of humorous narrative fragments excerpted from the above-mentioned novel, focusing on the humour techniques employed by the author. The findings indicate that ethnic humour in *Ayesha* is created by a combination of elements pertaining to the three basic theories of humour. Incongruity appears in connection with the absurdity of the navigating methods of the Turkish captain Oman Reis, who instead of using a map or a compass, relied entirely on *Kismet* 'fate' and on the headlands when sailing. As the setting of the novel was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious town (Kars), it was not at all surprising to find elements of the superiority theory in some of the fragments under consideration, superiority/hostility being displayed differently depending on whether the people pertained to the same or to a different ethnic group. Thus, in the case of the three Muslim heads of Kars who wanted to demonstrate their superiority one over the other, hostility had a milder form. But the same Muslims showed increased hostility to a Jewish dentist who, by mistake, extracted a Turk's healthy tooth. The elements of the release theory, though present in the novel, contributed to a lesser extent in the creation of humour.

The joke techniques employed by Morier in his novel were *ridicule* (the three wise Muslim Turkes are ridiculed for mistaking the Western leather trousers for a head-wear or a recipient for liquids) and *self-deprecation* (the Jewish dentist admits having pulled out a good tooth instead of the rotten one, becoming himself the butt of the joke and emphasizing in this way his inferiority with respect to the Turk). From among the linguistic means employed by Morier to create or to enhance humour, worth mentioning are *implications* and *allusions*, which enabled the author to present certain negative traits of his characters in an indirect way, *comparisons* (the Turks felt superior in comparison with the Jews living in Kars), and sometimes *exaggerations*. The cultural characteristics Morier humorously hinted at were the Muslim Turks' stupidity, greed, desire to break the Muslim laws, and boastfulness, the Jewish people's cowardice, cunningness, and maybe lack of personal hygiene, and the Armenians' servility.

Morier's ethnic humour is gentle and good natured, not intended to insult anyone. Moreover, it is an elegant way of making the readers aware of the emotional and moral differences between persons of different religions, ethnicities, and cultures.

#### 2.4. INTERETHNIC COMMUNICATION

It would be wrong to assume that one may encounter differences in behaviour only among people who speak different languages and who belong to different national cultures. Even within the same culture, people speaking the same language may have access to a multitude of cultures (Scollon and Scollon, 2001) and thus, may tend to behave differently in various situations. Hofstede (1980: 38) is of the opinion that 'there are subcultures within cultures, which are shared only by others of the same educational level, socio-economic status, occupation, sex or age group'. This shows that within the same country / nation, people of different strata might share some cultural elements with a certain group of persons and some cultural elements with another group of people. As Hale opines, 'membership of one group does not guarantee homogeneity in all aspects of life, nor exclusion from other groups' (2014: 323).

An article I have co-authored with Adrian Lesenciuc on this issue and that also tackles the problem of ethnicity is titled:

**Patterns of intercultural communication: a case-study of Cața rural district** (presented at Appalachian – Carpathian International Conference: Researching, Documenting, and Preserving Highland Traditions, organized by *Transilvania University of Brașov*, October 6-9, 2015; published in *Bulletin of Transilvania University*, Series Philology and Cultural Studies, vol. 9 (58), No. 1, 2016, pp. 29-48, ISSN 2066-768X  
[http://webbut.unitbv.ro/bulletin/Series%20IV/Contents\\_IV\\_1\\_2016.html](http://webbut.unitbv.ro/bulletin/Series%20IV/Contents_IV_1_2016.html)  
 Indexed in <https://www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>

Our objectives were to identify certain tendencies in the intercultural communication patterns in the district of Cața, to find the ethnicities that engage in cultural contacts in this area and that bring about cultural changes, as well as to trace the possible obstacles that hinder intercultural (more specifically inter-ethnic) communication in this particular rural community. The ethnic groups that participated in the study were Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Roma people. Data were collected from the inhabitants of this village by Adrian Lesenciuc (the first author) during two periods (August – September, 2012 and January, 2013); the instruments he used were the *participant observation* and the *interview*. The framework employed in the analysis is the *ethnography of communication*, more specifically Dell Hymes's (1974) interactional S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema which covers a number of constituent elements (*setting, participants, ends, act sequence, key, instrumentalities, etc.*), each and every of them contributing to the analysis of the data. We employed two research instruments: *participant observation* (Malinowski, 1922), complemented by *interviews* (based on 40 questions) taken from a representative of each of the four ethnic groups in Cața plus 14 other local people.

Our understanding of the syntagm “ethnic group” is that of a community that shares a cultural and social heritage, transmitted from one generation to another. People in ethnic groups are identified on the basis of the nation, culture, religion, and the race they belong to. The communication patterns in Cața are worthy of investigation as the four ethnic groups settled in the area in different historical periods; moreover, there are financial, religious and education differences among them. Our hypothesis was that due to these differences, inter-ethnic communication would be problematic, but the results disproved it: inter-ethnic communication in the rural area of Cața is non-conflictual and non-exclusive as the people living here are open to adapt to the each other. The assumed barriers to intercultural dialogue ‘are rather suggested by the administrative authorities and the national ethnic organizations, whose divergent interests still exert useless, artificial pressure on the community members’ (Lesenciuc and Buja, 2016: 44). Our hope is that this small-scale research study will help people to better understand ethnic groups, in general, and the four ethnic groups living in the rural area of Cața, in particular. Moreover, we hope to have proven that the ethnic groups we have studied do not live in isolation from each other but mingle and communicate with each other, setting a good example for intercultural dialogue in other multi-ethnic areas in Romania.

## **2.5. HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS**

Another possible manner of investigating cultures would be to make use of the cultural dimensions theory put forward by Geert Hofstede (1980, 2010), which enables researchers to

compare various countries and to identify cultural similarities and differences. The “dimension” is defined as ‘an aspect of culture that can be measured relative to other cultures’ (Hofstede *et al.* (2010: 31). Initially, Hofstede identified four such cultural dimensions in his large-scale studies on the employees of the IBM subsidiaries in 40 countries, namely *power distance* (i.e. the way power is distributed in society), *masculinity* (related to the values that a certain society considers to be important), *collectivism* (the degree to which a certain individual is integrated in a group), and *uncertainty avoidance* (the level of comfort with unfamiliar situations). Later on, by extending the area of investigation to the Asian countries, he came up with two more such dimensions: *time orientation* (related to the importance cultures attribute to the past traditions or to future achievements) and *indulgence* (defined as the extent to which people manage to control their human drives according to the way in which they have been brought up). Every country is characterized by a score along each dimension (see, for example, <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/>, where the scores for the 6 dimensions could be found for each of the countries that were studied).

I have employed Hofstede’s framework in order to present a culture which, I think, is less known by the Europeans, namely the South Korean culture and, at the same time, to compare it with the Romanian one.

### **2.5.1. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as they are reflected in Korean literature**

Cultures (and all the elements pertaining to them) are in a permanent process of changing. Consequently, the outcomes of research studies carried out on one particular culture at various moments in time may not hold true and may not be generalized over time. This is what I have attempted to demonstrate in the article:

**Hofstede’s dimensions of national cultures revisited: a case study of South Korea’s culture,**  
In *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, 8, 1 (2016), pp. 169-182,  
<http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-philo/philologica-main.htm>, ISSN 2067-5151.  
DOI: 10.1515/ausp-2016-0012.  
Indexed: ERIH PLUS, CEEOL, DOAJ, <https://www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>

One may wonder why from all modern cultures of the world, I have focused on the Korean one. The answer is that I had the opportunity to work in South Korea for an academic year at Hankuk University of Foreign study, and during my stay in this Asian country I sensed a lot of differences between the Koreans’ way of behaving and thinking and my own. This motivated me to explore these differences and make them known to people who may take an interest in the Korean culture. In my investigation, I have employed, as Scollon and Scollon

(2001:18) suggested, ‘products and materials produced by the members of the group under study such as works of film and literature and TV and other media of entertainment’.

The aim of the afore-mentioned paper was to find out the extent to which in the time span between the first publication of Hofstede’s (1980) study on the dimensions of national culture and the moment of my study (2016), the South Korean culture joined the process of globalization or resisted it, due to the strong influence of Confucianism. The data I have used to this aim was a Korean best-selling novel authored by Kyung-Sook Shin (2009), *Please Look After Mom*, whose plot unfolds between the 1960s and the beginning of the year 2000. The flashbacks of the main character, the Mother of five grown up children, who suffers from Alzheimer’s and who gets lost in the Korean capital city, as well as those of her children, provide a clear image of the changing Korean society.

In order to find out if, how, and to what extent the Korean society has changed within a time span of 40 years, I started my investigation from three research questions, namely: a) which particular aspects of the Korean life have undergone changes?; b) which of Hofstede’s dimensions of cultures has been most affected by the passing of time?; and c) how do the Koreans feel about these changes?

The findings of my study indicate that the Korean culture has not escaped the effects of globalization, changes being visible in all aspects of life, starting with the family, the educational system, and the society as a whole. Shin (2006) (quoted in Marinescu, 2014:2) stressed the fact that ‘the paradox of globalization in South Korea is the existence of two (seemingly) contradictory trends: the co-existence between a “nationalist appropriation of globalization” and an “intensification of ethnic/national identity” in reaction to globalization’.

Out of the four dimensions I have focussed on (*collectivism/individualism, masculinity/femininity, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance*), collectivism seems to have been most affected by the passing of time. In the recent past, most of the Koreans lived in extended families in small houses, sharing the home, the feelings (whether positive or negative) and the food with their family members, their neighbours and friends, especially in the aftermath of the Korean War, as it nicely emerges from a couple of fragments in the novel. Sharing is perceived as “a virtue” (Nam 2014:104) among the Koreans. But this tendency to share has witnessed a decline nowadays, being encountered only among the elderly people (an example in this respect being a fragment in which the old Mother shared her food with the children of a poor family in her village). In current Korea people live in “cookie-cutter apartments” (Tudor 2012:189), either alone or in nuclear families, they work extremely long hours, so that they do not have the time to visit their parents, especially if the latter live in the countryside, to participate in family ceremonies or rituals, not to mention coming to know their next-door

neighbours, so mutual support or sharing of feelings of any kind would be out of the question. Thus, collectivism does not seem to be that strong in the current Korea and this will attract the weakening of the culture of *jeong*<sup>8</sup>.

Another cultural dimension, *power distance*, has undergone a different change in comparison with *collectivism*. While in the 1960s ‘the South Korean Society was surprisingly level (...), almost no one had any money or major social advantage over the rest’ (Tudor 2012: 206), the gap between the classes is pretty big nowadays, the current Korean society being divided into rich (among whom a large number of “nouveau riches”) and poor. And as education is closely linked to well-being and power, the Mother in the novel urged all her children, irrespective of gender<sup>9</sup>, to study, to have a career of their own which should enable them to advance socially. Worth adding is that power-distance is also encouraged by the old Confucianist philosophy, which dominates the Korean culture.

*Masculinity* (also very much related to Confucianism, according to which men and women have their own roles) is another cultural dimension that has been strongly affected by globalization. While in the 1960s the Korean society was perceived to be a feminine one, in that people were more supportive of each other, they were relationship-oriented, and still paid tribute to the deceased, nowadays the country exhibits a more masculine culture, as instead of paying respects to the ancestors on the national holidays, the Koreans prefer to take advantage of the free days to travel (as illustrated by a fragment in the novel), they are more ego-oriented, are characterised by a competitive edge, and are more individualistic.

With respect to the Koreans’ attitude towards the changes, I would say that many of them lament the decline of the large family and its replacement with the nuclear one. Then, the old Koreans complain about the younger people who are cold and individualistic (this is reflected by the loose relationships between the old parents in the novel and their adult children, especially the youngest daughter, a famous writer), and who lack and feeling of shame (the writer child of the Mother lives with her boyfriend, which is perceived to shame the family).

These changes in the Korean society had, nevertheless, some advantages mainly for the women. Thus, while in the past their responsibilities ranged from doing the house chores, raising the children, complying with their in-laws’ demands, and organizing the rituals for the deceased at Chuseok (a national holiday, equivalent to the American Thanksgiving) and Seollal (the Lunar Year), as was the case of the Mother and of her sister-in-law, nowadays women struggle to have

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<sup>8</sup> *Jeong* is a concept pertaining to the Asian cultures of China, Japan, and South Korea, in each of these countries having a slightly different meaning. The term is rather difficult to define, as it is quite ambiguous: it may mean love, passion, heart, emotion, attachment, and bond. What is more interesting is the fact that *jeong* does not reside solely in the heart/soul of the Koreans, but also outside, contributing to a collective emotion.

<sup>9</sup> There was a time in the Korean society when only boys, especially the oldest sons in the family would be sent to school.

a career of their own (especially because this enables them to marry into a better family), they are less submissive to their parents and their husbands, and fight for equality.

Tudor is of the opinion that ‘a fundamental fact about this country is that it has an immense capacity for change. Because of this, a statement about life in Korea that is true at a particular moment may become completely false far sooner than can be predicted’ (2012: 266).

### 2.5.2. Hofstede’s cultural dimensions as they emerge from K-Dramas

According to Patel *et al.* (2011: 22),

a major contributing factor to our behaviour in an intercultural communication event is the *mass media*. Media in the form of television, radio, newspaper, songs, music and the Internet, all play an important role in helping us to form our own opinions, to make judgements and influence our perceptions and therefore our communication with individuals and groups of people.

Lately, the Romanian National Television Station has been broadcasting numerous Korean dramas. Nam (2014) stated the television series *Jewel in the Palace* (the original Korean title is *Dae Jang Geum*) saved the national Romanian public television station (TVR) from financial crisis. This drama was soon followed by others (*The Great Queen Seondeok* – broadcast between October 2010 and February 2011, *The Legendary Doctor Hur Jun*, which ran between August and November 2010, or *Dong Yi* – broadcast between March and June 2011, to mention just a few<sup>10</sup>). All these movies are part of what is known as the *Korean Wave* (or *Hallyu*).

The Korean Wave was born in the mid-1990s, when many Asian countries, including South Korea, experienced financial crisis. Kim Dae-Jung, the president of the country at that time, was aware of the large amount of money that the movies contributed to the budget of the United States and the musicals to that of Britain. So he decided to create an entertainment industry based on dramas, film, and pop music, with the intention of getting Korea out of the critical situation. This trend was continued by another president, Park Geun-Hye (who served between 2013 and 2017), who immediately after taking office, ‘created a 1 billion dollar investment fund to nurture it [the entertainment industry]’ (Hong, 2014: 101), of which 20-30% was provided by the Korean government, while the rest of the sum represented the investment of various banks and companies.

From a local phenomenon, in the mid- 1990s, the Korean Wave became a regional one. Thus, Korean dramas and pop music started being broadcast in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines. One of the first K-dramas, *Winter Sonata* (produced by KBS in

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<sup>10</sup> <http://supermarketuldefilme.blogspot.ro/2012/07/seriale-sud-coreene-difuzate-la-tv-in.html> accessed in April 2016)

2002), ‘was the first hard evidence that Korean pop culture could break barriers’ (Hong, 2014:171).

Little by little, *Hallyu* became a global phenomenon. Cha & Ma, 1996 (quoted in Marinescu, 2014: 90) are of the opinion that ‘in the extra-Asian areas, the impact of this type of cultural industry on consumers was especially connected to the reception of *hallyu* within large Asian communities living in America, and, to a lesser extent, in western Europe’. More recently, the Korean wave has expanded in new areas, such as the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Thus, as reported by Ju (2014: 35), the drama *Jewel in the Palace* (MBC, 2003) has been exported to ‘more than thirty countries, including Australia, Canada, Iran, Israel, Mexico, Russia, and Romania’.

One may wonder how dramas produced in a small nation like South Korea are transcending language and cultural barriers, gathering fans from all over the world? There seem to be multiple reasons: on the one hand, the emotional power of K-dramas has attracted a growing number of fans. On the other hand, these film productions dramatize Asian sensibilities, such as family values, which make them appealing to Asian viewers. The non-Asian audiences, in their turn, are fond of the love relationships that are very tender and emotional rather than sensual. A finding worth mentioning is that K-dramas

are popular in different countries for different reasons. Americans find Korean dramas relaxing and cheerful; Europeans find the plots uncomplicated and romantic. Asians, meanwhile, discover lifestyles and trends they wish to emulate. The subtle repression of emotions and intense romantic passion without overt sexuality resonates further with viewers in the Middle East. Muslim countries find the dramas “safe”: they are less explicit compared to American ones, and adhere to traditions' (*The Korean Wave*, 2011: 72).

Irrespective of the reasons why each and every culture finds Korean dramas appealing, the truth is that they offer us a glimpse into the history and the culture of this small country, which for many people may be otherwise inaccessible, considering the geographical distance.

The article:

**K-dramas: a window to Korean culture**, In Lesenciuc, A. and Fornasari, A. (eds.), Proceedings of the *Sixth International Conference Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Intercultural Pedagogy and Migration - RCIC'17*, Vol. 6, no.1 / 2017, Braşov: ‘Henri Coandă’ Air Force Academy Publishing House, pp. 247-254, ISSN 2285-2689  
[http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2017/RCIC'17/rcic'17\\_volume.PDF](http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2017/RCIC'17/rcic'17_volume.PDF)  
<https://www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>

is an extension of the previous article on Hofstede’s cultural dimension, this time the focus being on just one dimension, namely power distance as it emerges from a recent 18-episode K-drama, *The Other Miss Oh* (directed by Song Hyun-Wook and Lee Jong-Jae), which was aired between



May 2 and June 28, 2016, on tvN. In Romania, the movie could be watched on Rakuten VIKI (<https://www.viki.com/genres/korean-drama?locale=en>). The K-drama portrays the love affair of two couples in which the women, who happen to have the same full name, used to be highschool mates. Fate has it that as the plot advances, the partners are exchanged: “the better” Oh’s boyfriend falls in love with “the lesser” Oh. This causes a series of mishaps in the life of the latter, who has the lowest social standing, ergo little power.

My analysis was guided by two research questions, namely: a) whether power distance is more prominent in organizations or in institutions? and b) whether there are any signs of a decrease in the power distance index as a result of Western influences on the Korean culture?

As the first research questions shows, I tried to find how power distance manifests itself in *organizations* (i.e. workplaces) and in *institutions* (family, schools, and society as a whole) (cf. Hofstede, 1991). Since the movie did not contain relevant scenes related to school, this aspect has not been researched into. The analysis of the drama series under investigation reveals for the non-Korean audience a traditional culture, dominated by Confucianism, which preaches the existence of a hierarchical society divided from top to bottom into carefully prescribed ranks, with ‘each rank having specific kinds of acceptable behavior’ (de Mente, 2014:269). These ranks have an incredible impact on each individual’s life. “The lesser” Oh Hae-Young’s life is made miserable because “the better” is more powerful, due to the fact that she is better-off than her peer in terms of wealth and social connections. Then, “the lesser” Oh had to strictly obey and pay due respect to her boss both at the office and outside and also do all kinds of favours to her. Moreover, the lesser Oh also needed to show respect to her parents (as preached by Confucianism), despite the fact that they did not always treat her gently. All these are indicative of the fact that in current Korea power distance is equally present in both institutions and organizations.

At the end of the movie, when the lesser Oh eventually marries the man she loves, the viewer is left with a question of whether the inequality husband-wife stipulated by Confucianism will be preserved after the main characters’ marriage. My impression is that, nowadays, Korean women fight for equality more than ever before. They want to have their own careers, to earn their living and not to be supported by their parents or by their husbands. At the same time, they are more progressive in terms of love: “the lesser” Oh dares express her feelings to her boyfriend, although she is not sure they are mutual. She would also fight for her love, despite her mother’s refusal to accept Park Do-Kyung, her lover, as her son-in-law.

These tendencies, enforced by the ever-growing western (especially American) influence, may contribute to a weakening of the Korean hierarchical social system. Nevertheless, the

Koreans are still very keen on the *sonbae* (superiors) - *hubae* (subordinates) system of ranking in their lives, proving that old habits die hard.

In the paper entitled:

**Power distance in the Korean culture** (paper presented at the Conference *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Migration and Intercultural Dialogue*, Vlora, 2-4 May 2019, published in Lesenciuc, A. (ed.). *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Migration and Intercultural Dialogue*, vol. 8, no.1, 2019, ISSN 2285-2689, pp. 137-147 [http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2019/rcic'19/volum\\_2019/137-147%20Buja.pdf](http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2019/rcic'19/volum_2019/137-147%20Buja.pdf))

I further pursued the exploration of the way in which high-status Koreans exert their power over the less powerful co-nationals. This time, the data employed came from another K-drama, *Descendants of the Sun* (KBS 2016), and the focus was on *organizations* only, which differed from those that were under discussion in the previous article, namely the military, the medical field, and a construction site. What I aimed at was to find how power distance is displayed in terms of speech and nonverbal behaviour in each of the three organizations under consideration and if there is any conflict when the most powerful persons in each of them have to interact.

The fragments excerpted from the movie revealed that powerful people can control the lives of their subordinates (the *Haesung* Hospital Chairman ‘ordered’ Dr. Kang to have a date with him and, as a result of her refusal to sleep with him, he punishes her by sending her to look after the Korean soldiers deployed in a foreign country). People in power can grant favours to persons they consider socially superior to others (a *Haesung* Hospital professor, despite alluding to Dr. Kang that in return of her help he would promote her when the appropriate time comes, chooses to promote another doctor, only because this one was richer than Dr. Kang, though less skilled) and may also enjoy various favours from the less powerful people (the mother of Chi-Hoon, a young doctor deployed to Uruk - a special military zone -, is allowed a phone conversation with her son despite military restrictions, due to the fact that the hospital the doctor was hired by was built on the land which belonged to her family).

South Korea’s social system, characterized by large power discrepancies, also produces unique nonverbal behavior. Thus, positive emotions are shown to powerful people, while low-status persons can also be shown negative emotions. The smiles exhibited by the Koreans in the K-drama are meant to flatter or appease a superior and to smooth the social relations. Certain non-verbal elements related to body posture (hand stuck in the pockets), gestures (finger-pointing), or use of interpersonal space (very close, almost touching the other, as was the case of the Power Plant Chief manager and Dr. Kang) are characteristic of the people who have power over the others. Moreover, hierarchy ‘is demonstrated by the adjustment of voice tone and pitch to fit the speaker's position of junior or senior’ (Morsbach, 1973) (quoted in McDaniel, 2003:

257), as well as by the use of linguistic etiquette (use of titles/ranks and of honorific particles) or, on the contrary, of humilifics (as is the case of the interjection *ja* ‘hey’).

When the heads of the three organizations had to cooperate with the view to saving the people injured during an earthquake, the power hierarchy that is valid in normal circumstances seemed to be disregarded in emergency situations, in that the military rank takes precedence over any other social ranks or age. The Power Plant Chief Manager, apparently unaware of it, tried to impose his power both verbally (by shouting, speaking faster, using derogatory terms) and non-verbally (by using gaze to intimidate, by touching and using the finger pointing gesture).

All these aspects may make us conclude that Confucianism still exerts a strong impact on the Korean society. Nevertheless, just like in the previous article, there are two characters in the movie that seem to break away from the old Confucianist tradition. One is Myung-Joo, a female military doctor, who, unlike many women in the current Korean society, knows what she wants and is not afraid to stand for it. She openly and bluntly confesses her love to her boyfriend, an Alpha Team soldier, who is inferior to her both in status and rank, and she is not afraid to fight for her love, even if this means going head to head with her father, who also happens to be her Commanding Officer. The other character is Yoo Si-Jin, the Alpha Team Captain, whose father had taught him honesty and righteousness and whose actions are based on these values. When he senses that his superior’s command is triggered by personal interest, Captain Yoo refuses to comply with it, preferring to be punished, which may cause him to lose face in front of his team members.

All in all, the findings of this study may indicate that power distance started to decrease in the Korean culture, even if the process is very slow.

## 2.6. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND MUSIC

Continuing the line of reasoning of Patel *et al.* (2011), according to whom music is a key element in helping us understand other cultures, and as K-POP is another important export ‘item’ of Korea, I have attempted to investigate this aspect of intercultural communication in the paper titled:

**The spread of K-Pop culture in Romania**, In Lesenciuc, A. & Sao Jose, M. (eds.), RCIC, 2016, *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Music and Human Mobility*. Braşov: “Henry Coandă” Air Force Academy Publishing House, pp. 185-191, ISSN 2285-2689, ISSN-L2285-2689

[http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2016/RCIC'16/rcic'16\\_volume.PDF](http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2016/RCIC'16/rcic'16_volume.PDF)

<https://www.cceol.com/search/journal-detail?id=1610>

The aim of the study was three-fold: first, I tried to identify if the Romanian audience is familiar with K-POP music, an integral part of the Korean Wave; then I also aimed to find the

extent of the spread of this artistic phenomenon in Romania, and finally of interest was also the Romanians' attitude towards this musical genre and the influence it had on their decision to dig deeper into the Korean culture. In order to fulfill these aims, I have employed two sets of data: one set consisted of data extracted from questionnaires containing 15 questions (both open-ended and multiple-choice ones), which had been administered online and which had been completed by 35 Romanian subjects with ages varying between 16 and 29. The second set of data was collected from various Romanian K-POP sites.

The analysis of the two data sets provided contradictory results concerning the first objective of the study. The questionnaires indicated a low degree of familiarity with K-Pop music of the young Romanians (some accidentally heard this music genre in a café or on the radio, some others only heard about its existence, without feeling the urge to listen to it, while only a very small number of respondents, who also proved to be K-POP fans, had personally searched for songs and information about singers and bands on the internet. The data collected from the Internet, on the other hand, proved that K-POP fandom started in 2011 with an online petition by means of which the Romanian listeners requested more K-POP music on the radio and more posters with their Korean idols in the *Bravo* magazine. The two sets of data also revealed different results related to the way Romanians feel about this kind of music. While a very low level of enthusiasm emerged from the questionnaire analysis, the survey of the online data revealed that an evergrowing number of young people in Romania showed a strong desire to be part of the K-POP industry by participating in the domestic, as well as in the international K-POP World Festival, by becoming members of various fanclubs (currently there are about 20 such clubs in Romania), by attending parties where this kind of music is played, and last but not least, by going to the concerts of the Korean groups that have performed in Romania. The numerous online petitions requesting longer K-POP programs both on radio and television, the frequent events which are organized in Romania to promote Korean music interpreted either by solo singers or by groups, could constitute evidence in favour of the Romanians' love for K-POP.

With respect to the influence exerted by the Korean Wave and implicitly by K-POP on the Romanians' interest in the Korean culture, the online data revealed that the activities organized by various institutions in Romania (The Embassy of South Korea, the International Youth Fellowship) brought together large numbers of Romanians who are keen on discovering Korean food, dances, paintings, pottery, and K-POP music. The questionnaire data reveal an equal impact, a large number of respondents expressing their desire to study the Korean language, to visit the country where this language is spoken, and to watch K-dramas either on

Romanian television or on the Internet, in order to become more familiar with the Korean culture.

Opinions are shared with respect to the staying power of K-POP music: while some of the questionnaire respondents opine and also wish that this music genre would grow stronger and would enjoy a much wider Romanian audience, others think that, in time, it will fade away, having the fate of many other music genres. As Zsaklowska (2008) (quoted in Kida 2014: 66) nicely puts it, at the moment, ‘there is not a Korean wave but only a breeze blowing’ over Romania. Fans expect this breeze to turn into a wave in the near future, K-POP music becoming thus an ambassador of Korean culture.

## **2.7. CULTURE AND PROVERBS**

A particular culture could be interestingly explored by studying not only its music, movies, and novels, but also its proverbs. Proverbs are cultural artefacts, ‘common to nearly all cultures, both ancient and modern, literate and non-literate’ (Stone, 2006: xiii). They offer pieces of advice, they guide our actions, and warn us of the dangers we may encounter along life’s path. These words of wisdom have a long life, as they embody values that many generations considered relevant for their own culture, and, thus, transmitted them by word of mouth or in writing to the next generation(s). Scholars in the field (Mieder 2004, Stone 2006, Lauhakangas 2007 or Dominguez Barajas 2010) are of the opinion that the characteristic features of proverbs are: brevity, simplicity of rendering human experience, wit, use of stylistic features, ‘which allow more than the expression of an abstract idea in a highly efficient way, but also stress how that idea and its expression in that particular form reaffirm cultural bonds’ (Dominguez Barajas, 2010:17). This quote emphasizes the strong connection between culture and language.

The charm of the proverbs is not simply found in the characteristics mentioned above, but also in the way ‘they draw upon, and reflect, the common human experiences that are shared across time and space’ (Stone, 2006:xiii). Apart from addressing such common experiences and human characteristics like generosity, virtue or ambition, proverbs may also be unique to a specific culture. Thus, the proverbial utterances of various Native American tribes reflect their view of the land/Earth as sacred: ‘Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it’ and ‘All plants are our brothers and sisters. They talk to us and if we listen, we can hear them’ (Arapaho), or ‘We are made from Mother Earth and we go back to Mother Earth (Shenandoah), ‘We are grateful to Mother Earth’ (Pueblo), ‘Walk lightly in the spring: Mother Earth is pregnant’ (Kiowa), ([http://www.walnutridgeconsulting.com/?page\\_id=376](http://www.walnutridgeconsulting.com/?page_id=376), accessed in July 2019). On the other hand, many Chinese, Korean and Japanese proverbs capitalize on filial piety, submissiveness of women, importance of education, or respect toward elderly people or people

in power: ‘A person who bows never gets his cheek slapped’ (Korean), ‘If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people’ (Chinese), ‘To forget one’s ancestors is to be a book without a source, a tree without a root’ (Chinese) (<https://everydaypowerblog.com/chinese-proverbs-quotes/> accessed in July 2019)). Such differences could be explained in terms of the influence of the cultural area, with its local character, traditions, customs, and religious beliefs. The cultural similarities and differences that emerge from proverbs are nicely captured by a Yiddish folklore utterance, according to which ‘Everyone is kneaded out of the same dough, but not baked in the same oven’ (<https://thecultureur.com/around-the-world-in-52-proverbs/> accessed in July 2019).

Many of these old words of wisdom are still valid nowadays, and as such, are frequently employed in conversations to highlight certain values or flaws. But since reality is in a continuous process of changing, some of the proverbs will disappear, as they become outdated, while others will emerge in the new environment. An illustration of the mutual relationship between reality and proverbs is given below:

- (1) *Cheongcheopchang-i anira kojiseo-da.*  
‘It’s not a wedding invitation but a tax bill’ (Lee, 2006: 75).
- (2) *Cilivizația e diferența dintre ogor și maidan.*  
‘Civilization is the difference between the (corn)field and the empty/barren place’.  
([https://ro.wikiquote.org/wiki/Proverbe\\_rom%C3%A2ne%C8%99ti](https://ro.wikiquote.org/wiki/Proverbe_rom%C3%A2ne%C8%99ti))

The Korean proverb highlights the fact that in the current society weddings mean business, not necessarily the desire to celebrate/share the happiness of the union of two destinies with families and friends. The Romanian example, on the other hand, underlines how important it is for someone to improve his/her knowledge, and through knowledge, the standard of living, just the way la land/field becomes more productive when it is properly taken care of.

An old Chinese proverb states that: *To truly know a people, know their proverbs* (Lau *et al.* 1995: viii). Thus, the paper entitled:

**Proverbs as a means of crossing cultural borders** (presented at the International Conference *Border Crossings*, 20-21 April, 2018, Sapientia University of Miercurea-Ciuc, published in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae, Philologica*, **10**, 2 (2018), pp. 85-97  
<http://www.acta.sapientia.ro/acta-philo/C10-2/philo102-06.pdf>

aimed at getting a glimpse of the Korean culture by comparing its proverbs to the Romanian ones, in order to identify similarities, but also differences in terms of the structure of the proverbs, vocabulary items specific to one language, figures of speech employed, and more importantly the meaning of these folklore expressions, being aware that they best reflect the beliefs and values the culture that produced them. The proverbs I have used for the comparative

analysis were extracted, on the one hand, from two important Romanian collections, namely Iordache Golescu's (1973) *Proverbe comentate* ('Commented proverbs') and Anton Pann's (1897) *Proverbele românilor* ('The Romanians' proverbs'), and on the other hand, from a long list of 150 Korean proverbs provided by a former Korean colleague of mine.

The results of the comparative analysis proved that the Korean and the Romanian proverbs are similar mainly in what concerns the themes they tackle (such as human flaws, weaknesses, poverty, submissiveness, and class differences) and the use of a number of proverbial forms to convey the same rule of conduct, advice or message (*Închide grajdul după ce îi fură calul*. 'He locks the stall after his horse has been stolen' / *Aduce apa după ce s-a stins focul*. 'He brings water after the fire has been extinguished' or 'The lobster is crabby' / 'The arm bends inwards', both Korean proverbs hinting at the idea that people sharing the same character will help each other in dire situations). The differences relate to the culture-specific lexical items employed (such as *rice cake*, *dragon*, *loach*, *rice-paddy*, *kimchi*,<sup>11</sup> or *hanja* – for Korean, and *puică* 'chicken', *șoim* 'falcon', *vrabie* 'sparrow', *ie* 'Romanian traditional women's blouse', or *hora* 'typical Romanian dance performed in a circle'), the use of people's and place names in the Romanian proverbs<sup>12</sup> (**Liță** cu frate-su **Ghiță** 'Liță and his brother Ghiță' – hinting at persons that share the same flaw), and the blunt expression of vulgarity in the Korean proverbs (*bang-gwi kkwin nom-i seongnaenda* 'The one who farted gets annoyed', *bang-gwi-ga jaj-eumyeon ttong* ssagi swibda 'If farts are frequent, it is easy to poop'.)

Even more striking differences were identified in the paper entitled:

**Women, proverbs and culture diversity. A comparative study of Korean and Romanian proverbs.** In Lesenciuc, A. (ed.), RCIC, 2018, *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Nation Branding, Identity and Security*, vol. 7, no 1, Brașov: "Henry Coandă" Air Force Academy Publishing House, pp. 215-222

[http://www.afahc.ro/rcic/2018/rcic'18/volum\\_2018/215-222%20Buja.pdf](http://www.afahc.ro/rcic/2018/rcic'18/volum_2018/215-222%20Buja.pdf)

where the investigation of the Korean and Romanian proverbs was narrowed down to those related to women. Both groups of proverbs reflect the way women were perceived by men in masculine cultures like the South Korea and Romania. Thus, a common feature is the frequent association of women with Satan / the Devil (*Femeia e sora Dracului* 'The woman is the devil's sister', *yeojaneun saheulboda iljjig taeonassda* 'The woman was born three days earlier than

<sup>11</sup> Some of the culture-specific terms cannot be translated, only explained. *Kimchi* is a Korean side dish made from fermented napa cabbage and radishes, which are mixed with chili powder, garlic, ginger and other spices. *Hanja* is the Korean word for the Chinese characters. The *ia* is the traditional Romanian blouse worn by women in the countryside, while the *hora* is a circle folk dance, typical of most Slavic countries in the Balkans.

<sup>12</sup> Lack of names in the Korean proverbs can be explained on the basis of the fact that names are very seldom used in addressing people in Korea. As this is a high-power distance country (in Hofstede's terms) and as it is also influenced by Confucianism, which preaches submissiveness to the ones higher up, when people interact, they use titles in addressing each other or titles plus surnames.

the devil' – both proverbs highlighting the women's evil nature). Then, another flaw of the women in both cultures is their tendency to nag and to quarrel: *Dacă limba femeii ar fi mai scurtă, zilele bărbatului ar fi mai lungi* 'If the woman's tongue were shorter, the man's life would be longer', *yeojaga jansoliga manh-eumyeon jib-an-i manghanda* 'If a woman nags a lot, her family will be in ruin'.

Both in Korea and in Romania, men tend to marry for the same reasons, namely to have a loving woman who should attend to their needs, in order for them to be able to focus on their manly duties, and who should bear them legitimate sons that will perpetuate the family name. Very often, men chose to marry a less worthy woman only because she had a good dowry (*Miile și sutele mărită și slutele* 'The thousands and the hundreds help the ugly ones [women] get married'). Married women, especially those who had become mothers, were expected to set a good example for their children (*Uită-te la mumă-sa și cunoaște pe fie-sa* 'Look at the mother and you will know the daughter', *jasig-eul bogi jeon-e eomeonileul bolaessda* 'Before seeing the kids, we have to see the mother'.).

Given the lack of love as the basis of marriage and also women's verbal gift (which comes to compensate for their weak constitution), men in both the Romanian and the Korean cultures feel entitled to reduce women to silence by beating them, turning them in this way into submissive, faithful partners: *Femeia nebătută, e ca moara neferecată* 'A woman who is not beaten is like a mill that is out-of-order'; *yeojaneun saheul an ttaelimyeon yeouga doenda* 'If you don't beat your woman for three days, she becomes a fox'.

But, unlike their Korean sisters, upon which Confucianism imposed a high degree of submissiveness to their husbands, in-laws, and parents, who dedicate their entire life to the well-being of their families, the Romanian women seem to be more rebellious, in that very often they defy the social rules. Thus, they feel entitled to enjoy life to the same extent as men do, to love whomever they want, to disregard the wishes of their (very often) much older husbands, and to rebel against the violent treatment they receive from their partners, as illustrated by the following examples: *Dacă m-am căsătorit, nu m-am și călugărit* 'If I got married, this does not mean that I also became a nun'; *Lelea joacă pînă-n noapte, iar bărbatu-i e pe moarte* 'The woman is dancing until late at night, while her husband is on his death bed'; *Cîți văd cu nădragi, toți îmi sînt dragi* 'I like all those wearing trousers'; *De m-ai bate cît vei vrea, tot nu voi tăcea* 'Even if you beat me hard, I will not keep silent'.

Though both Korean and Romanian men associate women with Satan on grounds of being evil, the Romanian women seem to outsmart the Devil, being able to manipulate him: *Femeea judecă pe dracu și'l scoate dator* 'The woman judges the Devil and finds him indebted'; *Femeea hotărâsce și Satana împlinesce* 'The woman decides (on something) and Satan will



carry it out'. As Schipper (2004: 245) puts it, 'women's power is presented as so dangerously spectacular that the Devil himself is overruled and has to accept being a woman's subordinate'.

Another difference between the Korean and the Romanian women, as it emerges from proverbs, is a much higher degree of personal sacrifice on behalf of the former, especially in their role as mothers: *hyungnyeon-e eomineun gulm-eo juggo aineun baeteojyeo jugneund* 'During the famine, the mother starves to death and the child dies from eating too much'; *hananimkkeseo yeoleo gos-e hankkeobeon-e gyesil su eobsgie eomeonileul changjohasyeossda* 'God created mother because God cannot be in every place at the same time'.

Two other differences, which have also been mentioned in the previous article, are the use of vulgar terms in the Korean proverbs and the use of names in the Romanian ones. The Korean phrase *cheonyeodeul-eun mal bang-gwiman kkwieodo usneunda* 'The virgin laughs even when the horse farts', hints at the inexperienced young women's / girls' tendency to laugh at everything that is new or unexpected. The lack of names in the Korean women-related proverbs should not come as a surprise, as in this culture, women are addressed by using titles based on their age or social standing: *ajumma* (a term having negative connotations) is employed for middle-aged married women, while *samonim* 'teacher's wife' might be employed to address a wealthy married woman.

The value of proverbs does not only reside in the fact that they help us get a glimpse of the values, customs and thoughts that pertain to cultures different from ours, but at the same time they teach us something about our own character. In approaching proverbs from various cultures one has to try to be as objective as possible, and not pass negative judgements on the folklore phrases of a foreign culture.

I am aware that despite my intention to be neutral, I might have adopted an "outsider's" perspective when dealing with the Korean proverbs in general, and with the women-related ones, in particular and that I might have misunderstood or failed to grasp the exact meaning of some of them. Thus, the perspective of an insider should also be considered in order to render a truly genuine understanding of the cultural values hidden in the proverbs.

By way of concluding this section of the habilitation thesis, I will quote Glazer (1994: 1), who stated that 'the study of any culture has to be done with a cold and neutral eye so that a particular culture can be understood at its own merits and not another culture's'. If we manage to do that, we will show respect to the others, we have all the chances to become culturally 'fluent', to work in partnership with persons of other cultures, and last but not least, to become better citizens of the world.

### Chapter 3. EDUCATIONAL WORK AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

In current higher education, the teaching activity should intertwine with research. Consequently, in this subchapter I will briefly present the courses I teach and the way they have contributed to my research studies on the one hand, and how they have benefited from my research work, on the other hand (section 3.1.). Further on, section 3.2 offers a brief account of other contributions of mine to the academic work.

#### 3.1. TEACHING-RELATED ACTIVITIES

Ever since I became a member of the teaching staff of the Faculty of Letters, I realized that a teacher should constantly reflect on his/her students' knowledge, needs, and skills. This is the reason behind my permanent interest in finding ways and means to motivate my students<sup>13</sup> and to adapt my teaching methods and materials to the ever demanding educational and professional environments. The courses I currently teach cover two of the educational levels: B.A. and M.A.

At undergraduate level (B.A.), both for the regular, as well as for the distance students, I teach four courses in linguistics, each of them being tailored in agreement with the curriculum and the students' needs, and on the basis of up-to-date bibliography. The course in *English Phonetics and Phonology* is addressed to all freshmen that have English as one of their specialisms. It introduces them to the basic block of any language - the sound structure and the phonological processes (of English, in this case). The course covers the most relevant aspects of articulatory phonetics, starting with a brief description of the speech organs/articulators, the principles of classifying the sounds (segmental phonemes) of English, moving on to the suprasegmental phonemes like intonation, rhythm, and word stress. Due to the fact that in speech sounds are not used in isolation, but are linked to each other, one chapter/lecture is dedicated to the processes that affect the individual properties of sounds when they are combined in words or longer syntagms: *elision, assimilation, and juncture*. And as English is spoken as a first language in various geographical areas of the world, where it was influenced by the languages of the natives of those places, it is natural to have a number of pronunciations of the same word, so the students will learn which pronunciation pertains to which variety. The seminars are practice-oriented, the students being given the opportunity to correct or improve their pronunciation, to identify processes that are typical of the casual, fluent speech of the English natives and to detect sound differences among the varieties of English as a first language.

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<sup>13</sup> Motivating my students has been a main concern of mine, as illustrated by the paper: **From Needs Analysis to Increased Motivation**, in *THE CHALLENGE OF CHOICE*: Proceedings of the 1st International ESP Conference, Bucharest, 1993, pp. 9-11.

The main goal of this course is to make the students aware of the significant role this science plays in a number of fields: in the teaching profession, first and foremost, in medicine-allied professions, technology, forensics, performing arts, and movie dubbing, to mention just a few. At the same time, I also try to make the students understand the fact that knowledge of phonetics will help them better understand notions that pertain to other sub-branches of linguistics such as semantics (see, for example, sound symbolism in motivation of meaning or the different meanings carried by intonation or word-stress) or child language acquisition (the difference between cooing and babbling). Last, but not least, my intention is to have fluent students in English, whose pronunciation is as close as possible to that of a native speaker, irrespective of whether they favour one variety over another (American English over British English, for instance).

For this course, I produced both a course book (*An Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology*, 2008, Brasov: Editura Universității Transilvania, ISBN 978-973-598-338-3) and a set of seminar activities, as well as a course material for the distance-mode students, which requires a specific layout.

My knowledge of phonetics and phonology helped me tremendously in my research activity, especially in the study of the acquisition of Romanian. You cannot possibly study the acquisition of the sound inventory of a language without having prior, solid knowledge of the sound features and of what happens to these features once children start producing words in their mother tongue. On the other hand, in my lectures, I always illustrate such phenomena as assimilation, juncture, elision, metathesis by using examples from the corpus I have gathered for Romanian.

The next important block in the structure of any language is *vocabulary*: the sounds studied in the first semester are put to good use in forming words. The course in ***English Lexicology***, again meant for both first year full-time, as well as long-distance students, provides an account of the making of the current English lexicon, which is subjected to the cross-fire of a diachronic and a synchronic approach. The topics covered are the means of enriching the vocabulary, such as *borrowings* and *word-formation rules*, the sense (semantic/meaning) relations connecting the words of English both on the syntagmatic and also on the paradigmatic axes, and the lexical (stylistic) strata in Contemporary English. This course combines, to a certain extent, historical and linguistic knowledge, as the development of the English vocabulary is inextricably linked to the historical events that occurred on British soil in the last two millennia.

The main objective of this course is to help students enhance their vocabularies, which will enable them to correctly decode and produce oral and written pieces of discourse, adapting

the lexicon to their interlocutors, to the topic under discussion, and to the medium of communication. Additionally, students are encouraged to identify the lexical differences between the two varieties of English they are most exposed to, i.e. British and American, and to realize that in certain contexts, the use of the inappropriate term may lead to embarrassing situations (for instance, the use of the American *pants* - with the meaning of ‘trousers’ - in Britain, where the same word refers to ‘underwear’). Moreover, knowledge of vocabulary registers and semantic relations is beneficial in other courses the students enrolled in our faculty will attend, such as *translations*, *semantics*, or *discourse analysis*, but more importantly, it will enable them to communicate fluently, without much inhibition, with other speakers of English, whether this is their first, second, or foreign language.

For this course, I have written a book (*An Introduction to English Lexicology*. 2000. Editura *Paralela 45*, Ploiești, ISBN 973-593-179-6) and also prepared a set of exercises we make use of during the seminars. The material in this book has been upgraded and given the layout required for the long-distance program, which is meant to serve the needs of students studying in an unconventional environment.

In my research on the acquisition of vocabulary by the Romanian-speaking children, knowledge of lexicology proved very useful, especially in what the building of new words is concerned. At the same time, examples of the way in which my young Romanian subjects create new words for old (and new) concepts, proved a goldmine for my elective course in *Achiziția limbii materne* (‘First Language Acquisition’), which has recently been introduced in the curriculum for the third-year full-time students enrolled in the English major study program. In this course I have capitalized on the expertise I gained during my doctoral studies at the Research Institute for Linguistics in Budapest, which I attended between 1996 and 2001. There were two reasons for proposing this course: on the one hand, I assume that any course in linguistics should cover all major sub-branches, and this particular branch was missing from our curriculum; on the other hand, some of our graduates enrolled in PhD programs at the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Bucharest, where child language acquisition had been in focus for quite a long time, and their lack of knowledge in this field put them at a disadvantage in comparison with graduates of the university in our capital city. So this course came to fill this gap.

I first taught this elective course in the academic year 2016-2017, and the positive feedback I received from my students and also the fact that it was selected again for following academic year, encouraged me to start writing a course book on this topic in the near future.

Being designed as an introductory course, *Achiziția limbii materne* (‘First Language Acquisition’) aims at enabling students to acquire an understanding of the process of language acquisition, including how children learn sounds and words and how they combine the latter to

construct grammatically correct sentences and longer texts. Thus, it often reifies the theoretical concepts my students acquired in their previous courses in general linguistics, morphology, syntax or discourse analysis, but, at the same time, it also provides them with an understanding of the importance and relevance of this branch of linguistics in their future professions as teachers or in their future roles as parents. The issues covered by the course also include: theories of language acquisition and stages in the linguistic development of children. The seminars focus on working with data, i.e. transcripts of spontaneous speech produced by children acquiring Romanian and English (and not only), as well as discussions of appropriate experimental methodologies meant for evaluating children's knowledge of language (such as elicited production or truth-value judgment, for example).

Due to the fact that the reading material for this course is not easily available in our university library, I provide students with excerpts from basic reading texts, making sure to acknowledge the sources they come from (William O'Grady, 2005, *How Children Learn Language*, Eve V. Clark, 2009, *Child Language Acquisition*). They are also given a list of links to short video recordings (which they can watch at home) of children using speech in various stages of their development, in order for my students to get a grasp of the fascinating way in which humans acquire their mother tongues. Students are also encouraged to do small-scale research studies, either in small groups or independently, on younger family members and to present their findings in class.

Another elective course I teach at undergraduate level, both to full-time and distance-learning students, is *An Introduction to Semantics*. It belongs to the same pack of elective courses offered to third-year students as *Child Language Acquisition*. As the title indicates, it is an introductory course to the study of meaning on both word and sentence level, whose main objective is to develop the knowledge of meaning acquired in the lexicology course and to show the students how important the basic concepts and analytical tools of semantics are for the study of other sub-disciplines of linguistics, such as syntax, discourse studies, or sociolinguistics. Moreover, semantics could be considered an important interface between linguistics and other domains, such as cultural anthropology or psychology.

The course starts with a short overview of how semantics became a field of study in itself. It then considers meaning, by looking at the positions adopted by F. de Saussure (1916) and by Ogden and Richards, (1923), and at whether the meaning of words can be said to be motivated. Geoffrey Leech's (1974) seven types of meaning helps students realize that the concept of meaning is not something fix, but flexible, fluctuating due to a number of factors. Two theories of meaning - decomposition and distribution - will be investigated next, this

marking the passage from word meaning to sentence meaning. The last topic to be covered is ambiguity of sentences and how this is could create humour.

Since 2004, I have been teaching a course in *Cultural differences in nonverbal communication* in the Master program *Studii de Limbă și Comunicare Interculturală* (Language Studies for Intercultural Communication) of the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of the Faculty of Letters. I suggested this course because, due to the process of globalization, the domains of economy, politics, and education are becoming strongly multicultural. As such, the people working or studying in a multicultural environment need to be attentive to diverse attitudes and behaviours, in order to better understand how cultural variables shape our worldview. The course has been designed to help students understand how culture may impact our behaviour and how they can adapt their actions to better communicate with people belonging to other cultures. Consequently, the focus is on non-verbal behaviour, considering all its aspects. The course generally covers the following points:

1. The concept of culture and how it is manifested
2. Hofstede's cultural dimensions as a possible means of analysing differences between one culture and another.
3. Cultural differences in body language, touching behaviour, the use of time and space, the use of artefacts.
4. Variations in paralanguage.
5. Use of silence is various cultures.

What I expect my students to be able to do on completion of this course is to identify not only the differences among cultures, but also the common elements that they share, to detect the possible barriers in the non-verbal communication between interactants belonging to different cultures, and more importantly, to instil in their minds a positive attitude towards the multitude of cultures.

It is not only my students who have (hopefully) benefited from this course, but I myself, as well. As I was building the material for each lecture and seminar, my readings opened for me a wide and promising avenue of research, which developed in parallel to that on child language. Little by little, I started disseminating the findings of my small-scale studies to my students, when the situation demanded it. Much to my delight, many of the master's students asked me to coordinate their theses on various topics related to this field, and the outcome of their work was highly appreciated by the graduation committee members.

A second course that I teach in the Master program (in the distance-mode variant this time) is called *Varieties of English* and it is a continuation and extension of the knowledge of phonetics and phonology, on the one hand and of lexicology, on the other. My aim is to present

the students with the characteristic features at the level of sounds and lexicon of the English language spoken as a mother tongue, as a second language, and as a foreign language. I prepared and wrote a course material, consisting of the following units:

1. “Theoretical preliminaries” is an introductory unit that provides an outline of the varieties of English according to the regions where they are spoken and the classification of New Englishes put forward by Kachru (1992);
2. “Englishes of the inner circle” focuses on the pronunciation and lexical characteristics of American, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand English in comparison to RP.
3. “Englishes of the outer circle” moves to the varieties spoken in the postcolonial countries in West and East Africa, where English is used as a second language, being influenced by the indigenous vernaculars mainly in terms of pronunciation and vocabulary items.
4. “Englishes of the expanding circle” describes two varieties of English as L3 spoken in Asia, namely Japanese and Chinese English.

The usefulness of this course resides in the fact that it makes students aware that apart from the two varieties they are frequently exposed to (i.e. British and American English), the English language presents other nuances, brought forth by the cohabitation with other languages spoken in various areas on the globe and also by the interference of one’s speaker’s mother tongue. Moreover, since many of our graduates intend to continue their studies abroad or to immigrate to English-speaking countries, they are prepared in a way to confront the new linguistic environment.

As mentioned above, in my teaching career I have produced course materials for almost all courses I teach. Even if some were designed quite some time ago, I try to update them, in keeping with the new information in each and every sub-domain of linguistics which I teach.

### **3.2. EDITORIAL WORK**

The International conference, *Structure, Use, and Meaning* was organized for the first time in 2012, and then took place every second year, each edition having a different theme: 2012 – *International Contexts*, 2014 – *Linguistic Studies*, 2016 – *(De/Re)Contextualization*, and 2018 – *Language Policies and Practices in Institutional Settings*. I have been on the organizing committee of each edition of this event which brought together academics from both Romania and many other countries. I have been co-editor of the proceedings of this conference with my colleagues, Dr. Stanca Mada, in 2012, 2014, and 2018 and also with Dr. Mona Arhire, in 2016. The volumes published in 2014 and 2016 were indexed in the Thomson Reuters/Clarivate Analytics database, and we intend to have the latest issue (2018) indexed both in Clarivate Analytics and in other international databases.

### 3.3. OTHER ACTIVITIES

In what follows, I will just enumerate other activities that I have performed in the academia starting with the year 2005, when I earned my PhD:

- **Member of the peer review committee for:**
  - Bulletin of Transilvania University, Series VII: Social Sciences, no. 2/2014 and Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies, Vol. 8 (57) No. 1 – 2015;
  - Studii de gramatică contrastivă - University of Pitești (2009 - 2013), <http://studiidegramaticacontrastiva.info/editorial-team/>
- **Member of the scientific committee for:**
  - Journal of Philology and Intercultural Communication (since 2014) (Air Force Academy, Bucharest)
  - Redefining Community in Intercultural Context (since 2013) (Henry Coanda Airforce Academy, Brasov)
  - Journal: Science Sociali e cultura (University of Padova, Italy) (2015)
- **Member in 15 promotion committees/recruitment panels**, both at my home university, as well as at other universities in the country (Sapientia Miercurea-Ciuc, Sapientia Tg. Mureș, Bucharest, Sibiu, Pitești).
- **External examiner for 10 PhD candidates** from the Universities of Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca.
- **Member of the graduation committee** at my home university (every year), at “Petru Maior” University in Tg Mureș (2009), and at Sapientia Miercurea-Ciuc (between 2012 and 2015).
- **Invited speaker at:**
  - The 2nd Bucharest Colloquium of Language Acquisition - BUCLA 2, 6-7 December 2013. <https://vdocuments.mx/program-bucla-21.html>
  - The International Conference *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context: Worlds*. May 2015. <http://www.afahc.ro/ro/rcic/2015/rcic'15.html>
  - The International Conference *Structure, Use and Meaningi*, 2018. <http://old.unitbv.ro/arta/Conferences/SUM2018/Plenaryspeakers.aspx>
- **Team member in projects:**
  - *Proiectul pentru Învățământ Rural PIR* (2005-2008), specialization: Limba și Literatura Engleză (English Language and Literature).
  - POSDRU/86/1.2/S/5936 – *Asigurarea calității în învățământul masteral internaționalizat: dezvoltarea cadrului național în vederea compatibilizării cu Spațiul European al Învățământului Superior – ASIGMA*. In this project I was a short-term expert.



- POSDRU/57/1.3/S/32629 – *Formarea Profesională a Cadrelor Didactice din Învățământul Preuniversitar pentru Noi Oportunități de Dezvoltare în Carieră*; short-term expert.
- LLP - MERIDIUM (Multilingualism in Europe as Resource for Immigration. Dialogue Initiative among the Universities of the Mediterranean) – European project, 2009-2011 (<http://meridium.unistrapg.it/?q=it/transilvania-university-brasov>).

My participation in a large number of national and international conferences, as well as the papers and books I published brought me recognition and visibility, and helped me establish professional relationships with specialists in linguistics and intercultural communication from all around the world. My research studies, be they articles or contributions to volumes, were published both by prestigious Romanian publishing houses, as well as by international publishing houses abroad (Uppsala University Publishing House, Cambridge Scholars, and John Benjamins), and they appear in international data bases and many university libraries in the world, as revealed in the CNADTCU criteria form.

**(B-ii) CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLANS****1. PLANS FOR TEACHING-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

As a teacher, my major objective is to increase my students' motivation. In this respect, I will continue to improve my course materials, as well as my teaching and evaluation methods, in agreement with the changing student profiles and market demands. I will also continue to militate for class attendance in exchange for an environment that should stimulate students to express openly their ideas on the subjects under discussion, which, eventually, should lead to constructive debates. I am aware that, nowadays, education needs to be based on a bidirectional dialogue and that the protagonists of the educational act should be active partners.

At the same time, I will try to keep the bibliography of my courses updated with the latest information in the domain. Moreover, I will continue to support the courses I teach with findings of my own research, as well as with evidence provided by research studies carried out by leading scholars in the field. In a related vein, I intend to grant more attention to my course in *Child Language Acquisition*, the only one which is not covered by a published course.

One other priority related to my teaching activity is to manage to make my students aware that all the individual subjects I teach them in the field of linguistics do not have clear cut borders, but overlap and mingle, forming a whole. Along this line of reasoning, the students need to figure out how knowledge acquired in one sub-field of linguistics can be used effectively in another one. As a teacher, I need to capitalize on these connections and to make reference to knowledge the students acquired previously.

I will continue to encourage and help my students in writing papers for various students' scientific events organized by our university or other universities in the country, and I will offer them my support and guidance in completing their graduation papers.

Last, but not least, as a teacher I intend to spark my students' interest in studying and conducting research in child language acquisition and multiculturalism. The number of students who, after attending the optional course in child language acquisition, expressed their dissatisfaction for having found out about this field of investigation much too late to be able to start writing their graduation papers on a topic related to it (the course is offered in their last semester) was quite high. On the other hand, in the last years, many master students have taken up topics related to multiculturalism and intercultural communication for their MA papers under my supervision. This shows that quite often, it is not only the subject *per se*, but also the teacher who is important in a student's selection of the topic for his/her dissertation. One of my former master students, Ramona Tane, even dared participate in the international conference on British

and American studies organized by the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of my home university, an event meant for teachers.

I am convinced that the mutual dialogue with my students should not be confined to the lectures and seminars hours, but should continue outside the classroom, too by providing them tips for studying from our my experience, by offering them advice both in academic and also personal problems, if possible. This attitude increases their trust and respect for their teachers.

For a number of years, every Romanian university has asked students to evaluate their teachers. I have to admit that I am among those teachers who have received good results, which stimulates me to continue my activity and be even better. I assume that the positive feed-back I received from my students is due to the fact that I consider them to be part of a team, where each member has to show respect and tolerance to the others.

## **2. PLANS FOR RESEARCH-RELATED ACTIVITIES**

As both my main research domains offer a wide range of topics that can be investigated from various angles, I will continue to explore them, being also interested in doing research in new area which I have approached tentatively, namely bilingualism. Consequently, the following subsections will present my future research projects.

### **2.1. Language acquisition**

In this field, my main interest will be in the acquisition of Romanian phonology, which has been almost completely neglected. Apart from professors Tatiana Slama-Cazacu (1967), Andrei Avram (1960), and more recently Andrei A. Avram (2016) who approached the way in which young Romanian children start acquiring the sound of their mother tongue, nobody else seemed to have taken an interest in this domain until 2008, when I wrote my first paper on it. To fill this gap, I will continue and expand my research on two, already tackled issues related to the phonological acquisition by Romanian-speaking children, namely the acquisition and development of the liquid sounds and the development of consonant clusters. The studies I have already carried out are based on naturally occurring speech samples, obtained longitudinally, as well as cross-sectionally. The findings could be complemented with experimental data obtained by using images or objects representing the words containing the targeted sounds, i.e. the liquids (/l/r) or consonant clusters, on the basis of which to elicit a spontaneous production of these words. Approaching the same issues from various angles cannot but contribute to a better understanding of the acquisition and development of Romanian phonology by young children.

A research avenue I consider worth pursuing in the field of the acquisition of phonology is the investigation of not only speech production, but also of the emergence of speech

perception, as these two systems are closely linked. While on the international arena attempts have been made to study these two aspects in concert, by training researchers in both fields and by adapting the research methodologies, in Romania this domain has been completely neglected. My conviction is that by examining both perception and production when speech emerges, one may obtain a more precise picture of the phonological acquisition. In this respect, I am in agreement with Zamuner and Johnson (2011: 18), who state that

a study of speech production would be enhanced with a simultaneous examination of the time course of speech perception. The perception study could provide additional and crucial information about the phonetic detail children's early phonological and lexical representations, how language is being processed, learned and represented.

I am well aware of the many problems I will be confronted with in developing this project, ranging from identifying the subjects and persuading their parents to have their children's perceptual and production abilities assessed, to establishing an appropriate location where the experiment should be conducted, to the difficulty in deciding on the most appropriate research methodology, or the difficulty of obtaining correct judgments from my subjects, considering that they are too young (aged between 1 and 2;6 years) to understand the instructions or will not be able to focus on the task. But, on the other hand, I am convinced that somebody has to break the ice in this domain and try to align the findings related to the acquisition of Romanian phonology to those obtained on other languages, providing, thus, a basis for comparison, for identifying similarities and language-specific phenomena.

Given the increasing number of inter-ethnic marriages in our country, as well as all the ever-growing number of parents who want their children to start learning a foreign language (mainly German and English) at a very early age, either in kindergartens or at home, with private tutors, an area of research I would like to pursue is that of bilingualism, with special focus on bilingual phonological acquisition. My main interest would be in finding out whether bilingual children are comparable to monolingual children in terms of the age at which they come to master the full inventory of sounds of the languages, as well as whether their phonetic inventories are affected by the interference/transfer, defined as 'the occurrence of sounds or sound patterns specific to one language in the other language context' (Fabiano-Smith & Barlow, 2010: 81).

While the literature abounds with studies carried out mainly on English-Spanish (Barlow, 2014) and English-German bilingual children (Leopold, 1939-1949), on the Romanian arena only one article (Avram, 2016) investigated the phonological development of an English-Romanian bilingual child. I consider that data collected from a larger sample of English-

Romanian subjects will contribute to relevant statistical comparisons. At the same time, data coming from bilingual children acquiring simultaneously<sup>14</sup> (2L1) or sequentially (cL2) Romanian and other languages (such as German, Hungarian<sup>15</sup>, Spanish, Italian or even Korean) would contribute to the general understanding of the benefits of bilingualism.

Moreover, the findings of the phonological acquisition of two languages could also aid speech pathologists/therapists in devising appropriate methods for identifying and treating the problems encountered in bilingual populations.

One particular interesting topic to be investigated in the domain of the phonological development of bilingual children would be the development of bilingual twins, again a field where there is a dearth of data concerning the Romanian language. Of interest would be to determine the extent to which the phonological acquisition and development of twins is similar or different, depending on factors such as gender of the children or language typology. Of importance would also be to consider the extent to which the phonological acquisition of the two languages the twins are surrounded by is similar. In the literature, there is only one study of this kind I am familiar with, performed on Spanish-English bilingual twins by Ingram *et al.* (2011). My intention would be to replicate this study, by using the same measures employed by the afore-mentioned scholars, only on bilingual twins speaking other languages, such as Romanian-Hungarian, Romanian-German or even Romanian-Korean (given the relatively large number of Korean people living in my hometown). Such a study may empirically support the results of Ingram *et al.*'s research or may lead to slightly different results. Of course, for such an endeavour, I will have to solve most of the problems mentioned above, as well as to find collaborators (among our master students) whose mother tongue is Hungarian or Korean (I am a fluent speaker of German, so this proves to be an advantage in case I am able to find Romanian-German bilingual twins).

In what concerns the acquisition of vocabulary, a topic worth investigating would be the slips of the tongue produced by young Romanian subjects. This idea was sparked in me while watching some fragments of a show on Romanian television, *Copiii spun lucruri trăznite* ('Children say funny things'), where in answering the questions addressed to them by the moderator Virgil Ianțu, due to various factors, such as nervousness or shyness, children produce slips of the tongue. These structures are defined by Jaeger (2005: 2) as:

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<sup>14</sup> Different terms are employed for the existing types of bilingualism. Thus, de Houwer (2017) uses the term 'Bilingual First Language Acquisition' for the children who acquire two languages from birth, while other scholars call the same children 'simultaneous bilinguals'. Lleó (2016) refers to them by the abbreviation '2L1'. On the other hand, when children are exposed to a second language after the first one is in place, we speak of 'successive bilingualism' or 'child L2' (Lleó's 2016), to distinguish it from adult acquisition of a second language (L2).

<sup>15</sup> Erika Todor (2015) mentions in brief some examples of interference at the phonological level between Hungarian and Romanian in bilingual adult population.

a one-time error in speech production planning; that is, the speaker intends to utter a particular word, phrase or sentence, and during the planning process something goes wrong, so that the production is at odds with the plan.

My assumption is that if we consider the slips of the tongue produced by children to be caused by the same factors like in adults, then this means that children have certain knowledge of the vocabulary items of their language that can be employed as a backdrop against which one can judge their utterances. Moreover, if more children of similar ages produce the same type of slips of the tongue, then the hypothesis could be that this is the age when that structure is fully acquired.

The questions I would like to address are: a) at what age do Romanian-speaking children start producing slips of the tongue? b) which lexical errors are more frequent, the syntagmatic or the paradigmatic ones?, and c) are there individual preferences/tendencies among children?

While my intention is to focus only on the lexical slips of the tongue, if the corpus provides examples of phonological or semantic ones, these could also be considered, being convinced that they could provide insight into the development of the relationships among linguistic units and linguistic levels.

I would also very much like to have the time (and inspiration) to devise some experiments for eliciting the production of certain words with a view to assessing both language comprehension and language production. The findings of these experiments may shed a new light on children's creativity in making use of the word-formation rules, and will add to the findings of my studies based on natural speech sampling.

As shown in my doctoral paper, narratives are an effective way to study multiple levels of language (vocabulary, grammar, and story structure) within a single task. An interesting turn would be to take a look at the narratives of bilingual children. A look at the CHILDES bilingual corpora (<https://chilDES.talkbank.org/access/Biling/>) reveals that Romanian is not included as a dominant or minor language in bilingual children's narrative productions. Still, narratives produced by English/French-Romanian bilingual children have been investigated by Maria Petrescu (2014) in her doctoral paper and by Petrescu *et al.*, (2016). Thus, I intend to extend my investigation to Romanian-German bilingual narratives and to compare the bilingual stories to monolingual productions (Buja, 2008 for Romanian and Bamberg, 1987 for German). The group of Romanian-German bilinguals I envisage for the study are typically developing kindergarten goers and primary schoolchildren (there are lots of kindergartens in Braşov and two primary schools where German is the language of instruction), as well as a group of adults, mainly

colleagues of mine from the German department of my home university). The focus will be on the elements pertaining both to the macro-structure (characters, setting, initiating event, action, consequence, and internal response) and to the micro-structure (coordinating and subordinating connectors or more elaborated noun phrases) of the narratives.

I have already started recording narratives from the bilingual children of friends and colleagues of mine, but the process is not finished yet. The findings of my study could be compared with those of Veronica Tomescu from the University on Bucharest, who is currently investigating the narrative productions of Hungarian-Romanian bilinguals. Our results could contribute to the growing body of research on the language behaviours of bilingual children, acquiring Romanian as one of the two languages.

## **2.2. Intercultural communication**

A field of study closely linked to bilingualism is biculturalism, understood as ‘comfort and proficiency with both one’s heritage culture and the culture of the country or region in which one has settled’ (Portes and Rumbaut 2006, quoted in Schwartz and Unger, 2010: 26). Biculturalism emerges not only among immigrants coming from various countries, but it is applicable to the children of immigrants, who despite the fact that they were born and brought up in the host country, they stick to their heritage culture as a result of the influence exerted by their parents at home. In this respect, I believe that the work in the MERIDIUM international project<sup>16</sup> may be a steppingstone for further research in the domain of linguistic diversity and biculturalism (or even multiculturalism). A continuation of the project could envisage the group of Romanian children living in Italy whom we investigated 7 years ago and who, by now, have turned into adolescents and may have become both bilingual and bicultural. Of interest would be to find out what their attitude towards being bicultural is and the extent to which they consider this an advantage or a disadvantage for them. A similar, smaller-scale study could be performed on the ever-growing number of foreign students who come to study at our university, some of them even with the intention of finding a home. They usually spend between 3 to 5 years, depending on the type of program they enrol in (master of doctoral), a time span in which they come to master the Romanian language needed for their studies. The question that arises is whether they also become bicultural.

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<sup>16</sup> Multilingualism in Europe as a Resource for Immigration - Dialogue Initiative among the Universities of the Mediterranean (MERIDIUM) was a three-year European project launched in 2009 and funded within the Lifelong Learning Programme (KA2 - Languages). Together with 3 other colleagues from Transilvania University, I was a member in this project whose aim was produce a broad field research on the perception of the value of multilingualism, with particular reference to the new languages brought by migratory flows in different national communities.

The framework I intend to employ is that provided by Kleinjans (1975), who suggested that when people learn a second culture (C2), they need to focus on three categories: *cognition* (i.e. knowing the *what* and *why* of that culture, which is some kind of encyclopaedic knowledge which is of utmost importance for people who deal on a daily basis with persons from other cultures), *affection* (i.e. coming to know and appreciate aspects pertaining to another culture, such as clothing, food, music or certain values), and *action* (i.e. verbal and nonverbal behaviour). The research instrument I intend to use will be a questionnaire.

We can speak of biculturalism also in connection with persons belonging to minority groups within the same country, who differ from the majority ethnic population, as is the case of the Hungarians living in Romania. In this context, a question to be addressed is whether the ethnic element of biculturalism is a cause for discrimination or whether it represents the desire of the people belonging to this minority to hold on to their heritage. Along this line, I would like to expand two studies I produced in the late 2000:

**Aspecte lingvistice ale bilingvismului în comunitățile maghiare din România**, in Horvath, Istvan & Erica Todor. (ed.), 2008, *O evaluare a politicilor de producere a bilingvismului. Studii elaborate pe baza prezentărilor din cadrul conferinței de la Miercurea-Ciuc, 12-13 iunie 2008*. pp. 229–240. Cluj-Napoca: Editura Limes. ISBN 978-973-726-359-9.

and

**Sociolinguistic aspects of bilingualism among the Moldovan youth**, in Saxena, A. & Ake Viberg (eds.), 2009, *Multilingualism. Proceedings of the 23 Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics*, ACTA UNIVERSITATIS UPSALIENSIS, pp. 143–159. Uppsala: Uppsala University, ISSN 1652-1366, ISBN 978-91-554-7594-9.

My interest this time would be to assess cultural practices, values, and identifications, as well as some culturally important variables, such as perceived discrimination and ethnic socialization. The findings of such a study might have implications for the process of education: in teaching students from other cultures/ethnic groups, teachers may need to respect the diversity of the students' heritage, language, culture, and identity.

For my future research on biculturalism, collaborating with colleagues or master students from the Faculties of Sociology and of Psychology of our university would be of great importance, because they have more expertise in dealing with attitudes and perceptions of the foreign students/ethnic minority members, i.e. with soft data.

My study on women-related proverbs in Korean and Romanian could be complemented with one on the stories produced in these two cultures due to the fact that '[t]he stories told by particular groups tend to reflect the preoccupations, the values, beliefs and attitudes of group members (...) at a particular point in time' (Holmes, 2005:110). What I have in mind is an exploratory analysis of the most familiar folk stories written in Romanian and Korean, aimed at



identifying women's preoccupations, the roles they played in their communities, as well as men's attitudes towards them. For this endeavour I envisage a collaboration with a former Korean colleague of mine, Professor Baek from Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, who has a passion for Romanian folk stories.

I also intend to continue studying proverbs, as there is a wealth of data that can be exploited: literary works, songs, advertising, graffiti, or magazine headlines, whose authors may employ proverbs not necessarily for their inherent wisdom, but because they 'enjoy questioning or parodying them in order to get their readers to think critically about their purported wisdom' (Mieder, 2004: 162). The data could be then investigated comparatively, in terms of various issues that are related to cultures, such as the national character, the geographical position (*Apa trece, pietrele rămân* 'The water flows away, the stones remain in place') and the climate of the envisaged cultures, the national history (*În țara orbilor, cel cu ochi e împărat* 'In the land of the blind people, the one that can see is the emperor'), the people's attitude towards money (*Pentru bani își vinde și sufletul* 'He would sell even his soul for money'), the animals portrayed in proverbs (*Nu da vrabia din mână pe cioara de pe gard* 'Don't give away the sparrow in your hand for the crow on the fence'), or the religious/philosophical issues (*The root of suffering is attachment* – Buddha).

### 2.3. Others

Dissemination of the results of a researcher's activity is considered to be essential in establishing connections within the research community in and outside Romania. Thus, I will try to participate in a larger number of national and international conferences and to publish articles in prestigious journals and conference proceedings, indexed in important data bases, with a view to increasing the visibility of my research activity. The organization of the international linguistics conference *Structure, Use, and Meaning* at my home university will be permanently on my agenda.

As far as my implication in the academia of Braşov is concerned, I intend to participate in events aimed at bringing it to the attention of the people in our community and of the international academic environment. In this respect, at the beginning of November 2019, I will participate in an Education Fair, an international event organized in Seoul (South Korea), where European Universities are invited to promote their education programs. My hope is to persuade as many Korean candidates as possible to come to study at our university.

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