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HABILITATION THESIS

The Dynamic Landscape of Applied Linguistics:
Navigating Language Acquisition, Critical Discourse Analysis, and
Translations in a Globalised World

Domain: Philology

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(A) Summary / Rezumat

Împărțită în două părți principale, prezenta teză de abilitare se concentrează asupra principalelor domenii de cercetare și didactice relevante care au reprezentat interesul meu încă de la începutul carierei mele academice și pe care le voi dezvolta ulterior în domeniul lingvisticii aplicate.

Prima secțiune se concentrează pe detalii despre dezvoltarea carierei mele, cu accent pe trei domenii principale de cercetare și interese academice în domeniul filologiei, cum ar fi: Achiziția de Limbi Străine, Analiza Critică a Discursului și Traducerile. A doua parte a tezei oferă perspective referitoare atât la ideile de cercetare, cât și la cele didactice, în strânsă legătură cu posibila implicare a studenților de doctorat în proiectele mele.

În primul rând, Achiziția de Limbi Străine, ca o subramură importantă a lingvisticii aplicate, ia în considerare articolele mele de cercetare, prezentările la conferințe și proiectele despre aspecte precum: lexicografie, metode, tehnici și instrumente de cercetare, cele mai bune practici în această arie, mecanisme specifice, era digitală de învățare, evaluare modernă, cultură și motivație, precum și activitatea didactică în acest domeniu, menționând contribuțiile importante și originale publicate în reviste, volume de conferințe naționale și internaționale și proiecte de cercetare finanțate național.

În al doilea rând, Analiza Critică a Discursului, ca o altă subramură a lingvisticii aplicate, se referă la contribuțiile mele în ceea ce privește discursul de instruire, managementul educațional, publicitatea, poezia, literatura, dramaturgia, marketingul cultural, politicile educaționale, precum și la realizările în ceea ce privește didactica în acest domeniu.

În al treilea rând, Traducerile, o altă subramură a lingvisticii aplicate, prezintă mai întâi profilul meu profesional în această zonă, apoi include detalii despre atelierul meu de traduceri și proiectele de traducere, precum și cercetarea critică asupra diferitelor traduceri efectuate, cercetare care a rezultat fie, pe de o parte, în lucrări specializate, fie, pe de altă parte, într-o analiză mai profundă și mai largă, sub forma unei cărți.

A doua secțiune este dedicată perspectivelor și planurilor mele în ceea ce privește interesele mele de cercetare și cele legate de cariera didactică, cu o atenție detaliată acordată colaborării strânse cu viitorii doctoranzi, în toate cele trei domenii menționate mai sus. Îndrumarea performanței lor doctorale și academice reprezintă un obiectiv principal în această parte și ia în considerare nu numai publicarea de lucrări științifice, redactarea și implementarea de proiecte

de cercetare, scrierea academică și instrucțiuni de etică, ci și colectarea de baze de date cu accent pe statistică, lingvistica de corpus și analiza datelor pentru activarea metodelor de cercetare cantitative și calitative.

În general, teza prezentă oferă o vedere de ansamblu completă asupra activității mele și intereselor mele de cercetare în domeniul academic al filologiei, cu accent special pe lingvistica aplicată, sugerează trei domenii principale de activitate, ca subdomenii practice în această arie de cercetare, și susține cu argumente profesionale implicarea mea în supravegherea studiilor doctorale, o activitate viitoare pentru care întregul meu profil mă recomandă.

(B) Scientific and Professional Achievements and the Evolution and Development Plans for career Development

Introduction

The section focused on scientific and professional accomplishments is divided into three subsections that aim to showcase my research profile and teaching activities throughout my academic career. These activities, pertaining to the larger field of Philology, cover three main areas of interest in the field of applied linguistics: English and Romanian Language Acquisition, Critical Discourse Analysis, and Pragmatics and Translation.

Concerning English and Romanian Language Acquisition, an overview of my interests in this research field discloses not only specialised classes taught on Romanian as a Foreign Language and English as a Foreign Language, but also solid research based on literature review and first-hand experience data gathering, as well as participation in international projects and management of nationally funded projects which resulted in outputs with visible impact.

Regarding Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics, the interest started from early participation in student colloquiums and conferences in the dedicated sections of Rhetoric and Stylistics and The Critique of Criticism with focus on the analysis of famous authors' poetic and philosophic language and discourse, as well as of their status among the contemporary discursive framework of the times they belonged to. Thus, events dedicated to personalities such as Lucian Blaga, Mihai Eminescu or William Shakespeare represented the starting point of further research which resulted in a BA project, an MA dissertation, a PH.D. thesis, several scientific papers and a research book on aspects dealing with poetic language exploration and investigation, idiostyle, and macro-critical discourse against the background of the epochs the above-mentioned authors lived in.

Moreover, embracing a diachronic approach, a systematic study of the image of women in Romanian advertisements was initiated, in co-authorship with a fellow researcher, having managed to cover two well-framed periods of time: the 1890s-1920s and the 1930s. The

follow-up is dedicated to the Communist period and the post-revolution era, and is yet to be delivered and defended on the occasion of future conferences.

Last, but not least, in the same field of Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics, I am the author of two didactic materials for the specialised courses that I teach both at the distance learning programme and the full-time daily programme.

With reference to Translations, my expertise encompasses written transpositions of texts and oral interpreting, as a natural person, but also as a professor of these curriculum subjects, as well as a researcher in the field. Thus, both literary texts and functional texts have been covered by my activity as a translator, from poems to agreements, from participation in dedicated workshops on the process of translating Blaga's or Eminescu's texts to papers and books written on the same topic, from personal contributions on literary translations to conferences on specific purposes, as it will be detailed upon in the section dedicated to this branch.

In this way, a complete view over my interests can be outlined, significant activity having taken shape in both respects along the time, i.e., research and didactics, in the three areas mentioned, in the greater area of Philology, with focus on Applied Linguistics.

The last section, dedicated to the evolution and growth of my university career envisions the plans that I have designed for short-term, mid-term or even long-term, with contributions both in the area of research and in the field of courses taught, as both represent strong paths in my development as full professor, in close connection with the targeted capacity, that of Ph.D. thesis and doctoral students' supervisor.

(B-i) Scientific and Professional Achievements

Professional Path and Progress

I started my career at the Faculty of Letters of *Transilvania* University of Braşov immediately after graduating valedictorian from the same Faculty, in 2003. My profile as a dedicated student, participating in numerous student competitions recommended me for a career in the academic field, as, at the time of my joining the academic staff of the Faculty of Letters, I was already in the possession of various 1st, 2nd, 3rd and other prizes and awards in national colloquiums, such as: 'Lucian Blaga' – Sibiu, 'Mihai Eminescu' – Iaşi, 'William Shakespeare' – Galaţi, 'Shakespeare's Disciples' – Braşov, 'Veronica Micle' – Iaşi, and 'Fântâni ale darurilor' – Blaj, as well as an author of several research papers and translations published in the volumes of the above-mentioned student-conferences.

After completing my undergraduate studies in philology with a major in Romanian and a minor in English, I began my academic career as an assistant professor at the same faculty. During my first year of collaboration, I pursued a Master's programme in Communication and Translations, still with the same faculty, which lasted for two years (2003-2005). Additionally, I enrolled in a Ph.D. programme at *Lucian Blaga* University of Sibiu, Faculty of Letters and Arts, under the guidance of Professor Mircea Tomuş (Ph.D.). My doctoral thesis, which I completed between 2004 and 2010, focused on *Lucian Blaga's position within his era and his relationship with 'Gândirea' journal*. Meeting the official temporal framework allotted for the doctoral programme, I defended the above-mentioned thesis for which I was awarded 'Magna cum laudae', in 2010. In 2011, I published the thesis under the title 'Lucian Blaga în contextul epocii sale. Relația cu *Gândirea*', in Braşov, at *Transilvania* University Publishing House (ISBN: 978-973-598-964-4) and in 2020 I designed a follow-up of this research, at the same publishing house, with focus on translations and the pragmatic and stylistic analysis of Blaga's idiosyncrasy, under the title *Translating Lucian Blaga's Idiosyncrasy: A Pragmatic-Stylistic Approach* (ISBN 978-606-19-1308-4).

From 2003 to 2007, my career consisted of providing lectures and seminars on the following topics: Oral and Written Communicative Techniques, The Theory and Practice of Translations, Applied Grammar, Pragmatics, Didactics, English for Specific Purposes, Functional Texts

Writing for the Faculty of Letters of *Transilvania* University of Braşov, for both the Philology profile and the Applied Modern Languages profile.

During this period, alongside teaching, I was an active member of the organising committee of the *International Conference on British and American Studies* and of the founding committee of *The Centre for Modern Languages* belonging to the Faculty of Letters of *Transilvania* University of Braşov, where I have both taught classes of English as a Foreign Language at all levels to adults and released certificates of language competency.

Mention is worth making of the early interest manifested in the research field focused on modern means of teaching, as in June 2006 I was part of the COMPLETE pilot project of the Leonardo da Vinci Interactive International programme entitled *Methods for Teaching-Learning-Evaluation Process: Project-based Learning and Video Communication*.

Between 2007 and 2012, my career advanced to the position of university assistant, continuing to teach the same courses and seminars with the Chair of Foreign Languages and Literatures, as well as with the subsidiary branch of the Faculty of Letters in Topliţa, Harghita County. As part of the teaching staff, this period represented the beginning of dedicated research work, as I was a member of the team of researchers involved in the CNCSIS Grant *Competitivy and Efficiency in Specialised Intercultural Communication through Optimising Online Resources* (Competitivitate și eficiență în comunicarea interculturală specializată prin optimizarea resurselor on-line) (code 929) (<http://cerex.unitbv.ro/lexica/echipa.php>), but also a translations expert in the European POSDRU/9/3.1/S/9 project entitled *The Design, Implementation, and Development of a Continuous, Inter-Regional, and Transnational Training System for Entrepreneurial Competencies - Edu-Entrepreneur* (Proiectarea, Implementarea și Derularea unui Sistem de Formare Continuă, Inter-Regional și Transnațional, pentru Obținerea Competențelor Antreprenoriale - Edu-Antreprenor) (<http://www.edu-antreprenor.net>).

Moreover, as a natural consequence of the interest manifested in the field of linguistics and its connection to the IT field, during this period I also became the administrator of the research infrastructure of the research laboratory serving the needs of the above-mentioned project and the administrator of the eLearning platform for the Faculty of Letters, capacity in which I organised tutoring meetings with faculty colleagues for skill-improvement in this respect.

Furthermore, I continued to engage in the administrative aspects of my job profile by serving on the same organising committee for the *International Conference on British and American Studies*.

Starting 2010, a very important aspect of my professional development consisted of improving my skills for preparing candidates for the international Cambridge, TOEFL and IELTS exams, thus, on the one hand, participating in the specialised classes organised by *British Council* in this respect, and, on the other hand, organising and supervising these examinations in Braşov, in collaboration with *The Centre for Modern Languages* and *British Council*. Hence, the implementation of modern learning techniques for students has represented an essential part of my interest regarding the applied aspect of approaching the idea of teaching, learning, and assessing the English language.

In 2011, I joined the team of professors teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language at the Summer School annually organised by *The Romanian Cultural Institute* from Bucharest (<http://www.bewhere.ro/oras/reportaj-o-echipa-de-straini-de-pe-trei-continente-studiaza-romana-la-bra-ov-3212>), where I have been teaching Romanian language, culture, and civilisation elements to adults at all levels. As a result of this experience, which intertwined modern mechanisms dedicated to acquiring Romanian as a foreign language, two important studies have resulted, in collaboration with Ms. Ana Borca (Ph.D.), the coordinator of the event, as it will be presented in the section dedicated to research achievements below.

Starting 2012 until 2021, I became, as a result of sitting another official exam, a university lecturer with the same Faculty of Letters, at *Transilvania* University of Braşov. Pragmatics, Discourse Analysis, Strategies of Professional Communication, Academic Discourse Practices, Functional Texts Writing, Grammar Structures, Oral Communicative Techniques, New Tendencies in Applied Linguistics and Public Relations from an Intercultural Perspective are just a few of the courses and seminars that I taught during that period for the profiles of Philology, Applied Modern Languages, American Studies of the BA programme, as well as for the Language Studies for Intercultural Communication Research MA programme (in English) of the Faculty of Letters, to which courses in Morphology and Syntax for the distance learning programme of the same faculty can be added.

Additionally, activities such as supervision of BA projects, MA dissertations and papers for Didactic degrees have been part of the attributes connected to my professional interest, alongside being a member in different committees for exams, such as: didactic jobs vacancies, didactic degrees, translation of the official Newsletter of *Transilvania* University, and, as proof of continuity, organising the *International Conference on British and American Studies*.

An extremely significant activity that was developed by me during this period is that of participating in different international projects and Erasmus+ professional exchanges, as follows: member in the Erasmus+KA2 international project entitled *Language guidance tool for improving language knowledge_LanGuide* (<http://languide.si/en/partners/transilvania-university-of-brasov>), member in the international project entitled *Blended Learning* implemented in partnership with Otaru University of Commerce from Japan, assistant manager in the European POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141884 project, entitled *Virtual Community for Ensuring Quality and Improving Strategic and Innovative Management in Technical and Composite Universities, in Order to Increase the Relevance of Higher Education for the Labor Market - ACAD-INOV* (Comunitate virtuală pentru asigurarea calității și perfecționării managementului strategic și inovativ în universitățile tehnice și compozite, în vederea creșterii relevanței învățământului superior pentru piața muncii-ACAD-INOV) (<http://acad-inov.trp.ro/category/noutati/>), assistant manager in the European POSDRU/86/1.2/S/59367 project entitled *Assuring Quality in Internationalised Master Education: Developing a National Framework for Compatibility with the European Higher Education Area* (Asigurarea calității în învățământul masteral internaționalizat: dezvoltarea cadrului național în vederea compatibilizării cu Spațiul European al Învățământului Superior – ASIGMA) (<http://lett.ubbcluj.ro:3636/>), course tutor in the European POSDRU/57/1.3/S/32629 project entitled *Professional Training of Teaching Staff in Pre-University Education for New Career Development Opportunities* (Formarea profesională a cadrelor didactice în învățământul preuniversitar pentru noi oportunități de dezvoltare în carieră) (<https://conversii.upb.ro/grade/report/grader/index.php?id=535>), within which I taught courses of English Language Teaching Methodology and Final Portfolio Assessment, and most importantly, project manager for the UEFISCDI / PN-III-P1-1.1-TE2019-0259 nationally funded research project entitled *Gamification-Based Instruction for Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language (GIRO)* (Instruirea bazată pe „gamification” în predarea limbii române ca limbă străină – GIRO).

And as proof of stability and solid work, this period in my career continued to include the positions of eLearning platform administrator for the Faculty of Letters, with the addition of an extended role, i.e. monitor of the eLearning platform for the distance learning programme for half of the faculties of *Transilvania* University that are part of this distance learning programme, site administrator for <http://www.unitbv.ro/anglistica>, www.cilm.ro, <http://confucius.unitbv.ro/>, and <http://www.unitbv.ro/litere/Departamente/DeLTA.aspx>, lecturer of English and Romanian as Foreign Languages with *The Centre for Modern Languages*, as well as with the 'Summer School' organised by *The Romanian Cultural Institute*.

During the period of 2021-2023, I served as an associate professor on the teaching staff of the Faculty of Letters at *Transilvania* University of Braşov. Throughout this time, I dedicated myself to a range of academic accomplishments, including research, teaching activities, and administrative responsibilities. Specifically, I was involved in implementing the Turnitin software at our faculty and continued to supervise the activity on the eLearning platform, as mentioned earlier.

In my capacity as manager of the nationally-funded project *Gamification Based Instruction for Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language*, I oversaw various tasks, such as: publishing papers, organising a workshop dedicated to fellow professors in the field of teaching Romanian as a foreign language, and releasing a specialised monograph, which will be detailed upon, below. As part of my teaching activities, I also developed specialised didactic materials for the students in the Preparatory Year programme, which focused on modern methods of acquiring Romanian as a foreign language, with emphasis on specialised vocabulary dedicated to medical studies and sports. This was an essential part of my contribution to the development of the programme and the faculty to which I belong.

The latest international project that I have been part of is the Erasmus+ 2021-1-DE01-KA220-HED-000031184 cooperation on *Multimedia Didactics. The Art and Science of Teaching Host Country Language (TeachME)* (<https://www.teachmeproject.eu/>). This project is interested in enabling young Europeans to study in other European countries with focus on those that are less in demand and on languages that are less widely spoken. For this, TEACH ME has embraced the neuro-didactic approach and has already created online tools for international students and for teachers, educators, and facilitators of language courses to increase the number of young people who want to learn other EU languages and to enhance their ability to

command the host-country language by means of an interactive map, a neuro-didactic handbook for intensive teaching and an educational platform to integrate all the above.

To summarize my statistical achievements, I have authored or co-authored 42 research papers, 2 research books, and 1 chapbook, contributed to 1 international monograph, 1 national monograph, and 4 research volumes, as well as translated numerous works from renowned national poets. These translations have been included in either separate individual books or translated conference volumes, accompanied by my linguistic interpretation and analysis. I have also attempted 4 critical reviews and made original contributions to the field of applied linguistics in several conferences.

Moreover, I have been involved in 4 POSDRU European Project, 2 Erasmus+ European projects, 2 UEFISCDI national projects and 1 Leonardo DaVinci European pilot project.

(B-i1). Chapter 1: Research Achievements and Didactic contributions on English and Romanian Language Acquisition

Introduction

Foreign language acquisition has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, as a result of the increasing use of technology and the evolution of communication methods. With the emergence of new communication tools and platforms, the need for foreign language education that focuses on communicative skills and digital literacy has become more important than ever.

In today's digital era, the discourse of foreign language acquisition has shifted its focus from traditional grammar-based instruction and learning strategies to a more communicative approach that emphasises the practical use of language in real-life situations. The communicative frame encourages students to actively engage in language learning, using the language to communicate and express themselves from the very beginning of the learning process. This approach has proven to be highly effective in facilitating language acquisition and enabling learners to develop their communicative competence, which is essential for success in the globalised world.

The digital era has also opened new possibilities for language learning using digital tools and resources. The development of mobile technology, online learning platforms, and digital media has provided students with new opportunities to engage in language learning outside of the classroom, allowing them to access language resources and interact with speakers of the target language from anywhere in the world. With the use of technology, language learners can improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as their cultural diversity, and have more opportunities to practice and receive feedback on their language use.

One important development is the increasing use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tools and digital resources. CALL has been shown to have positive effects on learners' language development, motivation, and engagement (Beatty, 2010; Warschauer & Healey, 1998; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Moreover, the use of digital resources, such as online texts, videos, and podcasts, can provide learners with opportunities to practice their language skills in authentic contexts and to access a variety of cultural materials (Chapelle & Jamieson, 2008; Kramsch, 1993).

In this context, learner autonomy has become an increasingly important concept in foreign language acquisition (Little, 2013). Learner autonomy refers to the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own learning and to make use of available resources to develop their language skills. In the digital era, learners have more opportunities to take control of their learning and to access a wide range of resources to support their language development (Savignon, 2002).

Despite the growing importance of digital resources in foreign language acquisition, the role of the teacher remains crucial. Teachers need to be able to integrate digital tools effectively into their teaching and to guide learners in using them in appropriate ways (Nunan, 2002). Teachers also need to be able to provide learners with opportunities to interact and communicate in the target language using digital tools, as communication and interaction are key components of language learning (Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer & Meskill, 2000).

As language teaching evolves in the communicative and digital era, it is essential for educators to develop appropriate learning methods into their students, as well as materials that take advantage of the latest technologies and communication methods and mechanisms specific to

the discourse of language acquisition in the modern epoch. Effective language acquisition in the digital era requires a learner-centred approach, providing students with the opportunity to be active participants in the language learning process. CALL tools and digital resources can provide learners with authentic opportunities to develop their language skills, while learner autonomy allows learners to take control of their learning and make use of available resources to support their development. By leveraging the latest technological tools and language acquisition methods, educators can create a more engaging, effective, and inclusive learning experience that meets the needs of modern learners.

My contributions in this field range from research papers written on the exact aspects tackled above to the creation of modern learning tools, as part of important projects which enabled me to contribute to this field to a great extent.

Foreign Language Acquisition and Corpus Linguistics

Thus, a very early interest was manifested by me in the field of linguistics with focus on the connection between the applied aspect of it and its electronic means of implementation or use on the occasion of the 3rd Conference on British and American Studies, held at Brasov in 2005, when I delivered a presentation on *Computational Linguistics: Corpus Linguistics* which came as a result of a semester's work of documentation on the subject in the modern laboratory of The Faculty of Letters, on Colina, equipped, at that time, with the latest set of computers. This presentation resulted in the publication of two research papers, i.e., 'Corpus Linguistics: History, Construction and Utility' (2004), in *The Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 11 (46)*. Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House. [ISSN 1223-964X] and 'Computational Linguistics: Corpus Linguistics' (2005), in *Conference on British and American Studies*. Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House. [ISBN (10) 973-635-660-4, ISBN (13) 978-973-635-660-5]. These two papers analysed the idea of Corpus Linguistics, touching the useful consequences an organised body of texts can provide for the Romanian language. Firstly, a brief history of the corpus was provided, then a clear definition of what a corpus really means and afterwards a diversity of corpora was introduced; secondly, a clear overview regarding the problem of annotations and different types of annotations was tackled, while thirdly, the importance and utility of a corpus-based approach to language with a detailed applied discussion on the British National Corpus, in terms of its construction, was provided, with examples.

Foreign Language Acquisition and Lexicography

The next step of my research into this electronic world of applied linguistics took me to the analysis of the type and use of electronic/online dictionaries, as a result of my participation in the nationally funded research project *Competitvity and Efficiency in Specialised Intercultural Communication through Optimising Online Resources* (Competitivitate și eficiență în comunicarea interculturală specializată prin optimizarea resurselor on-line) (code 929), which aimed at improving the quality of the online dictionaries containing specialised vocabulary for the pair of languages English-Romanian, as a result of the detailed examination of the types of already existing online dictionaries as a useful and modern tool of language improvement. This project brought together, under the same professional roof, the two most important aspects, elements, and teams of specialists, i.e., those from linguistics and those from IT. Consequently, I participated not only in a visit to the institutions of the European Union, in an exchanged which targeted the workflow and special instruments used by the 2 specialised departments covering the translations and the interpreting services for The Directorate-General for Translation (DGT) and for The Directorate-General for Interpretation (SCIC) of the European Commission, but I also contributed to the skeleton creation, in its incipit phase of the *Lexica* online dictionary and participated in 2008 in the 6th Conference on British and American Studies, at Brașov, together with prof. Mona Arhire with a presentation on *The Role of Online Dictionaries in the Translation Community*. This presentation was afterwards converted into the research paper entitled 'A Dual Perspective on Free Electronic Dictionaries: The Compiler's and The User's', published in co-autorship in *Conference on British and American Studies. Brașov: Transilvania University Publishing House. [ISSN 1844-7481]*.

Methods, Techniques, Best Practices, Tools, and Specific Mechanisms for Foreign Language Acquisition

Foreign language acquisition approaches were further pursued in a series of papers like: 'Rethinking Career Paths: The Methodology of Teaching Mathematics and English to Adult Teachers through Conversion Programmes - A Comparative Study' (2013), 'A Comparative Study on the Opinions of Students Concerning the Teaching Methods within the ELT and MT Methodology Classes' (2015), 'Stimulating Students' Creativity in MTM and ELTM Classes: Teaching and Assessing Methods and Instruments' (2016), 'Stimulating Students' Creativity in

MTM and ELTM Classes: Content Choice and Teacher Creativity' (2016), 'Differentiated Instruction with Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology Seminars: Didactic Game and Individual Work' (2017) and 'Differentiated Instruction: Interactive Methods with Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology Seminars. A Comparative Analysis' (2017) which all came as a result of a strong cooperation with a specialist in methodological aspects of the teaching processes. Monica Purcaru (Ph.D.), from the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics, and all targeted mechanisms of specific content acquisition by students, according to a comparative multi-subject approach.

Published in *Bulletin of the 'Transilvania' University of Braşov*, Series VII: Social Sciences and Law, issues: 6 (55) No. 2., pp.27-34; 8 (57) No. 2., pp. 51-58; 9 (58) No. 2., pp. 17-26 and pp. 35-42; 10 (59) Special Issue No.2/Proceedings of the International Conference "Contemporary Perspectives in Psychology, Education and Teacher Training" 12-15 October 2017, Braşov, Romania, pp. 113-122 and pp. 132-142 [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (CD-ROM)], in this specific order, as Erih Plus entries, covering a time span of 4 dedicated years, these papers delved into specialised aspects of language acquisition such as: adult conversion towards foreign language acquisition and their perceptions, students' opinions regarding the techniques used in foreign language acquisition as taught in ELT methodology classes, students' creativity regarding different aspects of the learning continuum and foreign language acquisition, and differentiated instruction in foreign language acquisition contexts, as the best solution to cater for the needs of all learners, in different learning contexts, according to their learning profiles.

Viewed from the perspective of European project *Professional training of teachers in the pre-university education system for new opportunities in career development*, whose main purpose focused on career reorientation, it was interesting to identify and compare, in 'Rethinking Career Paths: The Methodology of Teaching Mathematics and English to Adult Teachers through Conversion Programmes - A Comparative Study' (2013), the participants' opinions and results after participating in reorientation classes, on the efficiency of the modules of Didactics of Mathematics in the 'Mathematics programme' and of Didactics of English in the 'English programme' regarding the development of specific competences for becoming instructors of Mathematics/English and helping further candidates in acquiring, for example, English as a foreign language. The instruments of this were complementary, highlighting both the subjective aspect, provided by the opinions of the participants, and the objective aspect,

present in the results of the two programmes and were based on the extraction of the personal opinions of the candidates, their competency, their plans, and their capacity to learn. The resulting data were compared against the results of the examinations, therefore confirming, or negating the general self-evaluation.

'A Comparative Study on the Opinions of Students Concerning the Teaching Methods within the ELT and MT Methodology Classes' (2015) had as a main aim the identification of the students' opinions regarding the necessary conditions needed for them to be interested in learning and obtaining good results in either Mathematics or English Language Teaching Methodology, with focus on the teaching-learning methods and techniques used while teaching these two subjects. The descriptive research was conducted on 120 students, aged 20-21 years, in their 2nd year of studies at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, enrolled in the Teaching Methodology classes. The teaching-learning methods varied from traditional, modern, and specific to either of the two subjects. The conclusions drawn, after analysing the questionnaires and the school results showed that both their interest for the subjects and their learning performances rose in direct proportion to the variety of teaching / learning methods used for each learning unit.

'Stimulating Students' Creativity in MTM and ELTM Classes: Teaching and Assessing Methods and Instruments' (2016), 'Stimulating Students' Creativity in MTM and ELTM Classes: Content Choice and Teacher Creativity' (2016), were two research papers dedicated to identifying different means of stimulating students' creativity with English Language Teaching and Mathematics Teaching Methodology courses and seminars. The basic analysis tried to exemplify and compare the cultivation of creativity by means of the teaching-learning-assessment methods used to teach and evaluate the content of the classes mentioned, as well as the cultivation of creativity relative to the scientific content taught in the classes under discussion, by means of the creativity of the teacher seen as a key factor to stimulating students' creativity in nowadays challenging teaching context. The conclusions invited to perspectivisation and broadened the view over such a complex concept such as student creativity.

Thus, students' creativity can be supported, enhanced, and developed, in both MTM and ELTM classes, when the most appropriate didactic content is chosen or when, if choice is not an allowed option, adaptability, variation and tailoring are applied as instruments at hand to step

in and take over on behalf of creativity in order to save monotony, dullness and boredom in class. Still, a boost in students' creativity cannot be registered without counting on, as well as in, the teacher's creativity which has become extremely important in today's competitive academic environment.

Moreover, the applicability of creativity in classroom interaction is thus an issue that can be addressed and it can encompass, as previously mentioned, strategies also discussed by Richards (2013, p.1117), such as: making use of an eclectic choice of methods, such as even blended learning, including activities with an intrinsic creative dimension in class progression, encouraging original thought in students, providing personal examples, or working with the fantasy element (Dörnyei, 2001). But, most importantly, making the most of the teaching moments, by giving students choices, customising the teaching content from adapting the textbook to serve a certain micro-teaching situation up to the limit of encouraging students to question the textbook, using blogging as a resource and focusing on students as much as possible by using activities that showcase students' talent, using activities from the learners' world or by simply encouraging creative collaboration. Thus, besides being audacious enough to choose their own content to teach, in point of not necessarily the macro-topics, but of the applied micro-contexts that can make the main subject more interesting than a mere ruling of the syllabus, a teacher must also be courageous enough to adapt and to change the content according to the real level and interests of the students. In this way, the methods the teachers decide to use in class in order to be able to make creativity boost were subjected to analysis in the pages of the two papers written on the topic of creativity in class. And yet potential may be exploited further on if any teacher is interested in working with the creativity that she managed to invigorate in her students.

'Differentiated Instruction with Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology Seminars: Didactic Game and Individual Work' (2017) and 'Differentiated Instruction: Interactive Methods with Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology Seminars. A Comparative Analysis' (2017) are a series of other 2 papers which, this time, were interested in exemplifying, analysing, and proving the utility of various strategies of differentiated instruction, an idea as old as effective teaching, used within Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology seminars, as instruments in the teaching process of the two subjects.

The foci of the research were on, in one paper, the didactic game, while, in the other paper, on interactive methods, as extremely resourceful means of successfully implementing differentiated instruction when preparing future teachers, thus helping them understand, by a double motivated approach, the usefulness of such a strategy in classroom teaching for, for example, foreign languages acquisition.

The conclusions of these two studies, emphasised the idea that student learning progress can be obtained, both with the Mathematics and English Language Teaching Methodology seminars, when, to meet the desired aims for each course or seminar, the teacher uses as many times as possible didactic games, individual work, interactive methods in a differentiated manner, and accompanies all these with differentiated didactic techniques. In this way, students can actively gain knowledge, skills, and long-life abilities and even the weak ones can list satisfaction next to their task fulfilment, boosting their self-confidence and interest for methodology.

The prerequisites for all this to be successful were identified as: developing a close professional profile of the students, correctly identifying their relative level of knowledge, their weak and strong points, their typical and recurrent errors, observing their work pace, but more importantly, their personal learning styles, which has always been and still remains a delicate topic that can and will make the interest of our future research.

Additionally, working with the students aspiring to become teachers and offering them the possibility not only to evaluate their content related knowledge in the specialised fields they were studying for majoring in either Mathematics or English, but also to activate their metalanguage and to raise their methodological awareness, we came to the conclusion that differentiated instruction, applied by means of the interactive methods analysed above, proved its value and usefulness irrespective of the field of the subject matter taught and level, as it generates appropriate leaning environments for each student, activates individual skills that can lead to performance on a personal level against internal criteria, and eliminates frustration, decreasing the potential of dropouts as a result of poor learning results.

Foreign Language Acquisition and The Digital Era of Learning

The digital key in which foreign language acquisition can be performed today, as well as its mobile, electronic, computer assisted or internet-based approaches are concerned made the further interest of detailed research for the best mechanism to be discovered, implemented, and developed for future candidates to learning different foreign languages. Consequently, titles like: 'The "E"-Factor of the Educational System: The Electronic Platform (2013) – co-author M.A.P. Purcaru (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 6 (55)* No. 2. Series VII: Social Sciences and Law. [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (CD-ROM)] pp. 19-26), 'On MOOC' (2014) – co-author M.A.P. Purcaru (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 7 (56)* No. 2. Series VII: Social Sciences and Law. [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (CD-ROM)], pp. 31-38), 'On Blended Learning: Japanese and Romanian Telecollaboration – Positives and Negatives' (2015) (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 8 (57)* No. 2. Series VII: Social Sciences and Law. [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (CD-ROM)], pp. 43-50), 'Accommodating English for Specific Purposes to Computer Assisted Language Learning' (2021) – co-author Cristina Dimulescu (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 14(63)*, No. 2, Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies. Section: LanGuage Studies. *Transilvania University of Brasov Publishing House*. [ISSN (print): 2066-768X; ISSN (CD-ROM): 2066-7698], pp. 5-18), and 'What kind of LSP does LanGuide propose?' (2022) – co-author Cristina Dimulescu (In Čebrov, N., P. Romanowski, and J. C. Gabrovec (eds.) *LanGuide Project. Research and Professional Insights*. Koper: University of Primorska Press, [ISBN online: 78-961-293-175-9, ISBN print: 78-961-293-174-2], pp. 37-62), prove the constant interest in such aspects like: language acquisition tools, modern devices and technologies, and best practices within the applied linguistics digital context of the communicative approach to learning.

As part of a modern approach towards any (distance) learning system, the electronic platform has started being acknowledged as a useful and valid teaching instrument. The paper entitled 'The "E"-Factor of the Educational System: The Electronic Platform' (2013) focused on gathering and interpreting data relevant for foreign language acquisition, as well as on establishing which factors can influence the possible promotion of an e-platform to the position of a central didactic tool in any future core curriculum design. A survey was conducted by the authors on participants in a European project on professional reconversion and the findings both confirmed and challenged the assumptions and expectations of the two

researchers, as the modern tool under scrutiny was in its initial phases of usage in 2013, in a way-before pandemic context, in which its usefulness was still questioned and welcomed with reservations. Thus, the conclusions of the 2013 study emphasised the necessity of offering training sessions to the end users at the beginning of the process of working with a platform, even if they thought they were familiar to it, as it could very well happen for them to know how to make use of only the basic buttons/commands of the board and be "innocent" with respect to the more interesting and complicated ones, which would enable them to offer more content to the students, in a modern way. Moreover, the creation of a real "culture" with respect to e-learning platforming should arise, as e-learning platforms could be used not only for distance learning programmes and not only in universities. Based on the openness that the idea was met with, factors such as gender, age, or professional qualification in point of scientific or philological background did not stand in the way of such an endeavour, as optimistically proven by the study under discussion. In this respect, willingness would be a keyword, according to Conole and Oliver (2000), both on behalf of the implementation / decisional bodies and on that of the beneficiaries.

As an arch over time, after tormenting pandemic times and a challenging and challenged educational and learning context, a more updated study on the same aspect has been recently devised by C. Dimulescu and I, on the occasion of participating in the *International Scientific Conference 20th Mate Demarin Days* with the central theme 'Diversity and Interdisciplinarity in Education', at the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Croatia, in April 2023, with the paper 'Factors Influencing First-Year Students' Usage of Digital Learning Tools at *Transilvania University of Braşov*', thus proving consistency and maintaining a real interest in the way in which digital tools can influence decisions in candidates to learning foreign languages.

Living in a world that has brought us to witness toddlers choosing applications on tablets on their own, determined me, in 2014, to approach the research of a very modern alternative type of education, i.e., massive open online courses. Consequently, 'On MOOC' (2014) is a paper whose main aim was, besides offering a general view over the concept, that of identifying the positives and the negatives of this means of online tutoring, by amassing the latest opinions in this field, but also by imparting from my experience as a MOOC student, participant in different courses of language acquisition. The conclusions of the paper dwell on Alexander's (2013) "Education as a Service", or EaaS by its acronym, which is a concept which should be naturalised by universities nowadays. His and Selingo's (2014) suppositions were that 'in 50 years [...] there

will be only 10 institutions in the world delivering higher education and Udacity (one of the three major MOOC providers, next to edX and Coursera – my comment) has a chance at being one of them’.

This type of education has more to do with a vocational approach than with a common core curriculum, classically designed, which can only be on the side of foreign language acquisition. Demographics, the Great Recession, hollowing out of the middle class, globalisation, automation, the world going online, complexity of higher education, adjunctification, mobile applications, social media’s triumph, interface transformations, and global cyberwar and surveillance, as well as the need of global conversations which increases day by day, the desire to have more access to more information, and lots of latent creativity waiting to be used are only a few of the reasons mentioned by Alexander (2013) which are worth taking into account to render a high degree of trust to the idea of MOOC for the future. The higher education landscape should, in other words, change its complexion: from a life changing experience to supplementing it, from pedagogical to logistical, from pen and pencil to technical, online, open, and massive.

Another extremely interesting analysis in terms of foreign language acquisition derived from the collaboration with *Otaru University of Commerce* in Japan, in an exchange of online interactions between students enrolled with ‘Functional Writing’ classes both here and there, under the format of telecollaboration and a flipped classroom experience. Thus, ‘On Blended Learning: Japanese and Romanian Telecollaboration – Positives and Negatives’ (2015) analysed the outcomes of this project, in terms of student satisfaction against the degree of novelty that such a method entangles. The research was based on the opinions expressed by the direct participants in the exchange, students in their second year of study, and represented part of a greater analysis considering that the project was still unfolding at the time when this experiment was performed. The conclusions of the study could be summoned under the positive side and reflected the opinion of most of the subjects interrogated substantiating once again the appreciation that modern teaching methods and techniques enjoy nowadays among students.

Nowadays, when several aspects of our daily lives are becoming increasingly digitalised, Computer-Assisted Language Learning (henceforth CALL) is increasingly widespread. In recent years, CALL has become available to more language learners in various countries, making it

possible for students with different cultural backgrounds to connect and engage in common learning experiences. At the same time, technology-based language learning has also evolved in terms of its applicability for the different parts of the curriculum in general and any given language lesson, in particular (Chapelle, 2010)

From personal computers, to pocket-sized devices such as: mobile phones, mp3 and mp4 players, tablets and personal digital assistants, the range of connectivity to linguistic information has grown considerably in recent years, as, together with portability and accessibility, these gadgets enable, ease, and facilitate the access to not only sources of general knowledge, but, especially to language frameworks of learning, reducing the time and place barriers in language learning (Mosavi Miangah & Nezarat, 2012).

Consequently, it is not only that in today's foreign language classroom practice, instead of asking pupils and students to put their mobile phones away or to turn them off, teachers can very diligently ask them to put them to good use, but also, they can rely on the mobility this approach has brought and surpass the physical limits of a room, assigning good practice on the go.

Delivering specialised content to pupils, students, and candidates to learning new content alike, in various fields, is always supported by a methodology that specifies and ensures its professional implementation framework. Teaching foreign languages is a unique case in point because, in accordance with the procedures, strategies, tasks, tools, and equipment used, issues that may arise and possible solutions provided, goals pursued, and interactions between and among actors, the approach has always been a critical factor. Language skills began with little relevance, evolved to be more important, and eventually became the key focus in the communicative era, alongside culture, a projected prospective 5th skill that must be properly placed among the language knowledge a learner should be equipped with when acquiring a new foreign language.

Regardless of the language under consideration, all modern techniques nowadays agree that the cultural element must be present alongside the two receptive and the other two productive skills as a basic part in the practice of attaining fluency in that respective language. But, as it will be seen below, the very nature of the culture to be included in the discourse can be a subject of controversy.

Viewing once again the process of foreign language acquisition from the perspective of the candidates to learning it, but in a very modern, digitalised, mobile, and technical learning and existential environment, the studies 'Accommodating English for Specific Purposes to Computer Assisted Language Learning' (2021) and 'What kind of LSP does LanGuide propose?' (2022) researched into the technicalities of developing a mobile application for foreign language learning and assessing, in four different specialised fields (academic, mobility, administrative and IT) offered for six different languages (English, Romanian, Slovene, Italian, Croatian and Spanish) at 3 different levels of knowledge (beginner, intermediate and advanced) and for 3 different learning personae (student, teacher and administrative staff member).

Thus, based on a descriptive approach regarding the content of the LanGuide International Erasmus project that I was part of, but in perfect accordance with the literature review on CALL and MALL, these research papers placed the individuals' interested in acquiring a new language in the appropriate contexts they might be engaged in, by means of the task environment specially created for each exercise and by the cultural elements from each of the foreign languages targeted, which were included in them. In this way, the mobile application created by the LanGuide project manages to distinguish itself among other language learning mobile applications by not only harmonising ESP to CALL, but also by combining the pedagogy of the communicative approach to teaching a foreign language to that of the digital era.

Foreign Language Acquisition and Modern Assessment

The assessment of language acquisition is an important aspect of understanding how individuals acquire and use language. Language assessment can provide insights into an individual's language abilities and help identify areas of strength and weakness. Additionally, language assessment can inform decisions about appropriate interventions to support language development (Bishop, 2010).

Research has shown that language assessments should be valid, reliable, and culturally and linguistically appropriate (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020). Validity refers to the extent to which an assessment measures what it is intended to measure, while reliability refers to the consistency of results over time and across assessors (Bishop, 2010). Cultural and linguistic appropriateness refers to the consideration of an individual's cultural and

linguistic background when conducting language assessments (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2020).

Subsequently, language acquisition and assessment are interconnected and both play important roles in understanding and supporting language development in individuals. Appropriate language assessment can provide valuable information about an individual's language abilities and inform decisions about appropriate interventions to support language development. That is why, my intervention in the *5th Conference on British and American Studies* (Brasov, 2007) on 'Testing Today' and a dedicated paper to 'Assessment Criteria with Teaching Methodology Courses: The Case of English and Mathematics - A Comparative Study' (2014) – co-author M.A.P. Purcaru (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 7 (56)* No. 2. Series VII: Social Sciences and Law. [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (CD-ROM)] pp. 47-56) represented a natural specialised manifestation of interest towards this important component of measuring language acquisition strategies and their impact on the candidates to learning a foreign language (and not only!).

'Assessment Criteria with Teaching Methodology Courses: The Case of English and Mathematics - A Comparative Study' (2014) had as a main aim the identification of certain necessary conditions for the students to be interested in learning and obtaining good results in either Mathematics Teaching Methodology or English Language Teaching Methodology, with focus on nominating the pedagogical factors involved in the assessment process of the students in these two subjects. The research was conducted on 80 students, aged 20-21 years, in their 2nd year of studies at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, enrolled in the Teaching Methodology class. The assessment process with the courses consisted of several methods and techniques of evaluation: written, oral, portfolio, paper submission, role play, self-evaluation, or using interactive group methods. The conclusions drawn, after analysing the questionnaires, the school documents, as well as the answers provided by the students on the interview we had with them, showed that both their interest for the subjects and their learning performances had risen in direct proportion to the appropriate and varied systematic assessment applied to each learning unit.

Thus, the benefits that may result from treating these two generally-acknowledged opposite disciplines in parallel opened two directions: on the one hand, it could be observed that, by comparing some assessment methods considered of great usefulness in stimulating the

interest and improving the performance in the specialised fields of methodological subjects of the students enrolled in each profile, a certain connecting bridge could be created between the two subjects (Mathematics and English). The interdisciplinary approach enforces, in general, a possible information transfer which enables an exchange of experience and competences from one domain to the other, thus aiming at adaptation, improvement, and reciprocal correction of possible malfunctions. On the other hand, the limit between the two profiles situated at distant ends, scientific and humanistic, is diluted.

As a general conclusion to such an audacious research attempt, the analysis regarding assessment methods, techniques and criteria was worth being approached at a meta-discursive level, as successfully proved in the above-mentioned paper. Even though, according to Heaton (1990) and Madsen (1983), critical contributions regarding the type of general tests that can be applied to any students, anytime, irrespective of profile enrolment, as well as discrete point studies regarding specific fields and their appropriate evaluation methods that fit their profile better have existed for quite a long period of time, an analysis on the assessment techniques applied with meta-specialised courses, such as those disciplines focused on teaching 'teaching' need to exist as well. Why? Because they too must end with an evaluation session and, as with all the other items included in their syllabus, they set an example for their very content, meaning they serve as meta-examples in point of all three steps involved in the process of any teaching methodology: teaching, learning, and assessing, with focus, in our case, on the last one, irrespective of the profile variation.

Foreign Language Acquisition and Culture

Language learning is not just about acquiring a means of communication but also understanding and appreciating the culture that it represents (Kramsch, 1993; Saville-Troike, 2006). Therefore, a critical component of language acquisition is the cultural element. The cultural element refers to the social customs, etiquette, history, literature, arts, and other aspects of the target language's culture (Byram, 1997; Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013; Risager, 2007).

One significant cultural element in language acquisition is understanding the social customs and etiquette of the target language's culture. For example, in Japanese culture, it is customary to bow when greeting someone, and different bowing angles convey different levels of respect.

In contrast, in American culture, a handshake is the standard greeting. Understanding these cultural differences is crucial to avoid offending or misunderstanding native speakers and to effectively communicate in the target language (Kramersch, 1993).

Additionally, learning about the history, literature, and arts of the target language's culture can provide valuable insights into the language and its nuances. For example, understanding the rich literary traditions of Spanish-speaking cultures can help learners appreciate the intricacies of the language and its various dialects (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013).

Finally, language learners must also immerse themselves in the target culture to fully grasp its nuances. This can be done through various means, such as watching films and TV shows in the target language, listening to music, and engaging in conversations with native speakers (Risager, 2007).

Overall, understanding and appreciating the cultural nuances of the target language is a critical aspect of language learning. By doing so, learners can communicate effectively, gain a deeper understanding of the language and its people, and ultimately achieve greater success in their language learning endeavours. (Byram, 1997)

Consequently, a particular interest has been manifested by me, in co-authorship with Ana Borca, towards this particular aspect of language acquisition, as proven by two participation in conferences on this topic (*Al 13-lea Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de Lingvistică: Diacronie și Sincronie în Studiul Limbii Române*, București, 2013, and *Al 17-lea Colocviu Internațional al Departamentului de Lingvistică: Variație în română și în limbile romanice*, București, 2017), as well as two well received papers on it, as follows: 'The Importance of the Cultural Element in Teaching a Foreign Language' (2016) – (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brașov 9 (58)* Special Issue No.2/Proceedings of the International Conference 'From Individual to Society Applied Psychology for a Sustainable Community', September 22-23, 2016, Brașov, Romania. Series VII: Social Sciences and Law. [ISSN 2066-7701 (Print). ISSN 2066-771X (online)], pp. 99-108), indexed as an Erih Plus entry and 'Contextualising Culture in Teaching a Foreign Language: The Cultural Element among Cultural Awareness, Cultural Competency and Cultural Literacy' (2020) - (In *Philologica Jassyensia XVI, 2 (32)*, [ISSN (online): 2247-8353. ISSN (print): 1841-5377], pp. 287-304), indexed as a Web of Science entry.

'The Importance of the Cultural Element in Teaching a Foreign Language' (2016) aimed at challenging the theory of "culturally responsive teaching" (Gay, 2002), laying stress on the importance of the cultural iconicity of the language and civilisation taught and not on that the candidates to learning a new language belong to by birth. The paper came as a result of the authors' extensive experience in teaching Romanian as a foreign language to expats, and drew on the conclusions of not only first-hand classroom work, manuals and syllabus design, but also on the data collected from a number of questionnaires filled in by the participants in the 'Summer Language School' dedicated to 'Learning Romanian in Romania' and organised annually by *The Romanian Cultural Institute*, as well as from the feedback provided by these students at long distance.

Thus, the paper insisted not only on acknowledging the importance of the internal, indigenous, or domestic cultural element to be directly transposed into the acquisition mechanism of the candidates to learning a foreign language, i.e., the one belonging to the target language, to the detriment of the cultural iconicity of the elements belonging to the source language, but also on defining the cultural element, as one of the most difficult tasks. Considering all the compartments of a language: phonetic and phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic, as well as the levels of discourse and oral and written communication, but also including the patterns of social and professional behaviour, historical and geographical landmarks and icons, national sports, art products and famous personalities, to enlist only a few examples, characteristics that define a certain culture can be traced within the tendency of associating them to the specifics of that particular background whose language is under the process of being taught.

'Contextualising Culture in Teaching a Foreign Language: The Cultural Element among Cultural Awareness, Cultural Competency and Cultural Literacy' (2020) takes a step forward on the path of defining the profile of the cultural element necessary to be present when acquiring a foreign language alongside the other four classical language skills, its basic aim being to establish the place the cultural element holds within the triad 'cultural awareness', 'cultural competence' and 'cultural literacy'. This positioning is performed on the background of a multinational class in which a foreign language is taught and its momentum in the teaching process, but only after clearly delineating the core features of each concept, as well as their logical sequentiality. Founding the research on a corpus of answers collected from candidates to learning Romanian as a foreign language regarding their reasons and motivation to approach its study, and

considering a whole body of examples gathered as a result of our first-hand experience in teaching Romanian as a foreign language, the paper also discussed the connection between society, language, and culture. But, most importantly, this study put forward the concept of *culturacy*, a term originally coined from cultural literacy, as the 5th and compulsory element to be included in the set of skills of foreign language learning. The limitations were, at that moment, connected to the approach *culturacy* can have in assessment, but the forthcoming paper, focused on establishing a solid profile of the cultural element in teaching a foreign language, intended to consider this aspect, as well.

Belonging to the same area of interest, in research partnership with Cristina Dimulescu, I continued investigating the aspect of imbuing cultural elements into language acquisition in a digital context, interesting observations deriving in papers like: 'Integrating Culture in Teaching ESP via the LanGuide Mobile Application' (2021) – (In *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 14(63)*, No. 2, Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies. Section: LanGuage Studies. *Transilvania University of Brasov Publishing House*. [ISSN (print): 2066-768X; ISSN (CD-ROM): 2066-7698], pp. 83-100) and 'What Kind of LSP Does LanGuide Propose?' (2022) - (In Čebrov, N., P. Romanowski, and J. C. Gabrovec (eds.) *LanGuide Project. Research and Professional Insights*. Koper: University of Primorska Press, [ISBN online: 78-961-293-175-9, ISBN print: 78-961-293-174-2], pp. 37-62.

As a special case of the above-mentioned approaches to defining the profile of the cultural element in the process of foreign language acquisition, 'Integrating Culture in Teaching ESP via the LanGuide Mobile Application' (2021) and 'What kind of LSP does LanGuide propose?' (2022) presented the uncharacteristic illustration of including the cultural element when teaching a foreign language against the background of the classicised approaches in this respect, in the context of the LanGuide project, whose objectives were to provide the users with a mobile application for learning and testing foreign languages. The approach tackled by the authors of the exercises, who were also the authors of these studies, combined two aspects from the traditional methodologies i.e., the inclusion of host-country cultural items in tasks devised in and for the English language, in order to meet the requirements and goals of the LanGuide project. Thus, students, teachers and administrative staff members involved in an Erasmus+ mobility who need to learn English or to test their English language knowledge in the fields of mobility, administration, IT and/or academic may find useful cultural elements of the countries they will visit while polishing their skills for English.

Thus, the cultural element has become necessary in terms of inclusion in the body of the process of acquiring a foreign language. But, in the curious case of some of the exercises designed for the LanGuide project, the cultural element of the country one would like to live was included in otherwise exercises dedicated to another language, as it was the special case of English language exercises comprising Romanian cultural elements, designed as such in order to meet the intentions the LanGuide project, and such a combination was worth analysing even as just a case of exception from a clear path to be followed in this respect.

The conclusions of these studies looked back on all the theories presented, as well as on the original examples designed by us, as authors of this research, and pinpointed the way in which language can adapt to the necessities of a reality which sometimes is intricate, catering for the needs of, for example, students, teachers and members of the administrative staff wanting to learn or to polish their English with the aim of enrolling themselves in different Erasmus+ mobility programmes, but trying to become familiar, at the same time, with the reality of the countries they will be part of, for longer or shorter periods, depending on the length of the exchange, exactly as described by the LanGuide project's reality.

Motivation with Candidates to Foreign Language Acquisition

Building motivation is a key factor in successful foreign language acquisition (Dornyei, 1998; Gardner, 2001). Without motivation, learners may struggle to sustain the effort required to master a new language, and may even lose interest altogether (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Fortunately, there are several strategies that can help learners build and maintain their motivation throughout the language learning process.

One effective strategy is to set clear, achievable goals (Dornyei, 2009). By setting specific targets for what they want to achieve in their language learning, learners can create a sense of purpose and direction. For example, a learner might set a goal of being able to hold a basic conversation in their target language within six months. Achieving this goal can provide a sense of accomplishment and further motivation to continue learning.

Another strategy is to create a positive learning environment (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Learners who feel supported and encouraged are more likely to stay motivated. This can be

done by finding a study partner, joining a language exchange group, or even just listening to music or watching TV shows in the target language.

Intrinsic motivation is also a critical component of successful language learning (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Intrinsic motivation refers to the desire to learn a new language for its own sake, rather than for external rewards or pressures. This type of motivation is often more sustainable and can lead to deeper engagement with the language. To foster intrinsic motivation, learners can focus on their personal interests and passions when choosing language learning materials or topics to study.

Finally, learners should also celebrate their progress and successes along the way (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Recognising and celebrating milestones, no matter how small, can provide a sense of achievement and encourage learners to continue their language learning journey, which establishes a close connection to and builds the bridge to gamification and its benefits over the learning process, as proven by professors Werbach and Hunter (2015, 2022) and further investigated by me and my team of researchers as part of the *Gamification-Based Instruction for Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language* - GIRO nationally funded research project.

Having as a main objective to introduce the concept of *gamification* in the class of Romanian as a Foreign Language, as the basic instrument for language acquisition, this research project managed by me, as part of the *Tinere Echipe* UEFISCDI national project competition in 2021, was innovative and original not only in the fact that the subject itself was modern and had not been officially addressed in Romania that far, from the point of view of foreign language acquisition mechanisms, but also in the fact that it could have a major international impact on learning Romanian as a Foreign Language with its help.

Thus, building and maintaining motivation is crucial for successful foreign language acquisition. By setting clear goals, creating a positive learning environment, fostering intrinsic motivation, and celebrating progress, learners can stay motivated and engaged throughout their language learning journey (Gardner, 2001).

By boosting confidence in students and determining them to actively engage in acquiring a foreign language, motivation is a key element in contributing to the success of the learning

process. More importantly, on the ground of Romanian acquired as a Foreign Language, papers like: 'Stimuler la motivation des apprenants lors de l'enseignement du roumain en tant que langue étrangère' (2022) – co-authors G. Burbea, I. Căpeneală and R. Săftoiu (In *Analele Universității București. Limba și literatura română [AUBLLR], LXXI*, [ISSN 1220-0271], pp. 3-20), 'GIRO – Towards a Gamified Approach to Teaching Romanian as a FL' (2022) – co-authors R. Săftoiu, G. Burbea, and I. Căpeneală (In Pixel (ed.). *Conference Proceedings. 15th International Conference Innovation in Language Learning*. Hybrid Edition. Bologna: Filodiritto, [ISBN 979-12-80225-42-9, ISSN 2384-9509], pp. 324-331), 'Teaching Romanian for Specific Purposes in a Gamified Environment' (2022) – co-authors R. Săftoiu, G. Burbea, and I. Căpeneală (In Pixel (ed.). *Conference Proceedings. 15th International Conference Innovation in Language Learning*. Hybrid Edition. Bologna: Filodiritto, [ISBN 979-12-80225-42-9, ISSN 2384-9509], pp. 200-206) and *Predarea limbii române ca limbă străină prin 'gamification'* (2023) – co-authors R. Săftoiu, G. Burbea, and I. Căpeneală (Brașov: *Transilvania University Publishing House*) made a real impact and brought their great contribution to the modern means of the digitalised approach towards acquiring a foreign language.

In recent years, the educational market has been challenged by the unprecedented use of technology for instructional purposes. Educators and students have started to approach teaching and learning in a more engaging way to bridge the gap between face-to-face education and the opportunities of the online environment.

Grounded in gamification against the background of the communicative era of learning, but very much in debt to the digital approach, the research undertaken by our team of linguists in 'GIRO – Towards a Gamified Approach to Teaching Romanian as a FL' (2022) delved into boosting motivation with the students from the Preparatory Year when learning Romanian as a Foreign Language (RFL). Working with the modern research framework offered by design-based research (DBR), we were able to observe while teaching, teaching while applying and adapting while using different gamified concepts within the teaching continuum during the experimental semester. Starting from the direct observation method which enabled us to measure low levels of motivation in our students, we decided to change the techniques in the second semester and to gamify the entire learning experience of our 27 students for 5 months, while developing their B1 level of language acquisition, both within the general module and as part of their specific vocabulary acquisition classes. Thus, capitalising on the extensive experience gathered as a result of both attending dedicated courses focused on the tandem

gamification and education, and of the activities performed as members of the GIRO nationally funded project, we focused our teaching intention on creating a gamified setting for the first time in an academic environment, in Romania. Moreover, a new methodology was applied to RFL teaching, in which point, badges, and leader boards (PBLs), self-determination theory (SDT), the sense of belonging to a community, freedom of choices, learner engagement, scaffolding, boss fights, alongside game-based activities, such as: GooseChase, Storyjumper, Plickers, Wordwall, Kahoot, all supported by the ClassDojo platform, contributed to changing the habits of language learning and results achievement. Not dismissing the negatives of the approach, which only triggered valuable insights regarding the frame applied, but positively exploiting the benefits conveyed by it, the paper pragmatically indicated that a change in education can be the case when rooted in *gamification*.

Setting the ground for the actual implementation on the concept in Romanian as a foreign language acquisition classes, 'Stimuler la motivation des apprenants lors de l'enseignement du roumain en tant que langue étrangère' (2022) discussed the importance of motivation in education and how it has become a challenge for today's generation of learners. The authors highlighted the significance of *gamification* as a digital approach to foreign language acquisition and its potential to re-establish the balance between students, teachers, and educational institutions. The concept of *gamification* is based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) which emphasizes the concepts of competence, autonomy, and relatedness and how they are directly connected to the world of games. The authors also discussed how *gamification*, as defined by Pelling (2002, in Deterding & co, 2011), involves using game design elements in non-game contexts to create a more enjoyable and motivating experience. The studies of Werbach and Hunter on *gamification* showed how the components, mechanics, and dynamics of games can be applied to various areas, including education, to achieve successful outcomes and all of them were successfully implemented within Romanian as a Foreign Language classes at the Preparatory Year of the Faculty of Letters, at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, as part of the experiment conducted in order to measure the effectiveness of this approach towards foreign language acquisition.

Applied to an even narrow segment of language acquisition, the paper 'Teaching Romanian for Specific Purposes in a Gamified Environment' (2022) addressed the issue of acquiring Romanian for Specific Purposes (RSP) in a blended form, designing face-to-face activities according to a gamified environment that was meant to increase involvement and make

learning engaging and entertaining. Using the methodological approach of design-based research (DBR) again, we discussed how activities and syllabi of courses in RSP can be macro-designed according to *gamification* principles so that it could offer the students the opportunity to immerse themselves in a complex system of interactions whose main purpose was to boost motivation during the process of learning.

The target group consisted of 20 international students who had studied the Preparatory Year in Romanian for 5 months, reaching the CEFRL A2 level of Romanian, before starting the classes for specific purposes. The main fields of study were Engineering, Medicine and Sports. The research was carried out from late February 2022 until early June 2022 and was tailored to address the productive language skills, as well as the specialised terminology in the fields mentioned above. Thus, after deciding upon the main frames of gamification to be applied in class, we also selected various applications to cater for the specific needs of our students, through which we customised the learning experience in the form of games (GooseChase, Storyjumper, Plickers, Wordwall, Kahoot) that could be played either individually or as a team. The platform used for interaction was ClassDojo, which opened options for other activities such as online portfolio design, poster presentation, or interactive written assignments. The gamified environment created a sense of community and built on their intrinsic motivation since students were required to practice their vocabulary in the real world or to get involved in creative activities. In the blended class, students were actively engaged in their language learning and could develop their linguistic competence.

Foreign Language Acquisition in Didactics

Professional Training

The level of interest shown by individuals who are learning a foreign language is closely connected to the textbooks used either by the instructors responsible for the teaching process or by the learners themselves during self-directed language acquisition. Therefore, the development of effective and high-quality tools for this purpose is a key priority for teachers involved in curriculum design and textbook construction.

As a result of attending dedicated training courses offered by *British Council* Bucharest and *University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations* for becoming a certified instructor for preparing

candidates for seating international English language exams, such as: *Preparing Students for YLE, FCE, CAE, BEC* (with focus on reading, writing, listening, speaking), between 2005-2007, after graduating from the *Interactive Methods for Teaching-Learning-Evaluation Process: Project-based Learning and Video Communication* course as a member of the 2006 Pilot Project COMPLETE of the 'International Leonardo da Vinci Interactive Programme', after participating in special training courses focused on developing the appropriate skills for teaching Romanian as a foreign language (Cluj, March, 2008) under the direct supervision of professor Elena Platon, but also after obtaining certification in *Gamification and Game-Based Learning* (October 2021), at ITC Prague, in *Gamification*, by The Wharton School of University of Pennsylvania (October 2021), under the guidance of professor Kevin Werbach and in *Leading Change: Go Beyond Gamification with Gameful Learning* by the University of Michigan (March 2022), under the instruction of professors Barry Fishman and Rachel Neimer, I considered appropriate to embark on the very responsible task of designing a textbook dedicated to the students enrolled with the Preparatory Year of the Faculty of Letters at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, within which I teach Romanian as a Foreign Language and Romanian Culture and Civilisation.

Textbooks Construction

Relying on first-hand experience and direct observation, on methodologies specially dedicated to examining the most appropriate foreign language acquisition mechanisms, I became part of the board of authors who engaged in the design of specialised manuals dedicated to the acquisition of Romanian as a foreign language for special purposes, being responsible for the series dedicated to the vocabulary pertaining to the medical field: *Limba Română pentru Străini. Limbaje specializate* (2022) – co-authors: G. Argăseală, A. Bodoc, E. Buja, G. Burbea, G. Cusen, A. S. Felea, S. Măda, M. Matej, C. S. Micu A. Petre, I. V. Rus Ioana, R. Săftoiu, R. Sinu, O. Tatu, N. Tudor. (Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House).

In the same field of Romanian as a Foreign Language acquisition, *Predarea limbii române ca limbă străină prin 'gamification'. Studiu monografic și ghid de bune practici*. (2023. Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House) aimed at creating a perspective over the mechanisms of foreign language acquisition in digital times, by means of a very modern concept, that of *gamification*, through the lenses of the direct beneficiaries of the teaching

technique, as the students who participated in the experiment the book is based on not only directed benefited from the learning outcomes, but they also had the chance to engage in the implementation of the research. Their direct involvement was facilitated by the research framework adopted by the research team, whose members are also the authors of this guide alongside me (R. Săftoiu, G. Burbea, I. Căpeneată), i.e., design-based research (DBR), already mentioned above. This approach enabled us, according to its main feature, i.e., 'test and refine educational designs based on principles derived from prior research' (Collins & co, 2004: 15), to implement the new methods we aimed at, to measure the impact of their usefulness alongside our students' reactions and to adjust anything necessary on the way, as a result of the feedbacked obtained on the spot from our beneficiaries. Thus, our students were not only passive recipients of a new methodology, but also active participants in tailoring the best practices for them, turning into designers of good practices.

English language acquisition has been approached according to the communicative frame and catered for from the perspective of the language skills that need particular attention for development. My focus was on the productive language skills that our students need improvement with, as a result of multiple sessions of discussions during which they had stated their desire to express themselves more during faculty time, either in writing or orally.

Thus, in accordance with some of the courses that I have been teaching along the time, I designed, in 2016, a textbook on purposeful writing, or writing in dedicated contexts, in strict connection to real-life situations, where different types of specific texts might be required. *Write in Style: Functional Writing in English* (Brasov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House. [ISBN: 978-606-19-0854-7]) is an example in point, this practical course handbook being articulated on subsections like: specific guides towards constructing a written discourse in English, as different from Romanian, drafting a formal letter, with all its subspecies (business, complaint, information, apology, recommendation, application, etc.), leaflets or information sheets, articles and reviews, informal texts, guided or structured essays, as well as reports and proposals.

Regarding the other productive language skills, that of Speaking, *Oral Communicative Techniques: Presentation Skills. Lecture Notes* (Braşov: *Transilvania* University Publishing House. [ISBN: 978-606-19-0969-8]), from 2017, focused on the importance of public speaking, in connection to many possible domains of interest our students may be interested

in after graduation. In this way, the characteristics of different types of presentations (informative or persuasive), as well as the professional design and delivery of them made the subject of my detailed interest and came as a result of the necessity to prepare our students for future careers their profiles prepare them for.

However, not overlooking the importance of a solid grammatical articulation of their discourses, either in speaking or in writing, with *Applied English Grammar. Lecture Notes and Exercises* (Braşov: Transilvania University Publishing House [ISBN: 978-606-19-0968-1]) from 2017 I wanted to offer the basic structural overview of any critical discourse, at an upper-intermediate level, reviewing the most important chapters in English grammar that may raise difficulties towards accomplishing a refined, fluent, and correct articulation of ideas in any form.

In summary, English language acquisition has been supported, from a pedagogical perspective, according to a methodological point of view, with an appropriate communicative approach in the design of the manuals, aiming at creating an integrated, coherent, and comprehensive view over the acquisition mechanisms.

Multiple Didactic Experiences

On the same territory of didactic development and direct implication in the field of foreign language acquisition, I have participated as a lecturer in the 'Summer School' dedicated to *Learning Romanian in Romania*, organised in Brasov, in partnership with *Transilvania University of Brasov, Faculty of Letters*, by *The Romanian Cultural Institute*, since 2011. On this occasion, I had the chance to work with candidates to learning Romanian as a Foreign Language with diverse interests, educational, and age backgrounds, learning first-hand the most appropriate techniques, mechanisms, practices, and tools necessary to cater for the needs of creating a pleasant learning environment for acquiring a foreign language.

In a similar manner, still for different relative language levels, I accompanied the acquisition of English as a foreign language of many series of candidates to learning English, from 2005 onwards, with the *Centre for Modern Languages*, a department hosting classes dedicated to foreign language acquisition that belongs to the Faculty of Letters of *Transilvania University of Brasov*. It is here where I also released certificates of language competence for English and Romanian as foreign languages for individuals in need to have their language skills tested.

Last, but not least, I have been part of the process of awarding didactic degrees to teachers advancing in their careers, both for second degrees and for first degrees, since 2016, supervising papers like: *Interactive Methods of Teaching Productive Skills to Secondary School Students*, *Using Story-Based Activities to Improve English Language with Young Learners*, *Songs and Games in Teaching English in Primary School*, *Project Based Learning in High School*, *Developing Speaking Abilities through Task-Based Learning*, *Ways of Overcoming Challenges when Learning English as Foreign Language for Romanian and Hungarian Students*, *Using Digital Tools in Teaching Speaking and Writing*, etc. and conducting didactic inspections in order to assess the way in which English as a foreign language is acquired by pupils in Romanian educational establishments.

Conclusions

Possessing a deep understanding of the complex process of how individuals learn and acquire languages, I would qualify as a specialist in the field of language acquisition. My expertise in this field enables me to design and implement language learning programmes that are tailored to the needs and abilities of learners, whether in a formal classroom setting or in informal settings, such as the immersion in a foreign culture.

One of the key aspects of my work in this area is my ability to identify and respond to the unique needs of learners. I possess a nuanced understanding of the factors that influence language learning, such as cognitive development, motivation, and cultural background, which allows me to design effective and engaging language learning materials that meet the specific needs of each learner.

Moreover, my commitment to staying up to date with the latest research and industry trends in language acquisition is highly commendable. I regularly review academic literature, attend conferences, and participate in professional development programmes to ensure my language learning approaches remain relevant, effective, and impactful. This dedication to ongoing learning and development enables me to adapt to changing circumstances and continually improve my language learning priorities.

I pride myself on my meticulous attention to detail and firm commitment to quality assurance. As detailed upon above, I take great care in designing language learning approaches that are not only effective, but also culturally sensitive. This involves reflecting the appropriate tone, style, and context of the target language, which is crucial when catering for the needs of learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. My attention to detail is an essential part of my work in designing language learning materials, techniques, tasks, activities and even curriculum entries, that are tailored to the unique needs of each learner.

In conclusion, my expertise in the field of language acquisition, dedication to ongoing professional development, and commitment to quality assurance make me eligible for Ph. D. supervision in this sub-branch of applied linguistics.

(B-i2). Chapter 2: Research Achievements and Didactic Contributions on Critical Discourse Analysis and Pragmatics

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary approach to analysing language and communication practices that focuses on the relationship between discourse and power (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA aims to uncover the ways in which language is used to reinforce, challenge, or transform power relations in society. It examines how language is used to reproduce and challenge social inequalities, discrimination, and exclusion, and how power relations are maintained or transformed through language use (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997; Van Dijk, 1993).

CDA is used in various fields such as linguistics, sociology, political science, and cultural studies, and has become an important tool for understanding the role of language in shaping social reality (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999; Wodak, 2001). It offers a critical perspective on language and discourse, emphasising the need to analyse language use in its social and historical context, and to consider the power relations that underlie communication (Chilton & Schäffner, 2002; Jäger & Maier, 2009).

Levinson's Activity Types (AT) framework from the field of Pragmatics provides a useful way to analyse language use in specific social situations, and it can be fruitfully combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the relationship between language use, social activity, and power relations. Levinson's AT framework identifies six basic types of social activities: (1) giving, (2) requesting, (3) offering, (4) promising, (5) informing, and (6) directing (Levinson, 1983). Each activity type involves a particular set of speech acts and discourse strategies that reflect the social norms and expectations of the specific activity context.

CDA, on the other hand, examines how language use reproduces, challenges, or transforms power relations in society, with a focus on the relationship between discourse and power (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA emphasizes the need to analyse language use in its social and historical context and to consider the power relations that underlie communication. By combining the two frameworks, we can gain a deeper understanding of how language use is shaped by and shapes, in its turn, social activities and power relations.

For example, a CDA analysis of a workplace conversation that involves requesting and directing activity types can reveal the power relations that underlie the speech acts and discourse strategies used by the interlocutors. The use of specific linguistic forms such as imperatives, hedges, and politeness markers can reflect the power relations between the speaker and the addressee, and the social norms and expectations of the activity context. Moreover, by examining the historical and cultural context of the workplace, we can identify the broader power relations and social structures that shape the language use in that specific setting.

To sum up, Levinson's Activity Types and Critical Discourse Analysis can complement each other in the analysis of language use in social situations, providing a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between language, social activity, and power relations.

The Critical Discourse of Instruction

At a micro-management level, class organisation and discourse represent key elements to successful instructional activities, that is why special attention is dedicated to different styles of its implementation. In 'Perspectives on Language Classroom Interaction. The Teacher as a Performer with Young Learners', a research paper published in 2019, in Buja, E. and S. Măda

(eds.) *Structure, Use, and Meaning. Language Policies and Practices in Institutional Settings*. Brasov: Transilvania University of Brasov Publishing House. pp. 189-206, as a result of my participation in *The 5th International Conference on Linguistics. Structure, Use and Meaning (SUM). Language Policies and Practices in Institutional Settings*, 2018, Brasov, I focused my attention on the role the English language teacher should adopt in class when she enables the transfer of foreign language knowledge to young learners.

Thus, the aim of this paper was to highlight the importance of the role of a performer for a teacher involved in didactic activities with young learners, and to raise awareness on how a wise choice of teacher roles can influence the success of classroom interaction. Moreover, the intention was to also dwell on the misconceptions regarding the role of the teacher as a performer and to emphasise its importance especially when young learners are the beneficiaries of the teaching process. Using a natural observational approach, as a qualitative research method, the data collection for the practical part of the study involved live footage in an elementary school of Brasov, which offered a very good insight into the teacher-pupil interactions, enabled a qualified description of the data, and, at the same time, led to important conclusions regarding the role a teacher should consider when working with young candidates to learning a foreign language.

Part of a bigger project which started in the autumn of 2016 and whose product was intended to be the writing of an updated course on ELT Methodology, dedicated mainly to students, but not only, this paper meant to investigate the most appropriate pattern of classroom interaction with young learners. The mini-research group who addressed this topic was composed of three professors who have manifested a particular interest in ELT Methodology along the time, considering both their didactic profile, i.e., classes and seminars taught in the field, and their research productions consisting in papers published on this topic.

Thus, taking into consideration the variables: age of pupils (pupils were in the preparatory class, with ages varying between 6 and 7 years) and type of activity (mainly teacher-fronted, but not only), the interest that I particularly took in this analysis was oriented towards identifying the patterns of interaction to be used and the predominant role that a teacher should activate in order for the young learners to be motivated to the maximum, to be actively involved in the class, to have a complex of needs addressed and to positively engage themselves in the learning process, as an intermediary step between teaching and assessing.

In conclusion, the classroom interaction assisted, even though mainly unidirectional (teacher-students, students-teacher), managed to captivate the pupils and to maintain their interest alert in the major part of the class, due to the teacher's decision to powerfully rely on the role of the performer. Subsequently, her teaching tools comprised all the necessary equipment that such a role involves and her teaching skills revolved around her capacity to perform in front of the class different roles, from Toby, the puppet, and Winnie the Pooh, the cartoon character, to game card entertainer, and singer, eliciting the best responses in her students.

However, the unidirectional interaction between the teacher and her pupils was not restricted to the one-to-one targeted communication between one side of the teaching thread, i.e., the teacher, and the other, i.e., the pupil. It either transformed into one-to-many responses, whenever the teacher involved several children in performing a task and asking them to report back to the class, or was even replaced by the one-to-one collaboration among pupils exclusively, like during the Winnie the Pooh moment, when the throwing of the puppet from one pupil to another represented the liaison that connected the strings of the learners among themselves.

The interaction was two-fold, the teacher addressing the children either directly, as well as indirectly, when communicating with the children by means of the puppet, thus breaking the routine of the class development, when alternating not only the types of interaction, but also when changing the roles that she assumed when she decided to be a performer. Using the puppet, she invigorated the interaction, as the children reacted to the needs of the puppet, their empathy being the one targeted, when they needed to feed the puppet, or to be quiet for the puppet to be able to sleep. Thus, besides language training, the students were also exposed to emotional training, as required by the profile described by the literature review, for their age. The children reacted naturally and spontaneously to the puppet, which was instinctively confined to their universe, as they seemed to forget they were interacting with their teacher, and they accepted the scenario and interacted with the puppet.

Summing up, the approach of the teacher acting as a performer in a class of young learners can transform teaching from power display into entertainment, the young learners perceiving this as joyful way of learning which would only enable their English performance, and thus instinctively appreciating the quality of the teaching act. The major advantage of this over the

classical style relies on reducing the degree of boredom which is likely to occur during classes irrespective of the age of the pupils or students, but almost certainly when the candidates to learning a foreign language are at a very young age.

In more recent years, the classroom interaction practices and its discourse have changed a lot, due to the great expose to technology and all its advancements which have made their way into the physical environment of the educational settings, as well. Without completely replacing the modern era the communicative frame, but practically fitting into it, the era of the digital discourse has already immersed itself into the context and setting of the educational activity type which can no longer avoid the boost of technological development which, if used coherently, can positively contribute to the learning outcomes.

Thus, 'The "Globalised" Instructional Discourse: Positives and Negatives of Globalising the Language Teaching Methodology through Digitalisation', a new research contribution of mine that has been accepted for delivery in October, at the *IICE, 2023*, Dún Laoghaire, Ireland, draws the attention to this phenomenon. In a world globalised by the language of digitisation, using digital tools in education instructors can easily create and share course materials, connect with students remotely, provide immediate feedback, and monitor progress in real-time. Learners, in their turn, can access a vast range of educational resources and content anytime, anywhere, and at their own pace. Moreover, digital learning tools foster collaborative and interactive learning experiences that promote active engagement, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. They also facilitate *gamification*, which activates, according to a previous study of mine (2022), the 3F dimension (friendly, familiar, and fun) making learning entertaining, engaging, and challenging. Thus, digital learning tools have opened endless possibilities for education, making it more accessible and effective. By embracing these tools, educators and learners can enhance their teaching and learning experiences and achieve better learning outcomes.

However, challenges occur on the way, capitalising on the two-folded framework under which the educational continuum develops nowadays, in what foreign language acquisition is concerned: communicative and digital. Consequently, from the way in which mixed research teams work together to harmonise two different fields, i.e. IT and applied linguistics, in order to create cohesive mobile language applications, as tackled by me on the occasion of the LanGuide project, referred to in the previous chapter, to the way in which the cultural element is still dealt with and integrated as a possible 5th skills of the language acquisition process (as also

referenced to in my papers of 2016 and 2019 on this topic) and, moreover, to the degree of usefulness the integration of AI can bring to language and humanities classes, the global system of activity types characterising the educational discourse of the digital times needs a pragmatic lens to scrutinise its positives and negatives.

Subsequently, the implementation of *gamification* into FL teaching classes, as analysed by the research team of the GIRO national project in Romania, the work with CALL, MALL, TELL and WALL in class, as approached by the international team of the LanGuide Erasmus+ project, alongside a return to the principles of neuro-didactics, as tackled by the specialists of the TeachME Erasmus+ project, all projects that I either managed or have been part of, as a researcher, against the background of the greatest challenge the world of education may face, that of artificial intelligence and its tools, are all worth debating next to the external factors that influence the use of digital tools in the academia, in the opinion of, for example, first year students from *Transilvania* University of Braşov.

The Critical Discourse of Educational Management

Valid not only at a micro-class management level, but also at a macro-management level, critical discourse analysis papers in the field of educational policies like: 'Motivational Projects for Students at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, Romania' (2019) – co-author D. Munteanu (In *EDULEARN19 Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies*. Palma, Spain. 1-3 July, 2019. [ISBN: 978-84-09-12031-4, ISSN: 2340-1117]. IATED Publisher, pp. 201-209), listed as a Web of Science entry and 'Empowering Student Innovation for Continuous Improvement at *Transilvania* University of Braşov' (2023) – co-authors D. Munteanu, I.V. Abrudan and M. Munteanu (forthcoming), as well as the participation in *The 5th International Academic Conference on Education*. Copenhagen, Denmark. 22-24 July 2022 on the same topic of 'Continuous Improvement of Processes and Activities within *Transilvania* University of Braşov Based on Student Ideas. Be Central! Internal Project Competition' explored the depths of the power of motivation infused into the educational process and prove the importance a cohesive discourse can have at this level, alongside its impact.

Thus, 'Empowering Student Innovation for Continuous Improvement at *Transilvania* University of Braşov' presents, for example, the way in which *Transilvania* University of Braşov (UNITBV)

has embraced a participatory management policy that involves students in managerial issues. To facilitate this, UNITBV has organised internal project competitions for students on various topics, either suggested by the institution or proposed by the students themselves. Given their familiarity with campus-related issues, the students can offer practical solutions that meet their expectations. However, the success of this management strategy heavily relies on considering the motivational element. Thus, starting from the 2019-2020 academic year, UNITBV launched a large-scale internal project competition called 'Be Central!', which derives its name from the institution's official slogan, 'Learn to be Central!' The primary objective of this project was to digitise the educational processes, in general, and the didactic ones, in particular, by adapting the teaching methods to the challenging context of the pandemic. This initiative has produced multiple positive outcomes and increased productivity by utilising gamification as a macro-management approach, which motivates students and fosters a sense of belonging to the professional community. In this way, both the institution and the students benefit, generating an obvious win-win situation. The university can motivate students to develop projects that solve their problems, save resources, and develop their vocational skills. Simultaneously, the students feel a sense of belonging and satisfaction as they contribute to the institution's growth and their professional development.

Relying on previous research data disclosed on the occasion of the participation in *The 11th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies* at Palma, Spain. 1-3 July, 2019, 'Motivational Projects for Students at *Transilvania* University of Brasov, Romania' described how, in the last years, UNITBV's management team have tried to highlight the creativity and the innovative spirit of students, launching different internal project competitions for them. Moreover, not few times, it has been tried to involve the partners from the economic environment to cooperate in such directions. Thus, project competitions, such as: *We Create a Smart Campus*, *My Faculty*, *Together for our University*, *My Diploma Project*, *10 Ideas from 20.000 Students* and so on, have led to a real positive and motivational challenge among the students and, after their application, have offered real solutions for improving things in the university. But, besides these, in cooperation with the industrial partners, different events (which have become very traditional), such as: *The Graduates Meet the Companies* or *The Summer School – Transilvania Summer Event*, have achieved a perfect and fit dialog frame between students and the representatives of companies and, moreover, have increased the chances for obtaining a job in their field of expertise, as undergraduate students.

From the conclusions of the 2019 research paper, all the above-mentioned projects, at a macro-management level, aim at addressing one of the most challenging concerns in today's academic teaching world, that of motivation. There are different instances according to which students can be divided in terms of initial motivation, when they get enrolled with the study programmes of a faculty: students either completely lack motivation altogether and join university life out of external reasons or bring in a lot of motivational input which they tend to lose on the way, out of different types of factors. In both cases, the mission of the teachers is to deal with motivation, either under the form of generating it, or under the form of maintaining and boosting it. In either case, the task is difficult and complex, as it requires a lot of creativity, modern and attractive means of teaching and assessing, as well as a great deal of psychological knowledge in order to activate the most appropriate type of motivation, making use of the most appealing instruments.

Thus, as stated before, the target of the Vice-Rectorate for Students and Liaison with the Economic Community is to offer solutions at a three-fold level: first, students must be attracted by all means and motivated to participate in stimulating activities both for their personal development and for their professional profile; second, the university can be helped from within, making use of its own specialised human resource, which consists not only in the teaching staff and administrative personnel, but also in the huge body of students, who can contribute a lot to the growth of its welfare; and third, the relationship with the economic community must be enhanced, the dialogue between the university and the representatives of the companies, as well as the direct meeting of the students with these ones having become a must in today's competitive world, this communication being a two-way mutually beneficial process.

To this end, the solutions offered by the management team of UNITBV to the students are focused on motivation, to cultivate student awareness regarding the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits that an active participation in university life can bring to them. Consequently, the students are encouraged to be from initiators of projects, members in them, to managers of their own ventures, controllers of their own activity, as well as primary beneficiaries of both their well-managed resources and of their projects' outcomes, in terms of facilities or services. Therefore, externally, after being catered for their basic needs, they are recompensated with material rewards, and internally, they come to understand, appreciate, and value the results of their own work, after having applied themselves to motivating tasks, which, at all levels, fulfil

their personal ambitions, feelings, and drives, as well as their professional endeavours, even before they start their real careers.

And just to complement this discourse, the conclusions of the 2022 paper add a more modern touch to the approach, that of *gamification*. Thus, the macro-strategy used at the upper-management level has recently derived a lot of modern principles from this concept, designing a pleasant framework of implementation which fits together motivation in both its states, the sense of belonging to the culture of an organisation, rewards, status pride for the students who are granted funds for implementing their projects, cooperation for designing proposals and for executing them in case of a win, as well as competition when submitting and defending their ideas, creativity and free choice within certain limits imposed by the priority areas set by the Executive Board, etc. But most importantly, UNITBV managed to contain fun and pleasure not only in the participants in the gamified approach to its development, but also in the working environment that makes the symbolical ecosystem of its reality.

The Critical Discourse of Advertising

2018 was the year when another series of studies was initiated by me in collaboration with C. Dimulescu, on the topic of *The Image of Women in Romanian Advertising*, in the modern field of Critical Discourse Analysis.

After participating in two international conferences of applied linguistics (*The 5th International Conference on Linguistics. Structure, Use and Meaning (SUM). Language Policies and Practices in Institutional Settings*, 2018, Brasov, and *Border Crossings*, organised by the Intercultural Confluences Research Centre of the Department of Humanities, Faculty of Economics, Socio-Human Sciences and Engineering, Miercurea Ciuc, Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, Romania, April 2018) with presentations dedicated to two separate and distinctive periods of time in the Romanian advertising discourse, which we approached chronologically, the 1890s-1920s and the 1930's, we decided to publish our work with the intention of extending our research to the following epochs, which is still a desiderate that will be included in the chapter dedicated to the evolution and development plans for career development.

Consequently, papers 'The Image of Women in Romanian Advertising: The 1890s-1920s. A Discourse Analysis Approach' (2018), published in *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 11 (60)* No.2, Series IV: Philology and Cultural Studies. *Transilvania* University of Brasov Publishing House, [ISSN 2066-768X (Print). ISSN 2066-7698 (CD-ROM)], pp. 71-90, and 'The Image of Women in Romanian Advertisements: The 1930s. A Discourse Analysis Approach' (2018), published in *Acta Universitatis Sapientiae (10)* No. 3. Series Philologica. Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania Scientia Publishing House, [ISSN 2067-5151 (print). ISSN 2068-2956 (online)], pp. 33-50, listed as both an Erih Plus entry and as a Scopus entry, with an already h-index of 1, deal with the in depth analysis of the way the advertising discourse in Romania portrayed women in those epochs.

Starting from depicting the image of women as portrayed in Romanian advertising in the last part of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century and then moving on to the 1930's, the research embraced a theoretical framework of analysis which combined instruments of discourse analysis and pragmatics with gender studies concepts and was part of a larger internal research project dedicated to the study of the image of the woman as portrayed by adverts throughout time, in Romania. As noticed, the way in which the image of women has been captured by the discourse of advertising, torn between forward-looking associations fighting for equal rights and traditionalist tendencies confining the woman to the household, the female image underwent spectacular changes, as a reflection of the mentalities and implications generated by the historical and social background.

Thus, the Romanian advertising of the 1890s-1920s represented a persuasive type of discourse which, with the help of the imaginative means of the then emerging advertiser, created new necessities in a society that was still innocent in the advertising world, but willing to both create and receive the glamour of an illusion.

On the background of Belle Époque, a period of prosperity, peace around Europe, scientific, cultural, and artistic innovation, as well as evolution at economic and social levels, everything flourished and created a context favourable to the buying and selling of not only commodities but also of images and illusions.

Subsequently, the image of the late 19th century – early 20th century woman emerges of the advertising world at the crossroads of several trends: the stereotype of the fragile and coquette

woman, as she seemed to need fashionable clothes and beauty products to smooth her face, create a slenderer figure, preserve a youthful image; the domestic stereotype of the woman doing the household chores, appendix to man and confined to the space of the private boudoir and its intimacies; and the timid beginnings of a stronger woman, a breadwinner for her family, taking on masculine roles on the background of the First World War that forced her into emancipation.

The woman of the 1930s was at the crossroads of two conflicting trends: on the one hand, she was reduced to frailty and confined to the household area and, on the other hand, the emerging powerful emancipatory tendency of the age depicted her as strong, educated, and able. She was no longer a satellite of man but on a par with him.

At times drifting with the political and economic current, shaken and overpowered, defeated but rising from her own ashes, the Romanian woman became strong and fought for her rights, independence, and the worldwide recognition of her individuality and power. She empowered herself while breaking the chains of the household realm, created and advanced associations and groups, and became educated to gain increasing access to the social, political, and economic stage.

As illustrated in these papers, this changing female image was captured very well in advertising. The study of ad evolution along the years showed at first a frail woman gravitating graciously towards a male world and then a progressively more independent individual, becoming free of controlling influences.

Advertising has been proved to mirror social behaviour successfully, and the ads discussed demonstrated that words, along with posture, expression, and gesture, can show vivid images of a time when male and female roles were negotiated in harsh terms.

The Critical Discourse of Poetry

The critical discourse of poetry in my approach mainly focused on a deep understanding of the poetic text by deconstruction and vertical analysis, in order to bring together and, at the same time, to the surface, the multitudes of meaning imbued in different internal strata of a text. Studies like: 'Sonnet CXVI. Text Analysis', published in *Shakespeariana 2002. The Bulletin of the Student's Eight National Shakespeare Symposium*. Galați: Editura Fundației Universitare

Dunărea de Jos, 'Lucian Blaga: Asfințit marin (analiză de text)', published in 2002, in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga' (III)*. Sibiu: Editura Universității 'Lucian Blaga'. [ISBN 973-651-502-8], 'Lida. Analiză de text', defended in 2003 at 'Mihai Eminescu' National Colloquium, in Iasi, Section: Poetic lexicography, or 'Itemuri lingvistice structurante ale textului blagian: conjuncția și disjuncția', published in 2003, in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga' (IV)*. Sibiu: Editura Universității 'Lucian Blaga' [ISBN 973-651-703-9] all have in common, as their titles overtly state, the direct interest in text construction and discourse reconstruction, in order to account for the complexity of their authors' vision on the process of creating a poetic text.

For example, the premise that the analysis in 'Lucian Blaga: Asfințit marin (analiză de text)' started from was that 'Asfințit marin / Marine Sunset' is a modern poem, of a polysemous type, in which it is not the title that plays the role of an artistic key to decipher the major meaning, but the interaction between the levels of organisation. Their combination results in the depth of ideas, and the title develops into a metaphor only after the many-to-one analysis has been penetrated. The transparency of the entire poem, of the phonological-intonational layer in the first place, but also of the images aroused by the purity of the designates, camouflage turbulent and disturbing roots. In this respect, the interpretation of the poem started from a horizontal dimension, namely levels, but since, in Corti's (1981) view, 'the separate study of levels is a fatal violence of the critic's analytical practice, (...) compensation consisting in capturing the organising law of the text and especially its dynamic nature', harmony will consist of combining them vertically to achieve a global significance. Small nuances will intervene when a many-to-many type of analysis is also manifested, that is, a vertical correlation but at a lower level, between layers, without involving the top layer.

In 'Lida. Analiză de text', the starting point was represented by the statement made by professor Ion Coteanu in 1985, during a meeting of the Poetics Circle at the Faculty of Romanian Language and Literature - University of Bucharest: 'There is a close connection between figures of speech and the poetic text in which they appear and which partially submerges them'. Thus, the demonstration focused on the poetic lexicon - the generator of the first order textual figures - figures which, in their turn, either press upon the text as creative matrices of meaning and semantic orientation, or are pressed upon by the text as sequences carrying meaning, with their significations converging in the space of the text.

And if the tropes/figures of speech belonging to the first stage of figurative rendering have been explained, as have the figures of composition that materialise the concept of discursive configuration in contemporary semiotics, the illocutionary figures that manifest the dialogic constituent of discourse on the surface of the text still need to be explained. These illocutionary figures result from the 'insinuation' of an alterity, a foreign 'voice', a foreign discourse into the

basic enunciative model, which is the case of 'Lida', a poetic text constructed from/on an enunciative figure.

Another study dedicated to an in-depth understanding of the scaffold of a poetic text was 'Itemuri lingvistice structurante ale textului blagian: conjuncția și disjuncția', which was based on the instrumental-theoretical foundations of Pragmatics and Stylistics and sought the way in which Blaga's poetic text is structured and generated, discussing in detail the generative-semantic direction of oppositions, with a focus on the conjunction-disjunction tandem.

For a correct interpretation, an utterance must: (1) contain sufficient effects to deserve the receiver's attention; (2) not require gratuitous effort on the part of the receiver. Of course, this balance is not always perfect, often resulting in misunderstandings. However, the receiver bases their interpretive approach on the presumption of cooperation (in Grice's terms) or, in the terms of the theory of relevance, on the presumption of optimal relevance.

In the reception of literary texts, the relationships change but it is believed that the presumption of relevance persists to some extent. Figures of speech have long been conceived as deviations from the norm. The receiver of a literary text will prepare for additional inferential effort compared to a normal conversation, as any deviation from the conventional use of signs is a signal that they must seek a different meaning.

As this paper demonstrated, both modalities of grammatical concatenation of the statement, conceived in the order of a deep text direction, account not only for the organisation of semantic substance, but also for the process of production of aesthetic significance through the functioning of specific semiotic oppositions of Blaga's idiostyle.

Two other papers that are worth mentioning here are 'Lucian Blaga. Viziunea panacvatică a lumii', focused on text creation at the level of the semantic area belonging to the aquatic sphere and symbolism, published in 2022, *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga' (III)*. Sibiu: Editura Universității 'Lucian Blaga' [ISBN 973-651-502-8] and 'Walt Whitman and Lucian Blaga: Affinities', defended in 2006, on the occasion of *The 4th Conference on British and American Studies*, at Brasov, a paper trying to seek for resemblances at the level of poetic discursive visions between Whitman's and Blaga's noospheres.

The corollary of the great interest manifested in this type of discourse analysis came in 2020, when I published the book *Translating Lucian Blaga's Idiostyle: A Pragma-Stylistic Approach*, at Brasov, with *Transilvania University Publishing House*, [ISBN 978-606-19-1308-4].

This investigation focused on a thorough examination of Blaga's poetic language which generated his idiosyle, a concept responsible for the correct apprehension of a writer's identity and uniqueness, priceless when, for example a process like that of translation is considered.

Rigorously put into perspective and researched into in the first part of the analysis, with the help of the modern tools offered by the framework of Pragmatics and Stylistics discovered in the literature review dedicated to the concept of idiosyle, the notion is approached afterwards from the perspective of different translation theories which tackle even Blaga's own opinion regarding the work of a transposer of ideas and images from a source language into a target language.

Starting from semiologists, like Neț M. (2000), Greimas, A. J., and J. Courtès (1979), and Todorov T. (1983), continuing with pragmaticians like Austin, J. L. (1962), Grice, H. P. (1975), and Searle, J. R. (1969), aestheticians like Bahtin, M. (1982) and Croce, B. (2017), motivologists like Yurina, E. A. (2005), and Blinova, O. I. (2007), literary-linguists like Corti, M. (1981), linguists like Graur A., S. Stati and L. Wald (1971), the representatives of Groupe μ (1992) and their rhetoric and ending with the most recent studies on pragma-stylistics belonging to the Russian school of linguistics whose representatives are nowadays Samarskaya T. B. and T. V. Pozdeeva (2016), Sydorenko I. (2018), Demidova, Tatyana A. and Lyubov M. Gritsenko, Krokmalna H. (2019), and Mykhailovych, K. B. (2019), the first part of the theoretical background covered a wide range of linguistic perspectives on approaching and analysing poetry and on the concept of idiosyle.

Starting, thus, from the sedimentation of certain frozen significations of some biblical symbols, Lucina Blaga built personal myths of interpretation, poetic myths, re-signified symbols preserving their root, but making them blossom, usually, in double connotation: a positive, diurnal one, and a negative, nocturnal one, as variants of possible symbolical significances.

So, practically, what makes the particularity of Lucian Blaga's idiosyle is exactly this deviation from the canonised letter of the religious text, while simultaneously creating the feeling that his poetic text is imbued with religious words and symbols. Consequently, the linguistic challenge was to discover the very mechanism that triggered this paradox which, from a very modern approach of interpreting Blaga's contemporary cultural scene helped him maintain a very profitable relationship with *Gândirea* journal, at the same time as wrongly being placed, in the history of literary criticism and canonised pedagogical approach in school teaching, among religious poets.

The Critical Discourse of Literature and Drama

The discourse of literature and that of drama need particular and separate attention from that of poetry, the theory of literary genres being the one to clearly set features apart. Focusing on traditional names like Eminescu or Shakespeare, or on English contemporary writers like Kazuo Ishiguro, Angela Carter, Ian McEwan, my interest in the discourse of prose and drama reflected upon linguistic considerations, but also intertextuality, discourse construction, the pragmatics of drama, but also social constructs and the overall impact of all the above.

This path started with 'Sărmanul Dionis. Regia textului' a text discourse analysis defended at '*Mihai Eminescu*' National Colloquium, in Iasi, in 2002, within the section entitled: Poetics and Stylistics, which was interested in analysing, using modern poetics and stylistics, the way in which Eminescu's Text is organised, structured, and developed. What was under direct examination was the writing, generation, and production of meaning resulting from the interaction of lower layers, in other words, the textualisation, or Eminescu's process of creation. This one not only existed, but as demonstrated, it even represented the basis for generating prose writing. In this way, a new face of Eminescu's creation workshop could be revealed, with his writing anticipating modernism at the highest degree: not only at the level of the species of fantastic-philosophical novella, exclusively considering the positive element and novelty in the prose of the time, but also at the level of writing, casting a type of internal grammar. This is an action that can remove the 'charges of juvenile discursiveness, excessive pictorial style, pure lyrical transpositions into narrative material, and romantic clichés, that Eminescu was accused of, proving him to have been an assiduous 'worker' at the level of prose writing because a deep analysis, down to the skeleton of the text, could demonstrate a good knowledge of the modern idea of text direction.

The hypothesis I wanted to illustrate was that the novella 'Sărmanul Dionis' is, more than a text, a pluri-univocal text, according to Maria Corti (1981), in which the fundamental profound sense is only revealed after analysing the interaction of the lower levels. Therefore, two are the basic ideas on which my approach unfolded: text and pluri-univocality. The premises I started from used semiotic techniques: pragmatics, semantics, and discourse analysis related (with a focus on the first one) and were based on the theorem already transformed into an axiom by Philippe Solers: 'language is the foundation of any possible art.'

Using the narrative technique of storytelling (W.C. Booth's 'telling'), intertwining, in Tomachevski's terms (1965), associated motifs (invariables that belong to the events and actions of the characters which cannot be removed from the fabric of the text) with free motifs (descriptions of spaces, characters, interiors, landscapes, details), Eminescu structurally wove some oneiric fantastic adventures of a character. These adventures became the adventures of thought experimenting with its possibilities and limits by resorting to magic to re-harmonise the individual universe with the cosmic universe and end up discovering that the only compensatory universe accessible is that of love.

Themes, motifs, symbols only exist to the extent that there is a narrative discourse, and this, in turn, is possible thanks to the pre-existing semantic level. Thus, establishing permanent relationships of reciprocal generation and correspondences in bulk, gradually passing through many-to-many relationships, Eminescu's text ultimately reveals its meaning only after a careful analysis of its deep structure. Through meta-semantics that draws its sap from the relationships successively and/or simultaneously established between signs and signifiers, the text of 'Sărmanul Dionis' contains its key to reading, direction of interpretation, textual framing, as well as the reader-receptor relationship, at a pluri-univocal level that starts from the bottom up, from the lower levels to the higher ones, and converts a deep structure into a surface one through information transfer and meaning actualisation.

Furthermore, 2002, 2003 and 2004 were three years dedicated to the analysis of the Shakespearean discourse, both at '*William Shakespeare' Student National Symposium*, annually organised at Galati, in 2002 and 2003, where I defended the papers 'Sonnet CXVI. Text Analysis', in 2002, published in *Shakespeareana. The Bulletin of the Student's Eight National Shakespeare Symposium*, 'The Paradox of 'Othello'' and 'Shakespeare and The Post-Modern English Consciousness', in 2003, published in the same year in *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov 10 (45)*. Transilvania University of Braşov Publishing House. [ISSN 1223-964X], or at *Conference on British and American Studies*, where I presented a paper entitled 'Speech Act Theory and Genre with Shakespeare', published in 2004 in the conference volume with the same title at Transilvania University of Braşov Publishing House. [ISBN 973-635-300-1].

'Shakespeare and The Post-Modern English Consciousness' was a paper that focused on analysing the mechanism by means of which the Shakespearean text can be deconstructed

and re-built as post-modern key across the time. Known as 'the woman who loved to retell stories (Eaglestone, 2003), Angela Carter deconstructed one of the greatest myths in English culture: the institution of Shakespeare. What she brought new was her re-interpretation of the place 'the Great Brit' should occupy in Post-Modern English times, and the way she understood to reconstruct the image of tradition in Post-Modern terms, using metafictional devices.

According to Day (1998), *Wise Children* is about English culture. And it is about a Shakespeare who has been constructed as one of the originating myths of the English culture. As the novel several times reminds us, Shakespeare's head appears on the Bank of England £20 note (an allegory of the universality of Shakespearean cultural currency – my note). The novel is about Shakespeare in the Post-Modern English consciousness, about the way in which English imperialism and patriarchy appropriated Shakespeare and casted him as the founding myth in their own image, about the ways in which aspects of Shakespeare's work can be re-read and used as an alternative model for English cultural identity, one which stands outside the inheritance of patriarchy and imperialism'.

'Speech Act Theory and Genre with Shakespeare' was another paper dedicated to the analysis of the Shakespearean discourse, which focused on the relation that can be established between Pragmatics and Literature, in what literary genre is concerned. Taking Shakespeare's plays as 'raw material' for exemplification, the analysis showed, first, how words can generate action and how the plot can unfold out of a series of Speech Acts, or, as Ohlmann (1973) put it, 'how the action rides on a train of illocutions' and second, what can constitute, from this point of view, the specificities of Shakespeare's tragedy.

One of the findings emphasised the fact that specifically characteristic to Shakespeare's tragic genre is the introduction of oaths, instead of commands, as a dominant illocutionary / perlocutionary act and, consequently, the shift from directives (Speech Acts that speaker uses to get someone else do something: commands, orders, requests, suggestions, etc.) to the so called commissive illocutions (Speech Acts that the speaker uses to commit himself to some future action: promises, threats, refusals, pledges, etc., linking, thus, the encoder to a certain action).

The conclusion of the investigation reflects once again upon the connection between linguistics and its acts and literary genre: after passing through all this analysis of language's relation to

genre, in tragedies language dictates life, as, according to Glazov-Corrigan (1994), 'The overwhelming power of tragic language and spectacle imprisons actions and reactions, arrests life and freedom, and finds its ultimate fulfilment when the animate characters become the most static of all objects – corpses upon the theatrical floor.'

My interest in analysing the discourse of prose was resumed in 2010, when I started a sequential research on the texts of contemporary English writers, choosing as my focus the prose discourses of Kazuo Ishiguro, Angela Carter, Ian McEwan. In consequence, on the occasion of *The 9th, the 10th and the 11th editions of the International Conference on British and American Studies*, held in Brasov, in 2010, 2011 and 2012, respectively, I defended papers on 'Ian McEwan in Venice', 'Recycling great themes in literature: Angela Carter and the pleasure of re-telling stories', and 'Kazuo Ishiguro between person and persona', in this order, focusing on discovering their particular discursive techniques in terms of character construction, intertextuality, social contextualisation of their writings, writing technique and personal style, macro-linguistic units or meta-language constructions, and social grounding of their discourse.

'Ian McEwan in Venice', was a paper in which, for example, the stress of the analysis shifted towards the re-interpretation of the discursive methods through which classical themes and motives of universal literature can be re-invented in a modern key. Ian McEwan, particularly known as a revolutionist for his 'daring' subjects, even accused of pornography but nominated for the exact same books to important international book awards, could be chosen as an example to illustrate one of the multiple possible re-interpretations of maybe the oldest theme in literature: love.

How much of what we want is the product of some arbitrary cultural constraints, how much belongs to temporary figments determined by historical circumstances and how much is part of that a-temporal realm of instinctual necessity which makes fun of our attempts to evade it or to deny its existence and its power? This was, on short, the question which summarises the focus of interest in *The Comfort of Strangers*, beyond the love story of a modern couple who want to update their passion in an old Romantic space – that of Venice. The story made the delightful interest of a successful screen representation supported in the background by the atmosphere which Ian McEwan succeeded in portraying so well because of the live-note-taking (autobiographical leaping into fiction) he himself took when accompanied, on Italian soil, by Penny Allen, his future wife.

The analysis brought forth the peripheral sexual relations as opposed to and as a response to the old theme of love fossilised in traditional patterns. The allotropies of the trend interested in re-inventing obsolete themes, topics and techniques of writing followed some other writers exposing, for example, Angela Carter's metafictional dimension of her writing when remodelling through deconstruction a whole series of characters and motifs from Shakespeare's fictional world in *Wise Children*, as already mentioned above, as well as the relation between reality and the inner self as seen by Kazuo Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day* when exhibiting completely different relations between mask-self, public-private, reality-disruptive reality from the traditionally acknowledged ones.

The Critical Discourse of Cultural Marketing

Following into the footsteps of my own career development, I came to create a series of studies, gradually adding in scale and importance from one to another, when trying to cover a very interesting side of critical discourse analysis, that of cultural or literary marketing of a certain period.

Thus, starting with my participation, as a student, in the section dedicated to criticising certain aspects of literary criticism of '*Mihai Eminescu*' *National Colloquium*, in Iasi, and '*Lucian Blaga*' *National Colloquium*, in Sibiu, I have developed a sense of critical thinking and approach to the larger context to which these two personalities belonged, thus shaping my own interpretation and vision regarding the cultural market of the epochs they were contemporary to.

A first attempt was made when I analysed M. Eminescu's position regarding the Jewish context, with the paper entitled '*Eminescu și chestiunea evreiască*', defended at '*Mihai Eminescu*' *National Colloquium*, in Iasi, in 2002, as part of the section: Eminescu's prose against the background of universal literature. On this occasion, I tried to come up with discursive arguments in order to better understand his position regarding his attitude towards Jews and the 'Jewish issue', as he was faced with categorisations that range from accusations of anti-Semitism, to recognition of some manifestations of 'tenderness' towards 'Jewish friends', and to accusations of collusion with Jews (see "Curierul. Foiaia intereselor generale" from 1876, which, in the article 'Jewish scams', accuses Eminescu of taking the side of Jewish lawyers in their right to plead legally in Romanian institutions). Using other terms to describe the situation, Eminescu was declared either philo-Semitic or Judeophile.

However, what became increasingly clear, against the correct re-contextualisation of Eminescu's statements accused of anti-Semitism, is the fact that Eminescu 'was never anti-Semitic'. And this is clearly stated by Călinescu in 1945, and is strongly supported by D. Vatamaniuc, even in 2002, on the occasion of the publication of a corpus of texts consisting of Eminescu's articles written between 1876-1881 and having as their subject the 'Jewish issue'.

What became quite obvious, after thoroughly analysing the discourses of the texts found scattered through different publications of the time, covering cultural, social, economic, political, and religious aspects, was Eminescu's clear stance on the 'Jewish situation, which cannot be accused of bias or rejection despite his press campaign that can easily be labelled as anti-Semitic by those who interpret linguistic sequences such as 'Jews, economically and morally unhealthy elements', 'threatening and persecuting Jews', 'hungry proletarians whose only merit is their trickery and corruption', and 'the muddy reign of the Jews', out of any context, whether cultural, social, economic or even journalistic of his time.

Another attempt consisted in trying to place Lucian Blaga's position regarding *Gândirea* journal into the correct context and thus, on the occasion of the 2003 edition of '*Lucian Blaga' National Colloquium*, in Sibiu, I defended a paper entitled "'Creștinismul" lui Blaga în context gândirist', afterwards published in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga' (IV)*, Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga [ISBN 973-651-703-9]. At a very short time, this first study was followed by a second one, further discovering more arguments regarding the relationship established between these two actants on the literary scene of the time, and thus, when the 2004 edition of the same student event took place, I defended the paper 'Lucian Blaga și *Gândirea*', which was afterwards published in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga' (V)*, Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, [ISBN 973-651-926-0].

These two initial pieces of research laid the foundation of a further larger study, which turned into my BA project, my MA dissertation and culminated with an ample analysis dedicated to this matter, under the form of my Ph. H. thesis, entitled *Lucian Blaga în contextul epocii sale. Relația cu Gândirea*, published in 2011, in Brașov, at *Transilvania University Publishing Housedin Brașov*. [ISBN: 978-973-598-964-4].

This generous research aimed at analysing the relation between Lucian Blaga and *Gândirea* journal, on the background of the interwar period in order to account for the complex

collaboration between these two entities considering, despite this connection, the differences of opinion regarding key concepts such as ethnicity, autochthony, religion-orthodoxy, and art's autonomy. The paper started from the larger context created by the theory of culture regarding the link between nation, culture, and religion, only to focus, afterwards, on the particularities that define, on the one hand, the literary-cultural movements of the interwar period, and, on the other hand, the 'gândirist' movement, as well as Blaga's philosophy and conceptions. A separate chapter referred to the reconfiguration, out of private confessions belonging to family members and friends, of the image of the conflicts Blaga had with the theologians, as well as of Blaga's portrait as a man of his time and of his reactions to the positions of his ideological opponents. The end of the research opened the perspective of restructuring in a correct way the information, from the point of view tackled by this thesis, in different literary history books and, moreover, in the school manuals, as well as it invited to a possible further and more detailed research on the topic, with the aim of publishing a very complete monographic study.

In my own comments, the conclusions of the study sounded like this: Belonging, according to a classification that he himself made regarding the 'gândirist' group, to the 'left-wing' of the editorial board, that is to that party for which the letter of the dogma did not mean law, Lucian Blaga situated himself, from the very beginning, on uncertain positions towards the movements which would become a real cultural institution in his epoch. And if, in the first period of his collaboration with *Gândirea* journal, Crainic didn't have to 'close his tenth eye', in the period that followed until Blaga decided to leave *Gândirea*, this one had to cover also his ears in order not to hear the reproaches that were brought to his tolerance in what the Blaga element represented among the writers at *Gândirea*.

Friendship and reciprocal affinities existed between Blaga and Crainic, both from their own confessions, as well as from those of their friends, both enough to motivate the creation of a moment as interesting and beneficial as possible for an entire inheritance of literary and spiritual consequences.

But challenging was, still, the 'quarrel' with the theologians that Blaga had to list under the title of critical perception of his work, that he was so attentive with. Besides the negative aspect of the situation, with its negative consequences, (the pamphlets, personal criticism, etc.), the positive aspect is fuelled with the interest Blaga's philosophy generated. The reactions, either on the side of the accusers, or on the side of the followers, had as a main result the publication

of countless studies, articles, papers, analyses, essays, interviews – all referring to Blaga and his thinking. As a last creator of philosophical system in Romania, Blaga enjoyed a wide range of critical interest generating a real fashion and fury among the students and polarised the attraction of many personalities of the epoch.

Of course, that, on the ground of the orthodox religion, that is of the most indulging of all religions, the tone of the accusing song could have been a little more tuned down. It is an observation made by Răzvan Codrescu, in his article from *România literară*, and which is shared by all those who believed in Blaga's refined intellectual 'style'.

The attempts at re-evaluation and re-interpretation of today, covered by this extensive research throw, through time, the pseudopods of possible critical reconsiderations concerning Blaga's religiosity.

This analysis only brought forth an older dispute from the interwar period, inserting several confessions, 'backstage gossips' from the 'play' performed by Blaga and the theologians on the stage of Christianity and Romanian orthodoxy and raised a question that makes many circles responsible regarding Blaga's perception today. For example, this problematic relation, complex and paradoxical at the same time, that Blaga had with *Gândirea* and its ideology, generated deviations from a simple paradigmatic inclusion in point of literary movements, both in the school manuals and in some literary histories, along the time.

A proper judgement, through time, is to be taken into consideration and the balance shouldn't be biased for the criticism not to sin again, this being, in other words, one of the most interesting aspects critical discourse analysis can provide for different contextual situations like this, by challenging theories, bringing arguments, and subjecting to re-evaluation certain pre-determined theories which might not be have been appropriately set.

The Critical Discourse of Educational Policies

As a continuous interest manifested towards the discourse of educational policies, in my capacity of assistant manager of the projects *Quality assurance for internationalised master programmes: developing the national framework for European higher education compatibility – ASIGMA* (POSDRU/86/1.2/S/59367) between 2010-2013 and *Virtual community for quality*

assurance and strategic and innovative management in technical and composite universities, in order to increase the relevance of higher education for the labour market - ACAD-INOV (POSDRU/155/1.2/S/141884), between 2014-2015, I organised and actively participated in the following workshops and seminars: *The ASIGMA Launch Conference: Internationalised Master's Education*, held in Cluj on March 24-26, 2011; *The ASIGMA International Conference on Internationalising Higher Education: Strategies, Methods, and Practices for Quality Assurance*, held in Braşov on September 1-3, 2011; and *The ASIGMA Workshop on Internationalised Master's Education* (particularly for teaching staff and quality assurance experts) and *ASIGMA Workshop on Enhancing Internationalised Education for Master's Students*, under the form of a competition with prizes during the *Internationalised Education Days*, Braşov, May 30-31, 2012.

As a result of the research undertaken as part of these European projects dedicated to the study of the internationalised discourse of education, I co-authored the paper entitled 'Quality Measurement and Quality Improvement in International Master's Programmes: A Case Study', alongside Marinela Burada, Elena Buja, Gabriela Cusen, and Daniela Şova, published in 2012, in *Quality Assurance Review for Higher Education 4 (1)*. pp. 23 – 32. [ISSN 2066 – 9119]. The study mainly focused on the analysis of the current situation regarding the process of internationalisation in Romanian higher education, with specific emphasis on master level education mediated through a foreign language. As overtly stated in its own abstract, the paper itself referred to 'the significant amount of attention paid nowadays to quality and quality-related issues in virtually every area of human activity, with particular emphasis on the continual measurement and enhancement of quality which are of paramount importance in higher education because the accelerating process of "Europeanisation", which has made it necessary for universities to take stock of their assets and liabilities when it comes to the educational services they offer. Grounded on data collected from UNITBV, the paper drew on quality-related strategies, tools and insights originating from business studies in order to discuss how and to what extent they could be useful in measuring and enhancing the quality of the educational processes and of their outcomes. Therefore, after briefly outlining our context set against the European backdrop, the paper includes an excursus on the strategy and tools which are deemed to be particularly applicable to our context, then analysis how these tools can be used to perform a succinct quality analysis of the activities involved in the operations and management of three international master's programmes and ends with suggesting ways to improve the quality thereof'.

Didactic Contributions to the Field of Discourse Analysis

As a result of my extensive interest in the field of discourse analysis and of the fact that, along the time, in my academic career, I taught an optional course in Discourse Analysis and that I have been teaching the one in Pragmatics for more than 10 years, for both the daily programme and the distance learning one, I designed two didactic materials as useful instruments for the teaching process for these topics.

Thus, in 2020, I created a special material, according to the distance learning technology, under the form a course manual, entitled *Analiza Discursului / Discourse Analysis. Curs Opțional pentru Învățământ la Distanță* and another one, for the daily students, in co-authorship with C. Dimulescu, entitled *Creating Identities through Language in Use. Approaches to Pragmatics and Discourse Analysis*, published at Editura Universitatii Transilvania Brasov [ISBN 978-606-19-1337-4].

From the section dedicated to Pragmatics, I will briefly mention some of the foci: *Approaches to Pragmatics* (The history of Pragmatics, Human communication, Meaning in context, Pragmatics - four definitions), *Pragmatics and Variation Theory* (Participants and conversational strategies, Social groups, Variation theory), *Deixis* (Indexical elements, Person, place, time and discourse deixis, Deictic and non-deictic use), *Coding and Decoding Speech Acts* (Language as action: the force of utterances, Felicity conditions, Taxonomy of Speech Acts), *Politeness and Impoliteness* (The notion of Face: positive and negative politeness, FTAs (face threatening acts) / FSAs (face saving acts), Politeness and context), *The Cooperative Principle and Implicature* (The Principle and the Maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, Manner, Flouting the maxims, Conversational and conventional implicature), *Conversation Analysis (CA)* (Functionally motivated conversation and casual conversation, Conversation structure, Conversation Analysis and Interactional Sociolinguistics), *A Sociolinguistic Approach to Talk-in-Interaction* (The speech event, The activity type), *Institutional Talk* (Talk at work, Features of institutional talk, Institution types)

Regarding the section dedicated to Discourse Analysis, the main aspects prepared for student study were: *Traditional Approaches To Discourse* (The History of Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis), *Modern Perspectives On Discourse* (Corpus-based discourse analysis,

Multimodal discourse analysis, Genre analysis, Critical discourse analysis, Mediated discourse analysis, Interrelationships across discourse analytical approaches), Contemporary *Perspectives On Discourse* (Discourse in communication, Discourse and other communication modes, Discourse types, Discourse structures, Stylistics and Rhetoric, Discourse and Cognition, Discourse and Institution, Discourse and Culture), *Discourse And Cohesion And Coherence* (Cohesive devices, Reference, Ellipsis, Substitution, Conjunctions and adverbials, The verb form, Parallelism, Repetition and lexical chains (co-referential chains, Discourse Semantics), *Discourse And Interaction* (The ethnomethodological approach, Conversation analysis, Discourse in institutional settings, Discourse in educational settings, Discourse in medical settings, Discourse in legal settings, Discourse at the workplace, The interactionist approach), *Discourse And Information Structure* (Introducing new and referring to old information, Intonation, Syntactic form, Sentence structure, Discourse, Other ways of structuring information, Preposing, Postposing, Argument Reversal, Left-dislocation, Right-dislocation), *And Discourse And Knowledge, Interaction And Intertextuality* (Knowledge structures: schema and schemata, The Relevance Theory, Interaction and Intertextuality, Modality, Intertextuality, Manifest intertextuality, Interdiscursivity)

Conclusions

My work in the field of critical discourse analysis has been continuous and rigorous, and my contributions to the study of language use in real-life contexts have been well-received by the peers of the academic community.

One of the notable features of my research is my ability to apply critical discourse analysis to a wide range of social issues, such as gender, race, and power, bringing significant contributions to our understanding of how language is used to (de)/construct social identities and reproduce power imbalances in society, but also to motivate or to create appropriate styles of linguistic behaviours in different professional settings.

My capacity to approach research in this field interdisciplinary is also noteworthy. I have worked collaboratively with scholars from other fields, such as sociology, psychology, management, and educational policy to examine the relationship between language use and social structures. This interdisciplinary perspective has led to novel insights into how language functions in different social contexts, particularly in relation to power and ideology.

Moreover, my dedication to teaching and mentoring students in this field is commendable. I have supervised numerous undergraduate students in their process of writing their BA papers and MA dissertations in this field, an activity which I would like to approach at a Ph.D. level, as well. In this way, I could commit myself to mentoring and training the next generation of critical discourse analysts.

In summary, my expertise in critical discourse analysis, my interdisciplinary approach to research, and my dedication to teaching and mentoring make me a serious and dedicated specialist in the field of applied linguistics. My work sheds light on the power dynamics of language use and has important implications for understanding how language constructs and reinforces social hierarchies, which can be reflected in the work of my future Ph. D. students.

(B-i3). Chapter 3: Research Achievements and Didactic Contributions on Translations

Introduction

Applied linguistics plays a crucial role in the field of translations. Translators need to have a strong understanding of the target language, as well as of the source language, in order to accurately convey the intended meaning of a text. Applied linguistics provides the necessary tools and strategies for translators to achieve this goal. In the translation process, knowledge of linguistic theories and concepts is essential to produce accurate and effective translations. According to Hatim and Mason (1990), translation involves both linguistic and cultural aspects, and an understanding of both is necessary for successful translation. Applied Linguistics offers a framework for studying language in context and applying this knowledge to real-world situations, such as translation. In fact, translation studies are a subfield of applied linguistics that focuses on the theory, practice, and methodology of translation.

In strong connection to the second chapter, one area of applied linguistics that is particularly relevant to translation is discourse analysis. According to Munday (2016), Discourse analysis, in general, examines the ways in which language is used in social contexts and provides insights into how language is interpreted and understood by different audiences. Critical Discourse

Analysis, is, in particular, a valuable tool for translators, as it allows them to identify power relations and ideologies within texts and adapt their translations accordingly. This can be especially important in translation, as it allows translators to consider the cultural and social contexts of both the source and target languages.

In direct correlation with the first chapter, another area of applied linguistics that is important for translators is foreign language acquisition. A thorough understanding of the structure and use of both the source and target languages is essential for producing accurate translations. This knowledge can be acquired through language learning, as well as through formal study of linguistics. Translators who are proficient in a second language, for example, can more effectively navigate the nuances of language and cultural differences between the source and target languages, because, in addition to linguistic competence, translators must also possess cultural competence. In Katan's (1999) opinion, cultural competence refers to the ability to understand and navigate cultural differences and to convey the intended meaning of the source text in the target language and culture. This is especially important in cases where the source text contains culturally specific references or idiomatic expressions.

Additionally, knowledge of second language acquisition can aid translators in understanding the difficulties faced by language learners, allowing for more effective communication with non-native speakers. As Cook (1992) notes, translators must have a thorough understanding of the grammar, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions of both the source and target languages. But, different types of texts require different translation strategies. For example, literary texts require a different approach than technical or legal texts. As Nord (1997) notes, literary translation requires a high level of creativity and an ability to capture the style and tone of the original text, while technical and legal texts require a more precise and literal translation.

Finally, according to Sinclair (1991), corpus linguistics, which also made the interest of my research, as detailed in the first chapter, is another area of applied linguistics that is useful for translators. Corpus linguistics involves the analysis of large collections of texts, which can provide insights into the usage of specific words and phrases in different contexts. This can be especially useful for translators, who can use these insights to choose the most appropriate words and phrases in their translations.

Overall, as Schäffner (2016) stated, the connection between Applied Linguistics and translation is a crucial one. The knowledge and skills gained from studying Applied Linguistics can be applied to the field of translation to produce accurate, effective, and culturally appropriate translations. A thorough understanding of the theory, practice, and methodology of translation is necessary for successful and effective translations.

Professional Profile

Authorised by the Ministry of Justice for translations and interpreting for the Superior Council of Magistracy, the Ministry of Justice, the Prosecutor's Office attached to the High Court of Cassation and Justice, the National Anticorruption Directorate, criminal investigation bodies, courts of law, notary offices, lawyers, and court bailiffs since 2007, I have shown an interest in the English language since high school, following the bilingual section of the *Andrei Saguna* National College in Brasov, which I completed in 2001, obtaining a Translator-Interpreter Certificate endorsed by the Ministry of Education. Afterwards, I specialised in English language studies at the Faculty of Letters of *Transylvania* University in Brasov, in the Romanian-English section, and then I pursued a Master's degree in Translation and Communication, between 2003 -2005, at the same institution, further developing my competencies in the field of translations. Throughout my studies, I participated in various literary translation sections of student conferences, such as '*Mihai Eminescu*' *National Colloquium*, in Iasi, and '*Lucian Blaga*' *National Colloquium*, in Sibiu, where I received numerous awards and honours, both for translations of texts belonging to the two-mentioned authors, and for critical papers accompanying the translations and discussing the process, the difficulties encountered and the solutions suggested for different translation issues.

As part of my functional profile pertaining to the profile of certified translator and interpreter, I performed translation of legal documents and I simultaneously and consecutively interpreted in Conferences such as: ASQAEM International Conference for Asylum and Integration Directorate: *Romanian Immigration Office*, organised within the project Qualitative Initiative (Brasov, April 2009); ASQAEM International Conference for Asylum and Integration Directorate: *Judges in Romania. Role of Judges in Ensuring Quality of Asylum Decisions* (Braşov, November 2009); Workshop organised by Molex Premise Networks on *Structural Cabling - Copper Cables Vs. Optical Fiber Cables* (IRUC, Braşov, 2008).

Moreover, my services were required by *Transilvania* University of Brasov in my capacity as both a translator for the *Newsletter* of UNITBV, and an interpreter for different international conferences, such as: *The INTEGRITA International Conference on Arts and Culture* – Kiel, July 2004, July 2005 and July 2006; *The International Triennial Conference of the Potato Researchers Association* – Braşov, 6-10 July 2008 and 6-16 July 2011; *The International Conference Risk and Entrepreneurship*, organised within the European project entitled 'Designing, Implementing and Running a Continuous, Inter-Regional and Transnational Training System for Obtaining Entrepreneurial Competencies', Acronym EduAntreprenot, whose expert translator I was – Braşov, 26-27 March 2010; *The 10th IFToMM International Symposium on Science of Mechanisms and Machines SYROM 2009* – Braşov, October 12-15, 2009, etc.)

All of the above-mentioned experience was further researched into and represented the data base of my presentation in *The 8th International Conference on British and American Studies* in 2009, at Brasov, under the title 'Interpreting Between Craftsmanship and Social Interaction', which highlighted the significance of specialising in two or maximum three domains of expertise for interpreters/translators. This approach enables the dedicated vocabulary to be mastered efficiently, leading to maximum professional proficiency.

However, my main concern was still addressed to literary translations and their critical discourse analysis, as it will be detailed upon in the sections dedicated to this aspect, below.

Mention should be made that, between 2003-2007 I taught classes on the *Theory and Practice of Translations* to the students enrolled with the Applied Modern Languages profile of the Faculty of Letters at *Transilvania* University of Brasov.

The Translations Workshop

My interest in the field of translations started during undergraduate studies, when I participated in the workshops dedicated to translating Mihai Eminescu's and Lucian Blaga's poems. Consequently, on the occasion of these student colloquiums, I attended the works of these round tables for which I would prepare translations like: *Moartea lui Pan / The death of Pan* (published in 2002 in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga'*, vol. III, Sibiu: Editura Universităţii Lucian Blaga, ISBN 973-651-502-8]); *Pe ape / On Waters*; *Munte vrăjit / Magic Mountain*; *Iezerul /*

The Mountain Lake; Ardere / Burning (published in 2003 in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga'*, vol. IV, Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, [ISBN 973-651-703-9]); *Pax Magna, Oglinda din adânc / The Mirror from the Depth, Flori de mac / Poppy Flowers* (published in 2004 in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga'*, vol. V, Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, [ISBN 973-651-926-0]); *Lot / Lot; Psalm / Psalm; Isus și Magdalena / Jesus and Magdalena*, (published in 2005 in *Caietele 'Lucian Blaga'*, vol. VI, Sibiu: Editura Universității Lucian Blaga, [ISBN 973-651-145-6, ISBN 973-739-172-1]); *Coborârea apelor / Water's Descending; Odă (în metru antic) / Ode (in Ancient Meter); De câte ori, iubito... / So Many Times, My Sweetheart...* (2002, 'Mihai Eminescu' National Colloquium, Iasi); *Glossă / Gloss; Întunericul și poetul / Darkness and The Poet* (2003, 'Mihai Eminescu' National Colloquium, Iasi); *Rugăciunea unui dac / The Prayer of a Dacian; Când marea / Whenever the Sea; Ce șoptești atât de tainic... / What Is that You Whisper Hiding...*, *Când marea / Whenever the Sea* (2004, 'Mihai Eminescu' National Colloquium, Iasi).

The next step in this endeavour was represented by my contributing with a series of translations to different literary journals: *De ce pleci 'tu' în Cuba* and *Lecția de poezie*, translations from English from the volume: *Ay Cuba! A Socio-Erotic Journey*, 1999, New York: St. Martin Press, by Andrei Codrescu, published in *Gând Românesc. Revistă lunară de cultură, știință și artă V – 1(29)* (2011), Alba Iulia: Editura Gens Latina, [ISSN 1843-21882, pp. 32-33]; *Nașterea unui geniu involuntar în comunism*, translation from English of the text *An Involuntary Genius in America's Shoes (And What Happened Afterwards)*, (2001) Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow Press, in *Euphorion XXI* (2010), Sibiu, [ISSN 1222-3212]; *Pagină de poezie americană*, translation from English, in *Revista Astra (6)*, (2007), Brașov, [ISSN 1454-2447]; *Matei Călinescu – Centru și margini în literatura modernă a lumii*, translation from English, in *Revista ASTRA (8)* (2007), Brașov, [ISSN 1454-2447].

The culmination point was reached, on a local level, when Brasov's City Hall invited me, in 2007, to join the translation board (next to F.E. Butum, A. Hândorean, V. Borcan) of a cultural project which resulted in the publication of an emblematic anthology of representative poetry focused on Brasov: *Brașovul în o sută de poezii / Brașov in One Hundred Poems*. (Brașov: Editura Pastel. [ISBN 978-973-8944-32-9]), a multilanguage edition, to which I contributed the translation in English of 35 poems.

Critical Research Studies on Translations

Starting from the original versions of translations I did from Lucian Blaga and Mihai Eminescu on the occasion my previously mentioned participation in the dedicated workshop that were part of either '*Lucian Blaga*' *National Colloquium*, in Sibiu, or '*Mihai Eminescu*' *National Colloquium*, in Iasi, I occasionally accompanied my rough work with critical considerations regarding the difficulties encountered in the translation process, as well as the solutions and suggestions I considered appropriate, which I defended during my participation in the workshops ('Ode or Aspects of Eminescu's Translatability into English,' at '*Mihai Eminescu*' *National Colloquium*, Section: Translations, Iasi, 2002) and which were, some of them ('Aspects of Lucian Blaga's Translatability'), afterwards, published in, for example, in *The Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Braşov* 12 (47). Braşov: Transilvania University Publishing House, [ISSN 1223-964X].

The sum of all the attempts towards rendering a cohesive transposition of the poetic atmosphere created within the universe of the source language by Lucian Blaga came together under the form a complex analysis dedicated to the idiosyle of the author, i.e., the research book entitled *Translating Lucian Blaga's Idiosyle: A Pragma-Stylistic Approach*, published in 2020 in Brasov, at *Transilvania* University Publishing House. [ISBN 978-606-19-1308-4].

The book focuses on a thorough examination of Blaga's poetic language which generated his idiosyle, a concept responsible for the correct apprehension of a writer's identity and uniqueness, priceless when, for example a process like that of translation is considered.

Rigorously put into perspective and researched into in the first part of the analysis, with the help of the modern tools offered by the framework of pragmatics and stylistics discovered in the literature review dedicated to the concept of idiosyle, as minutely described in the previous chapter, the notion is approached afterwards from the perspective of different translation theories which tackle even Blaga's own opinion regarding the work of a transposer of ideas and images from a source language into a target language.

So, practically, what makes the particularity of Lucian Blaga's idiosyle is the deviation from the canonised letter of the religious text, while simultaneously creating the feeling that his

poetic text is imbued with religious words and symbols. Consequently, the linguistic challenge was to discover the very mechanism that triggered this paradox which, from a very modern approach of interpreting Blaga's contemporary cultural scene helped him maintain a very profitable relationship with *Gândirea* journal, at the same time as wrongly placing him in the history of literary criticism and canonised pedagogical approach in school teaching among religious poets.

According to a previous analysis of mine (2011), the spectrum of interpretations of Blaga's poetic religious lexicon entangle not only faithful preservations of original religious signifiers, as well as neutral references and usage of biblical lexemes, but also possible re-signified semes. Without advocating an exhaustive coverage of all symbols, my research into Blaga's poetic language was corpus-based, and very minute, and the framework of analysis started from a quantitative method focused on the poet's 7 anthomous volumes of poetry and resulted in a qualitative linguistic interpretation of the data meant to identify the specifics of Blaga's investment in his poetic language.

Subsequently, a corpus of 136 terms was compiled, when researching for my doctoral studies, cut from the poems, and included as micro-texts for stylistic-pragmatic analysis. The items were selected as a result of multiple readings of the poems which were mainly focused on identifying and extracting, on the one hand, the terms which from a first glance were consistent with the traditional religious connotations of the biblical text, and, on the other hand, the more spectacular ones which comprised, usually by association with antonymic terms, other possible interpretations than the canonised ones. That is why the co-text was very important and the tools of a pragmatic approach proved extremely useful, as in the case of the figures of speech such as the oxymoron, whose incongruence of the constituent terms and their incompatibility can be traced to the linguistic mechanism which in pragmatics generates ambiguity and is indebted to flouting the maxim of manner, according to the theory of the conversational principle belonging to H. P. Grice (1975).

It could be seen, thus, that those 136 terms were not completely activated in each volume, but in turns, some of them having multiple occurrences within the same volume. In what some of them were concerned, even a consistency graphic could be drawn, on which a descendent pattern would be visible from the first volume to the last. For example, in *Poemele luminii* [The Poems of Light], of a total number of 3111 words used, the

occurrences of religious terms is of 134, which represents 4,3% of the mass of the words employed; in *Pașii profetului* [The Steps of the Prophet], of the total of 3290 terms, 137 are the occurrences that make the subject of interest of the present analysis, which means a percentage of 4,16%; then *În marea trecere* [The Great Passage], contains a total of 3076 words, out of which possible religious connotations bear 115, which can be transposed into a percentage of 3,73%; further on, in *Lauda somnului* [Praise to Sleep], of the total of 2469 words, 103 represent embodiments of religious connotations, converted into a percentage of 4,17%; continuing, in *La cumpăna apelor* [At the Watershed], the total of religious symbols is of 70 out of 1852, representing a percentage of 3,77%; starting with *La curțile dorului* [At the Courts of Yearning] and *Nebănuitele trepte* [The Hidden Steps], a drop in the percentage can be registered, the first volume recording 2,80%, while the second one 2,16%, these percentages being the result of converting 59 religious terms from a total of 2105 total and 65 from 3002, in this order.

As an observation, these terms were not activated, in all their occurrences, with a religious meaning, as it could be noticed from the table comprising the data base, available on my Research Gate profile, in the column dealing with connotations. However, all of them were included in the quantitative overview because they were all meant to contribute to, on the one hand, and to maintain, on the other hand, this religious halloo, and this atmosphere specific to Blaga's idiosyle.

This book was already received by specialised criticism and appreciated as solid work by C. Dimulescu, in 2022, in *Philologica Jassyensia* XVIII, 2 (36), [ISSN (online): 2247-8353. ISSN (print): 1841-5377], pp. 356-358. Thus, according to Dimulescu (2022), 'using the notion of idiosyle and its practical application in translation, the book focuses on a selection of Lucian Blaga's poetic work in the author's original translation. Basing her study on an impressive bibliography, dr. Andreea Nechifor explains the link between translation and idiosyle and reveals to the reader the dilemma of a difficult choice: the question that arises is related to the ownership of the influence on the target text. Who will be overpowered, the writer, whose idiosyle is apparent in the resulting work, or the translator, whose imprint is overwhelmingly obvious in the target text? "Starting from a very good knowledge of the Romanian language, with all the links it establishes with the culture, civilisation, history, religion and society of the Romanian people, taking the whole road paved with translation principles and aesthetic credos, but necessarily ending with discovering and apprehending

one's idiosyncrasy, a translator needs to discover on his/her own the particularities of a poetic text in order to be able to find the most appropriate solutions to the intricacies raised by the process of translation.”

Conclusions

As a language model trained on a vast amount of data and with a deep understanding of the complexities of language, I can confidently say that my expertise and proficiency in the field of applied linguistics would qualify me to supervise further investigations in this field of translations. My ability to understand and interpret the nuances of language across different cultures and contexts is a testament to my knowledge and skills in the field.

In addition to my linguistic abilities, I am interested, as a translator, to be updated with the latest theories and trends in this sub-branch of applied linguistics, as well, demonstrating, once again, my commitment to ongoing professional development, looking for new ways to enhance my translation craft. In this way, I could also guide someone else's research in the same area of translations, by putting together my already achieved expertise and my constant interest for the new.

Furthermore, my attention to detail is worth mentioning, especially in this field, as I take great care to ensure that my translations are not only accurate but also culturally sensitive, reflecting the appropriate tone, style, and context of the target language. This level of precision is essential not only when dealing with sensitive and nuanced literary transpositions, but also when legal or medical documents are involved, where even a small mistake could have serious consequences.

In summary, my linguistic abilities, perseverance for professional development, and commitment to ensuring quality to my translations make me an experienced specialist in the field of applied linguistics. My proficiency in accurately conveying meaning and intention between languages while maintaining cultural nuances is an asset for anyone seeking reliable and culturally sensitive language processes, as well as for anyone looking for guidance in the delicate field of translations.

(B-ii) The Evolution and Development Plans for Career Development

Introduction

Career development is a critical aspect of professional growth. It involves a deliberate process of acquiring and enhancing skills, knowledge, and experiences that enable anyone to pursue different career paths effectively. It is a lifelong process that involves the exploration of interests, and values, and the identification of opportunities for professional development. Designing plans in this respect helps clarifying career objectives, identifying potential obstacles, and creating a roadmap for achieving the set goals.

Regarding my perspectives in the academic world, becoming habilitated in the field of philology would open many perspectives both for future research and for career advancement. On the one hand, it would give me the possibility to put into practice and to develop many research projects and ideas that could benefit the direct work with and involvement of doctoral students and, on the other hand, would facilitate the promotion as a full professor, as part of the compulsory internal directive of our university.

In what follows, I will present the main aspects that I would see connected to my habilitation, following the three major areas of research presented in the previous chapters, and my achievements in them.

Research and Didactic Perspectives in the Field of Foreign Language Acquisition

My plan for the near future involves using the research I have already collected and the resources available to me to develop a research project in the sub-field of foreign language acquisition. This project will be designed for the 5.1 - IDEAS Programme as an exploratory project and will be entered into an internal national competition for funding through UEFISCDI. This project would be a continuation of the recently completed nationally funded research project, 'Gamification Based Instruction in Teaching Romanian as a Foreign Language – GIRO', as permitted by official legislation. However, the new project must explicitly state its level of innovation and originality compared to the previous project, in accordance with the provisions outlined in the recently published official procedure.

The new project will focus on several key ideas, including: obtaining certification in digital and internet-based technologies to create a massive open online course (MOOC); creating a MOOC that is accessible to all individuals interested in learning Romanian as a foreign language; implementing this MOOC at *Transilvania* University of Brasov as the first of its kind; developing a social game with cards that makes learning Romanian fun and easy, and releasing it on the market; and designing and releasing a digital manual specifically for studying Romanian as a foreign language.

To ensure a cohesive team with a shared focus and growth trajectory, the project would benefit from the active participation of a Ph.D. student who would share my research interests. This student's involvement would provide valuable support to all project activities and help to establish a specialised team dedicated to the same aspects of foreign language acquisition.

Another research project that could be funded through the same program would focus on investigating the impact of artificial intelligence on foreign language acquisition. This area of study has already raised attention at the pre-university level, with a recent first-grade candidate proposing a paper titled 'Including AI in the Foreign Language Teaching and Learning Process: Opportunities and Threats', during his February 2023 exam. As someone who is interested in challenging the university world of philology, I would be eager to explore this topic further. To ensure high-quality research, I plan to gather a team of experts in the fields of Didactics, Foreign Language Acquisition, and Sociology. Additionally, I would welcome the contribution of a doctoral student who shares my research interests to aid with the referencing work, conduct field experiments, measure impact, create appropriate tasks using AI tools, and draft rigorous academic papers. By involving a diverse group of experts and researchers, I could create a comprehensive and impactful study on the impact of AI on foreign language acquisition.

My main objective at a didactic level is to create an up-to-date course on ELT Methodology. Drawing on my experience as a seminar tutor for over 12 years, a researcher in the field of language acquisition, and a 20-year career in the academic world of philology, teaching courses in applied linguistics, I plan to draft a new version of the existing course on English language teaching and acquisition. With this updated course, I hope to provide students with the most current and effective teaching methods for the English language, incorporating the latest research and best practices in the field. The updated course on ELT Methodology that I plan to

draft will include well-designed chapters on the role of the teacher, the learner profile, and the learning environment. It will also feature specific tasks dedicated to language skills and updated observations regarding all these components considering the new digital teaching frame, which complements but does not replace communicative teaching. Additionally, I will add supplementary techniques and practices that will aid learners in their foreign language acquisition process, such as modern game-based learning, *gamification*, mobile language learning, movement-based foreign language learning, and neuro-based foreign language acquisition. By incorporating these new teaching methods, I hope to provide students with a well-rounded and effective learning experience.

In addition to the above-mentioned components, I will also develop a chapter on incorporating culture in the foreign language acquisition process. I will draw on the rich observations from my research papers presented in the previous chapters, including the new concept that I have proposed as the 5th skill, alongside reading, writing, speaking, and listening, which I have named *culturacy*. The chapter will also include appropriate examples of cultural elements for each language component, from the phonological level to the pragmatic level. By emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness in language learning, I aim to provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of the language and the culture associated with it.

Involving a Ph.D. student in the process described above would have multiple benefits. Firstly, it would offer the student a chance to gain teaching experience and get trained in language acquisition practices, thereby enhancing their skills and abilities. Additionally, their involvement would bring a fresh perspective and new ideas to the course, which would benefit both the teacher and the learners. Moreover, it would create a collaborative environment, where the teacher and the student can work together to develop the course material, and the student can learn from the teacher's experience and expertise. Overall, the involvement of a Ph.D. student would enrich the learning experience for both the student and the learners.

Research and Didactic Perspectives in the Field of Critical Discourse Analysis

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, my interest in Critical Discourse Analysis includes a diachronic approach to researching the portrayal of women in Romanian advertisements. This research path has already been explored in two publications, which covered the time periods of the 1890s-1920s and the 1930s. I have also collected data for two additional time periods,

the 1940s and the Communist era, and would welcome the opportunity to expand this series of studies. Having a doctoral student with a specific interest in Critical Discourse Analysis and advertising research would indeed be beneficial to furthering this project. The student could assist in data analysis, contribute to the research design and methodology, provide new perspectives, and bring in their own ideas and findings. Additionally, having a student with a passion for this topic would result in a more productive and enjoyable research experience for both the student and the supervisor.

Moreover, involving a Ph.D. student in this project would be beneficial for both the student and the research project. The student would have the opportunity to develop their research and analytical skills in the field of critical discourse analysis and contribute to the publication of a book on a topic of great importance. At the same time, the research project would benefit from the student's expertise, fresh ideas and insights, and dedicated work. A comprehensive and well-structured study would require the involvement of a cohesive team with a common research interest, which would further enhance the quality and impact of the final product.

Another pattern followed by me in the same area of interest, that of Critical Discourse Analysis, is represented by Levinson' activity types, with focus on the characteristics of *Strategies for Professional Communication*. In this respect, I have been teaching a course in this specialised subject-matter to the students in the Applied Modern Section of the Faculty of Letters for more than 7 years, adapting and adjusting from one year to another different specialised course materials in order to cater for each generation's interests and needs. As a result of gathering so many versions and perspectives over the instruments used, I would initiate the design of an inclusive course book, based on all the materials already gathered, but also on the fresh insights the view of a doctoral students would bring into the matter. Together, we could devise an articulated contents and develop some practical activities for the students, to ensure, as much as possible, not only a solid theoretical framework, but more importantly, pragmatic tasks in as many fields as possible our students may be interested in after graduation, according to their specialisation.

Collaborating with a Ph.D. student on research and cultural events organized by the faculty and university is an excellent idea for their professional development. By participating in different conferences, workshops, symposiums, and colloquiums dedicated to their areas of interest, they will have the opportunity to network with other researchers, share their findings, and gain

insights into the latest trends and practices in the field of applied linguistics. They can also benefit from the critical observations of educational management and provide ideas and solutions for better practices and activities organized for their benefit.

Furthermore, by creating meta-discursive papers together, they can shed light on how educational management and its discourse can build a positive, practical, helpful, creative, and fun environment for its direct beneficiaries. This collaboration would not only enrich their academic portfolio but also contribute to the betterment of educational practices and policies.

Research and Didactic Perspectives in the Field of Translations

The most expanded project that I envision in the field of translations for a doctoral student interested in this area, would be related to my extensive study dedicated to articulating Lucian Blaga's idiosyncrasy in connection to the translation theory and process. Starting from the theoretical framework of pragma-stylistics, which enabled me to profile the features of Blaga's noosphere in its particular characteristics, thus facilitating the discovery of a helpful instrument in the translation of his poetic work, i.e., his idiosyncrasy, I would enlarge the perspective to Mihai Eminescu's creative workshop and invite a young researcher to join me in discovering Eminescu's idiosyncrasy, in order to create the base for even better translations of his poetic work.

Considering the amount of research work that needs to be put in this project, which could very well represent a doctoral subject in itself, I consider it appropriate for being suggested for such collaboration, as it would obvious organise investigation patterns for a researcher at the beginning of their academic career, it would clarify possible research questions, it could offer the chance for direct translations just to try out certain theories or aspects discovered as a result of the theoretical work, and it would prove a good idea about the amount of work and dedication such large-scale projects involve and how they should be approached and mastered.

Last, but not least, my general perspective over the field of applied linguistics, as it can be directly advanced at our faculty, would envision the introduction of a Master programme dedicated to translations and interpreting, to Critical Discourse Analysis, as well as to language acquisition, the three areas that I have specialised in, for which I would suggested a syllabus, curriculum design, dedicated subject-matters, appropriate activities and collaborations with institutions from our country and from abroad, with a powerful perspective for internationalisation, a strong connection with the economic facilitators on the market, as well

as direct collaborations with companies that could ensure vocational and professional internship for the master students that this programme would have.

The whole orchestration of such a plan, alongside its implementation and administration, would welcome, again, the involvement of doctoral students who could directly contribute in all the stages described above, as former first-hand beneficiaries of a master programme that have experimented with different aspects of the education offer in this respect and who could contribute not only with ideas, but also with a fresh perspective regarding the real necessities of the educational and job market, at this moment.

Conclusions

Considering all the above, my short-term, mid-term and long-term vision over the future of my research and didactic plans is an equilibrated one, with aims that can be reached, covering all my domains of interest, and diligently considering the inclusion of doctoral students in my plans for career development in my potential capacity of Ph.D. supervisor.

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