Exploring Discourse Practices in Romanian
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EDITORIAL

*Exploring Discourse Practices in Romanian* is a glimpse into Romanians’ style of interaction, which has developed eclectically at the crossroads of Eastern and Western cultures; hence, it is oriented towards modern literacy although deeply rooted in a long oral tradition, and paradoxically displays both an attachment to local specifics and a commitment to mimetic speech and act(ion)s imported from various cultural spaces.

The book offers a characterisation of the Romanian cultural space in terms of some discourse practices, drawing on recent challenging theoretical proposals and concluding in in-depth corpus-based analyses. The first chapter of the book stands apart from the rest: it offers an overview of the evolution of pragmatics world-wide and situates Romanian approaches in this context. The following 15 chapters explore various discourse genres (political discourse, media discourse, professional discourse, face-to-face conversation, literature of memoirs, and the usage of Romanian by non-native speakers) and address topics grouped in five sections: *Negotiating Identities, Staging Voices, Textualisation of Attitudes and Emotions, Conceptual Metaphors across Genres, and Grammaticalisation of Context and Mismatches.*

The theoretical framework is discourse analysis, defined in a broad sense (i.e. discourse patterns, pragmatic phenomena, conversation analysis, and rhetoric). The corpora investigated comprise authentic oral transcripts and written Romanian texts from various time periods, focusing on relevant aspects of the dynamics of discourse phenomena in synchrony and/or diachrony, register differences, and the fuzzy boundaries of genres. Some of the contributions in the volume were formerly oral presentations in the workshop *Discourse Phenomena in a Comparative and Typological Perspective at The 17th International Conference of the Department of Linguistics: Variation in Romanian and Romance* (Bucharest, Faculty of Letters, 24–25 November 2017), but were expanded into self-sufficient and coherent chapters in this book.

The introductory study, *Paradigm Changes in Present-Day Linguistic Research* by Liliana Ionescu-Ruxândoiu, highlights the main epistemological turning points in the evolution of pragmatics, the discipline which marked an important shift from the universalist, abstract view of language structures and rules to the contextual variability of use and the probabilistic nature of
principles. According to Liliana Ionescu-Ruxândoiu, pragmatics developed within its own paradigm from a polemical “remedial discipline” to an integrative field of research. The author foregrounds the latest evolutions in pragmatics: the theory of pragmeme s and practs, diachronic pragmatics, research on (im)politeness, and an ever larger interdisciplinarity. The chapter ends with a brief characterisation of the Romanian research in pragmatics which appears to have synchronised with the latest approaches worldwide.

The three chapters grouped under the title Negotiating Identities address various aspects of the construction of textual identity in political discourse, media discourse, and discourse in Academia, respectively.

In A Diachronic Perspective on Romanian Festive Political Discourse, Răzvan Săftoiu analyses several festive speeches from the four Romanian presidents since 1990 (Ion Iliescu, Emil Constantinescu, Traian Băsescu, and Klaus Iohannis) based on the framework of membership categories theory and demonstrates how terms of address, persuasion techniques, and the expression of empathy are strategically used by political actors to connect with the audience. The analysis pinpoints the rhetorical-discursive preferences of each president, from identification with the people and building camaraderie to the display of seriousness and loyalty, warranting the Presidential institution, and emotional involvement.

Carmen-Ioana Radu aims to characterise Conflictive Communication in Romanian TV Talk-Shows in terms of three parameters: argumentation, assertiveness, and aggressiveness, also invoking the social distance and intimacy between interlocutors who try to establish conversational hierarchies by developing antagonistic relationships. Assertiveness seems to be the most important parameter which influences interpersonal relationships. At the same time, aggressiveness is directly dependent on the topic of the debate, participants’ goals, and the format of the talk-show.

Andra Vasilescu’s chapter, Mitigation Strategies in Linguists’ Professional Interactions, summarises the most important findings on the use of hedging in scientific texts and compares them with hedging in Romanian linguists’ oral interactions on professional topics. The corpus analysis presents specific types of oral hedges and their functioning based on the background of the cultural style of interaction as predicted by sociological/anthropological/discourse models. The author concludes that Romanian linguists’ mitigation strategies in oral professional interactions appear to be closer to the cultural way of speaking than to the transcultural conventions of the genre.

The red thread of the two studies in the second section, Staging Voices, is polyphony and dialogism in two textual subgenres: press news in cyberspace and memoirs.
In *Romanian Online Press News: A Space for Hyperbolisation in the Construction of Journalistic Headlines*, Margareta Manu Magda discusses the impact of the Internet on the source-receiver relationship and the structure of the peritext, proposing a richly illustrated taxonomy of hyperbolisation strategies in the headlines of Romanian online news. The hyperassertive nature of journalistic texts highlights the prominence of hyperbole as an intensifying figure, which, in context, can be embedded in other different rhetorical strategies.

The chapter *Looking for the Perfect Reader: Free Direct Speech and Prospective Dialogism in Memoirs* offers a glimpse into concentrationist literature, evoking aspects of the communist prison experiences of two Romanian intellectuals, Nicolae Steinhardt and Lena Constante. The author of the study, Cezar Balăsoiu, analyses how free direct speech and dialogism are used as both ‘diarisation means’ and as discourse strategies for building the ideal reader in the text: while Steinhardt’s ideal reader needs to put together the many pieces of an extremely fragmented and heterogeneous discourse, Constante’s reader needs to cooperate with the narrator in the search for answers to some key questions.

The verbal and non-verbal expression of emotions and attitudes is the common denominator of the four articles in the third section of the volume, *Textualisation of Attitudes and Emotions*.

Stanca Măda proposes *A Pragmatic Analysis of Political Cartoons* and studies how verbal and visual strategies are used as comments on the current Romanian administration in two Romanian satirical magazines, *Academia Cățavencu* and *Cățavenci*. By checking how political cartoons follow the Gricean maxims of quality, quantity, relevance, and manner, the author demonstrates that flouting, opting out of and suspending the maxims function as markers for the attitudes and emotions encoded in the relationship between visual and linguistic messages.

Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu’s chapter, *The Role of Paratext in the Humoristic Press*, focuses on the humoristic press in the late 19th century-early 20th century with a twofold aim: (i) to highlight the role of paratextual insertions in strengthening the interpersonal relationship between the producer and the reader, thus attaining affective connivance; and (ii) to depict the techniques that convey the cognitive connivance in this specific frame. The research found a correlation between the social context and the dominant type of humour: aggressive humour prevailed in effervescent political periods, while affiliative humour was preferred in periods of social, political, and economic stability.

In *Patterns of Pathematisation in the Declaration of Love*, Gabriela Stoica proposes a contextual-semantic analysis of the declaration of love.
Combining elements from argumentation theory, cognitive-lexical semantics, and key concepts from anthropology and the cultural history of emotions, the analysis aims to identify a possible cognitive-affective script that governs the type of discourse under consideration. Based on a corpus of love letters and diaries from the end of the 19th century and early 20th century, the analysis points out a stereotypical conceptual and discursive scenario around some recurrent topoi, triggered both by a (universal) prototypical conceptual grid of passionate romantic love and by cultural patterns.

The last chapter of this section explores a lesser studied topic, *Self-Deprecation and Self-Directed Insults in Colloquial Romanian*. These self-centred expressive speech acts associated with negative emotions like embarrassment, shame, regret, remorse, guilt, etc. are part of intricate mechanisms of self-awareness, self-representation, and self-assessment procedures based on moral, social, and personal standards. They are used by the speaker as face-saving strategies in the management of a public or private identity; they sustain other speech acts such as excuses, promises, warnings, threats, and irony; they participate in verbal duelling; or they express a mild form of self-mockery.

The chapters under *Conceptual Metaphors across Genres* are case studies which focus on the structures and functions of conceptual metaphors in Romanian philosophical discourse, political media discourse, and business journalese, respectively.

The outcome of Ariadna Ștefănescu’s contribution, *An Analytic Approach to the Use of Metaphors in a Philosophical Essay: Andrei Pleșu’s Minima Moralia*, is twofold: on the one hand, she analyses the dynamics of conceptual metaphors in an emblematic philosophical-essayistic text on ethics by Andrei Pleșu, and, on the other hand, she suggests new insights into the structure and usage of conceptual metaphors and metaphorical scenarios in (philosophical) written texts. According to the author, Andrei Pleșu’s text lies on the borderline between academic and poetic texts, rich in conceptual metaphors which display the following main features, among others: an imbalanced mapping between target and source, controlled ambiguity, an iconic relation between the source term and the text structure, different layers of figurativeness, an abstraction of source terms, the expansion of sources, relexicalisations, the competition between scenarios, and transitions among metaphor clusters.

In *Conceptual Metaphors in Romanian Media Political Discourse*, Liliana Hoinărescu illustrates how conceptual metaphors become ideological clichés exploited for the cognitive and emotional manipulation of the public in political journalism. The idea is illustrated with excerpts
from the anti-PSD press (PSD – Partidul Social Democrat/Social Democratic Party – the left-wing governing party in Romania at the moment of the speeches under analysis), which promotes a radicalised discourse and a dichotomous stance: in the collected data, the social evil represented by PSD is evoked in the corporeal metaphor of a sick organism, as opposed to the values that must be defended, which are conveyed by the architectural metaphor. The idea of imminent danger is communicated by the destruction metaphor, the animal metaphor, the conflict/war metaphor, and the gambling metaphor. At the same time, the author noticed a depreciation in the use of the family metaphor and of the journey metaphor.

The chapter Conceptualisations of Company Communications in British and Romanian Business Journals, by Teodora Popescu, draws a comparison between the linguistic construal through conceptual metaphors of corporate visibility in Romanian and British print financial media. The recurrent metaphors in both cultures are: organisations are systems of change, learning environments, instruments of domination, machines, competition/war, political systems, and gambling. Differences concern the frequency of specific metaphors, lexical selections, cultural references, appeals to ethos/logos/pathos, and quotation strategies. In the conclusions section, the author advances tentative explanations for the differences she observed between the Romanian corpus and the British one.

The section Grammaticalisation of Context and Mismatches explores the relationships between context, on the one hand, and deictics, interjections, discourse particles, discourse markers, and speech acts, on the other hand, in intracultural and intercultural communication.

As the title of the chapter suggests, in Fuzzy Deictics in Oral Narratives, Liana Pop discusses the behaviour of deictics in face-to-face monologic and dialogic communication and concludes with their cultural specificity and fuzzy meanings, going from direct to indirect reference: referent identification imprecision, shifts between physical and mental spaces, and ambiguity due to overlaps between referential spaces and deictic centres.

Gabriela Biris approaches Interjections as Discourse Particles in Face-to-Face Interactions. She proposes a typology of the most frequently occurring Romanian conversational interjections (conative, concessive, oppositional, epistemic, and evaluative) correlated with their pragmatic functions (appellative, back-channel, warning; hesitation, attenuation, partial agreement; disagreement, counter-argumentation, doubt; response to new information, referent identification, finalising inference, or retrieving information from memory). The case study of the Romanian interjection
“ei!” (with various English counterparts, i.e. wow!/great!, hey!/get lost!, well, eh, and whatever) shows that beyond its deictic value, i.e. context-dependent meaning, it ended up fixing certain preferred meanings which seem “to short-circuit” inferential processes.

In *Learning Romanian as L2: Skidding and Failing*, Gabriela Biriş, Carmen Mirzea Vasile, and Irina Nicula Paraschiv point to some of the most frequent misuses found in the written productions of the students enrolled in the one-year intensive Romanian language program at the University of Bucharest: the inappropriate performance of various speech acts (i.e., apologies, thanks, responses to thanks, agreements, acceptances, and disagreements), the troublesome subtleties of discourse markers, and inconsistencies in politeness pronouns usage.

All in all, the contribution of the volume is twofold: on the one hand, it offers a kaleidoscopic view of Romanian communication style in various oral/written genres, and approached from various theoretical perspectives; on the other hand, it reflects the current research interests of Romanian pragmatics in dialogue with pragmatics world-wide.

The book is the first volume in English which highlights Romanian discursive patterns in various social and historical settings, framing a lesser known cultural space (which diachronically has absorbed eclectic influences from Romance, Slavic, Balkan, Germanic, and Anglo cultures). Therefore, the data presented and interpreted by the authors, mostly from a mono-cultural perspective, are interesting for studies of cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics/discourse studies/communication. At the same time, it is the first volume in pragmatics and discourse analysis exclusively written by Romanian authors who, after having acted rather as independent researchers (in international groups), have now formed a Romanian research team.

The Editors
1. Preliminary Remarks. The Concept of Paradigm

This chapter takes two basic concepts as its starting point: the concept of paradigm, as defined by Kuhn (1970 [1962]), and that of pragmatics, as defined by Morris (1938). It attempts to bring to light the impact of changes over time in research paradigms concerning the definition of pragmatics, its tasks, units, and methods.

According to Kuhn (1970 [1962], 23), the paradigm is “an accepted model or pattern”, which is defined by the research practices in use in each period of time. Unlike the grammatical paradigm, which functions by replicating a certain pattern under similar conditions, the research paradigm involves creativity. It is open to further articulations and specifications, depending on the contextual data of its function (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 24). A research paradigm gains status in a certain epoch because it proves to be more efficient than (competing) other paradigms in solving basic problems in a specific field. It can create a coherent research tradition in that field. Two basic conditions should be met by a paradigm in order to become prevalent at a certain moment: its internal coherence and its adequacy for the data it describes and explains (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 24).

Paradigms are necessary as they orient the selection of data, which involves their critical evaluation; otherwise, all the data in a field would be approached as equally relevant (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 17). At the same time, paradigms simplify scholarly investigation: they eliminate the researcher’s constraint to build a certain field anew each time, starting from basic principles and justifying the use of each concept (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 19–20).
Paradigms “guide research by direct modelling as well as through abstracted rules” (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 47). They “prove to be constitutive of the research activity” (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 109).

Scientific revolutions involve major paradigm changes, accompanied by “significant shifts in the criteria determining the legitimacy both of problems and of proposed solutions” (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 109), in other words, important changes in the researcher’s world (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 111). They are marked by heated debates, concerning mainly the legitimacy of a certain hierarchy of problems and of their solutions as well (Kuhn 1970 [1962], 109). Paradigms can coexist and even compete in each period. See, for example, the coexistence of formal and functional paradigms in present-day linguistics.

In a study from 2008, Closs-Traugott claimed: “what was marginal in the 1970s has come to be of central interest, above all pragmatics” (2008, 207; our emphasis – LIR). The evolution of pragmatics marks a paradigm change in linguistics, from the “aseptic” model (Mey 1998, 720) of a grammar characterised by pan-syntacticism to a model centred on the communicative functioning of language. Chomsky’s (1957, 1965) syntactic model, mainly a theory of mental aptitude, conceives of the human mind as a perfect mechanism for producing (and understanding) linguistic units (similar to Turing machines). Accordingly, it is based on two main ideas: universalism (see Greenberg ed. 1966; Bach and Harms eds. 1968) and structural homogeneity.

Capone (2016, xx) is right when he asks why researchers should consider linguistics a theory of mind and not a theory of (human) communication and (dialogic) interaction. He supports the opinion of other researchers, like Wierzbicka (2002), who reminds us that “Language has been defined, traditionally, as a tool for communication and linguistics as the study of language”, noticing that “the dominant linguistic paradigm of the second half of the twentieth century had very little to do with human communication”. Accordingly, language should be seen as a goal-directed practical activity of real individuals in real-life (social, situational, and temporal) conditions. Pragmatics opposes the world of users and real usage to the world of grammatical rules.

Quoting Harris (1993), Wierzbicka (2002) admits that, in the last quarter of the past century, linguistics has “greened”, as a result of the changes in the dominant linguistic paradigm: formalisms “have been supplemented, if not supplantled” by approaches “concerned with meaning, culture and people”.

It can be noticed that, paradoxically, some of the agents of paradigm changes in linguistics were well-known generativists, like Katz and Postal
(1964), and especially Lakoff (1971), who admitted that well-formedness is relative, depending on what interlocutors know about each other, about the topic, etc. Quite often, grammatical correctness clashes with the language users’ perceptions (see, for example, the case of the agreement by meaning, not by form, or the use of who instead of which about pets).

Levinson (2005 [1983], 36) maintained that “various syntactic rules seem to be properly constrained if one refers to pragmatic conditions”; grammar alone cannot capture the complete definition of the vocabulary of a given language. As a theory of performance, pragmatics has the role of “filtering out the acceptable sentences” (Levinson 2005 [1983], 36). Pragmatic principles of language usage allow a deeper reading of sentences beyond their conventional or literal meanings (Levinson 2005 [1983], 37). Pragmatics cannot be restricted to those aspects of the context which are grammatically encoded or built up on the concept of adequacy (as the evaluation of adequacy is individually variable).

Going back to pragmatics viewed from the perspective of the concept of paradigm, its polemic nature appears to be quite obvious. Levinson (2005 [1983], xii) defines it as “a remedial discipline”, representing both a reaction and an antidote to Chomsky’s theory (as well as to logical positivism).

In Mey’s (1998, 724) opinion, the emergence of pragmatics, “as a societally oriented and societally bound linguistics”, marks a “paradigm shift” (Mey 1998, 721). It involves: (a) “a new definition of the object” of linguistic research and, accordingly, (b) a change in the focus of research, from “the systematic result of the users’ activity: language as system and structure” to “the language-using human” (Mey 1998, 722).

Considering its evolution in time, one can notice important differences between the pragmatics of the beginnings of the field (the seventh decade of the past century: Austin 1962, Searle 1969, and then Grice 1975) and present-day pragmatics, which attests to the creative nature of the concept of paradigm.

2. Current Trends in Pragmatics

In the following, I refer to three main domains of pragmatics where changes are quite clear: (a) its definition and conceptual system; (b) the diachronic component; (c) the definition of some basic concepts, such as politeness.
(a) Definition and conceptual system of pragmatics

Considering this field as lacking a precise research object, Bar-Hillel (1971) defined it by the memorable metaphorical formula a “waste-paper basket”. According to him, pragmatics was dealing with those matters which semantics was not able to explain, in the same way semantics did before in relation to generative syntax (see also Mey 1998, 716). In his article from the *Concise Encyclopedia of Pragmatics* (1998, 725), Mey noticed that, towards the end of the twentieth century, the great majority of “traditionally oriented linguists” considered pragmatics a sort of complementary domain, assigning it “to a quiet corner, preferably a little bit outside linguistics proper”.

Even inside pragmatics, there are important differences between the continental and the Anglo-American schools. Culpeper (2010, 70–71) notices that the former defines pragmatics as a general cognitive and socio-cultural perspective on linguistic phenomena, in relation to current usage; one can add that, accordingly, pragmatics is situated in a relation of continuity with the thinking of the representatives of the French sociological school (Meillet, Vendryes, etc.). British and American schools are closely connected with semiotics (Peirce, Carnap, and especially, Morris, who defined pragmatics starting from the triadic relationship between signs, the objects they designate, and their users), considering pragmatics a component of an integrated theory of language, alongside syntax and semantics. The above-mentioned distinctions between the pragmatic schools reflect their sources and not their geographical distribution proper, as many “continental” researchers have adopted an Anglo-American perspective on pragmatics.

More recent evolutions in the field reflect a tendency to bring pragmatics closer to linguistics, in order to increase its legitimacy as a scholarly discipline, and its methodological accuracy as well. Linguistics provides the model for the terminology of basic pragmatic units. For example, the concept of *pragmeme* (by analogy with the names of basic linguistic units: *phoneme, morpheme*), firstly used by Mey (2001), was quite recently reconsidered, refined, and explained by some researchers (see Allan, Capone, and Kecskes eds. 2016).

Fetzer (2016), for example, starts from Mey’s (2001, 221) definition of the pragmeme as a “general situational prototype”, involving both a textual (or content) and an activity (or force) part, but she refines this definition in order to make it meet the requirements of a discourse pragmatics. This means that, in her view, a pragmeme should account not only for the content and force of the discourse, but also for its dynamics.
(Fetzer 2016, 250–251), i.e. for the way cohesion and thematic progression become effective. Pragmemes are discursively instantiated as practs, depending on the discursive genre and on the participants’ communicative intentions.

There is a particular hierarchy of pragmemes and of their corresponding practs, which reflects the dynamics of discourse. *Macro pragmemes* define types of communicative activities or of discourses which function in a given community (Fetzer takes the interview as an example); *meso pragmemes* delimit discourse sequences (initial, final) and episodes (thematic sequences), and *micro pragmemes* – the pragmatic or communicative acts which make up a pragmeme. A similar hierarchy characterises practs too.

What makes the difference between the two series of hierarchies is that macro and meso pragmemes are particularised upon their discourse-specific purpose and their position within the discourse structure, whereas in the case of micro practs, the generalisation processes are rather frequent. Quite often, micro practs become stereotypical means of expressing certain discursive meanings. In the case of the macro pragmeme of the interview, for example, one can identify several meso pragmemes, like a political interview, job interview, didactic or medical interview. The opening section can be phatic or more elaborated, and the topic section can involve a higher degree of formality or informality. As for micro practs, Fetzer refers to the formula *How are you?* in the opening section of job interviews and in medical interviews.

Commenting on the concept of pragmeme, Capone (2016, xviii) notices that not all types of pragmemes are universally actualised, i.e. sanctioned by language use; some pragmemes are absent from certain languages (or, one can add, local or social variants of a given language). At the same time, some pragmemes and practs become obsolete over time and disappear from usage, whereas new ones gain ground. For example, the macro pragmeme “interview” and its different forms, which are quite recent, especially in some cultures; some meso pragmemes, such as the medieval Romanian formulae used to address the ruler of the country: *măria ta* ‘your majesty’, *înăltimea ta* ‘your highness’, which are no longer in use, or the pract *sărut mâinile* ‘I kiss your hands’, a formula for greeting a woman currently used in Romania in the twentieth century, which has become quite marginal nowadays.

The particularisation of macro and meso pragmemes explains the possibility of generating a large diversity of discourses and of imposing new norms over time, whereas the generalisation of micro practs ensures the propagation of specific norms of linguistic usage.
Without going more in depth, one can consider that the above conceptual system provides a more formal and detailed version of the system proposed by Goffman (1974), who distinguished between frames, schemes, and scripts, changing the perspective of approaching communication from the domain of cognition to that of discourse. Both systems involve reference to a certain cultural as well as dialogic space (specifically, their units involve reference to culturally and situationally specific aspects).

The pragmeme/pract system provides a better way of capturing and comparing the logic of each culture, as well as intercultural differences. It enables researchers to give a more rigorous expression of some empirical observations regarding such aspects. See, for example, Kerbrat-Orecchioni’s remarks (2000) on cross-cultural differences concerning the interactional value of some utterances which have quite similar forms in different languages.

(b) Historical pragmatics

Another aspect reflecting a current tendency of bringing pragmatics closer to linguistics is the growing interest in the diachronic dimension of research. This is another sign of a major paradigm change, as the formal paradigm involves quite exclusively the synchronic description of linguistic systems.

Closs-Traugott (2004, 560) explicitly notices that: “historical pragmatics requires going beyond decontextualised examples of semantic change and paying attention to the discourse context in which changes occur” (our emphasis – LIR).

The interest in diachronic pragmatics emerged in the ’90s, especially through the volumes edited by Jacobs and Jucker (1995) and Jucker and Taavitsainen (2010). Their object is the evolution in the discursive usage of certain linguistic units, in order to express different pragmatic categories and functions. To approach this kind of topic, one can start either from form towards function or the other way around. In the first case, one aims to determine the functional changes undergone by a particular form. For example, in Romanian, in the nineteenth century, the second person plural form of verbs acquired the new function of expressing a polite way of approaching the interlocutor. In the second case, the evolutions which took place in the communicative functions – due to some major changes in the historical context – resulted in major changes in the form system. For example, in Romanian, in the nineteenth century, a more refined perception of social differences, especially in
urban communities, and the influence of foreign – especially French – models resulted in a richer inventory of linguistic units and structures to mark these differences in discourse, and express negative politeness (the second person plural of verbs and the pronominal form dumneavoastră). Nowadays, the democratisation of public life and the pervasive influence of English have resulted in a stronger preference for an egalitarian attitude and, as a result, in the proliferation of positive politeness forms. Nevertheless, there are important differences between regional and social variants of Romanian, as well as between discursive genres, which should be investigated by historical pragmatics.

Diachronic pragmatics should be grounded in the analysis of several texts illustrating the genres which are discursively actualised in a given community, at a certain period of time, and based on a deep knowledge and understanding of the specific socio-historical context.

Still, it might be possible that the interpretations and explanations of the data proposed by modern researchers do not fit the realities of a certain epoch. Modern perceptions of data can result in errors of omission or addition. Accordingly, it is necessary to consider all the indices provided by a given text, especially the description of the interlocutors’ reactions and the meta-communicative comments both of the author and of those involved in a certain form of communicative activity.

(c) Redefining politeness

There is another tendency in present-day pragmatics also connected with changes in progress in research paradigms. It aims at the redefinition and reinterpretation of some basic pragmatic concepts. The most striking case involves the definition of politeness.

The “classical” definitions from the ’70s and ’80s, like Lakoff’s (1973), Leech’s (1983), and especially of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) became the object of quite strong criticism. Although most critics admit the “canonical” status of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory and the fact that it “exerted immense influence” (Harris 2001, 452), they have various objections. Among others, one can be mentioned: the use of constructed (not authentic) decontextualised examples, which diminishes the productivity of the theory; the static view determined by focusing on speakers’ intentions; the major role assigned to the analyst in the interpretation of the data (the analyst provides both the data and their interpretation).

The new, competing directions: the post-modern direction of discursive politeness (Watts 2003; Locher and Watts 2005; Locher 2006), and the interactional (sociological) direction (Arundale 2006; O’Driscol 2007;
Haugh 2007; Terkourafi 2008), both sharing a constructionist perspective on politeness (see Grainger 2011, 170–172), signal the changes which are taking place within this sub-paradigm of pragmatics. The difference between these two new directions in research into politeness is that while the former makes a strong distinction between the speaker’s and the analyst’s interpretation, the latter assigns the analyst the role of interpreting the data. The former focuses on the speaker’s post-hoc evaluations of politeness, whereas the latter focuses on those elements the participants in a certain communicative activity make relevant by their linguistic choices, without considering their post-hoc evaluations. The former is focused on so-called first order politeness, whereas the latter is focused on second order politeness.

There is a quite strong dispute between the representatives of these two directions in politeness research. Terkourafi (2005, 102) considers that the post-modern direction is not able “to bring about the paradigm change within politeness studies” they are claiming to, as it is based on the same unidirectional model of communication (encoding – decoding) which underlies the “traditional” model of Brown and Levinson (see also Grainger 2011, 171).

Politeness theories with claims to universality “need elaboration and revision” maintains Kienpointner (1997, 254). The post-modern orientation, by its very nature, rejects the possibility of building up a universal theory of politeness. In Mills’ (2011, 20) opinion, “the days of grand narratives are now at an end”.

Nevertheless, both directions in politeness research are based on the same idea: meaning is construed in interaction, in a context defined by specific parameters. At the same time, both directions extend their field of interest to the analysis of impoliteness, its forms and strategies.

In fact, both are eclectic, as they are based on the idea of communication as social interaction (which is common to all politeness models, starting with that of Brown and Levinson). At the same time, the idea of distinguishing between first and second order politeness, which defines the post-modern approach, is not alien to interactional approaches.

Anyway, both these competing directions of research reflect a new way of approaching politeness.

3. Final Remarks

In 1998, Mey (1998, 730) claimed that pragmatics will be probably considered by linguists, a long time from now, not as “a science” “in its
own right”, but as an aspect and a necessary complement of traditional linguistics.

Two of the above-discussed aspects, i.e. the attempt to design a theoretical and conceptual system using the models provided by grammar, and the interest in diachronic research in pragmatics seem to meet Mey’s claim. Still, a basic paradox is quite evident: to gain more autonomy for pragmatics, scholars resort to grammar as a reference system.

Mey’s prediction seems only partially valid. Although pragmatics developed “in the shade” of formal linguistics, its evolution tends to follow a larger trend, which characterises present-day scholarly research in general. This trend defines a paradigm of interdisciplinarity.

On the one hand, continental pragmatics involved, by definition, a sociocultural perspective on language. On the other hand, British researchers, starting with Leech’s (1983, 11) tripartite distinction: general pragmatics, pragmalinguistics, and sociopragmatics, have tried to define the limits of the last field more precisely. In relation to sociolinguistics, a rather static field, dealing with the systematic and static correlations between certain social variables and the use of linguistic forms, sociopragmatics appears as a dynamic field. Its focus lies on the variability of discursive practices (of a cultural and linguistic community, as well as of the individuals who exploit the communicative resources in relation to a specific situation and discursive genre). Culpeper (2009, 2010) tried to initiate historical sociopragmatics as a field of research and defined the interactional approach of politeness as a sociological approach to a specific pragmatic phenomenon (politeness).

As for Romanian research in pragmatics, it has kept pace with the main evolutions in this field, regarding both topics and methodology (see Sala and Saramandu eds. 2018, 644–674). The first articles and studies were published in the eighth decade of the past century, most of them inspired by the speech act theories of Austin and Searle. In the ninth decade, research gradually covered a larger area, based on suggestions derived from Grice’s maxims and politeness theories. As a result of the publication of some corpora of authentic spoken genres of verbal interaction (starting with Ionescu-Ruxândoiu ed. 2002, and Dascălu Jinga 2002), Romanian linguists have focused on conversation and discourse analysis, splitting with the traditional analysis of texts from literature. More recently, they show an interest in the new theories of politeness and impoliteness developed in Anglo pragmatics and discourse analysis. A growing interest in historical pragmatics is worth noticing, as well as a special opening towards interdisciplinary views and approaches.
In Romanian linguistics, like in linguistics worldwide, there is a quite strong competition between formalists and functionalists. This can be only for the benefit of a fine-grained description and a better understanding of the mechanisms which underlie communication in Romanian. Romanian researchers could be characterised as “followers”: their work intends to highlight both universal and specific aspects of the structure and functioning of their mother tongue, resorting to modern theories and methods of investigation.

References

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