

LINGUISTIC ‘ECCENTRICITY’: INTERLANGUAGE FORMS IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING ROMANIAN BY FOREIGN CITIZENS¹

Abstract: The activities involved in teaching Romanian and assessing linguistic competences have been organized in alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which outlines the necessary knowledge and skills for students to exhibit effective linguistic behavior. Foreign students enrolled in the Preparatory Year program have studied Romanian for communicative purposes, acquiring essential vocabulary and conversational structures required for interaction and understanding with others. This includes elements related to interpersonal connections and their determining factors, implications, and consequences. The acquisition of Romanian has been situated within a cultural context, providing crucial linguistic support.

In this article, I intend to analyse the development of lexical competence in Romanian among foreign students. This analysis will encompass an examination of the teaching, learning, and assessment strategies employed in vocabulary acquisition, as well as an exploration of methods to enhance the retention of new words.

Foreign students’ proficiency in Romanian vocabulary enables them to generate and interpret messages, as well as to negotiate meaning within specific contexts. These contexts, tailored to various communication situations, span educational, professional, public, and personal domains. Acquiring the lexical component of a language poses the greatest challenge, with difficulties in learning a foreign language largely dependent on the degree of similarity or difference between the target language and the students’ mother tongues. In my analysis, I will examine various aspects of linguistic transfer, including the students’ native languages, the similarities and differences between the native language and the target language, and the interferences arising from the native language.

¹ This article is the English translation of the article originally written in Romanian, which was published in the journal *Gaudeamus. Alma Mater Crisiensis*, Anca Tomoiogă, Adina Bandici, Diana-Cristina Tanc, Claudia Sanda Sotiuț, Denisa Ionela Pop, Maria Andreea Cotrău, Andrei Călinescu (eds.), The University of Oradea Publishing House, 2024, pp. 193–207.

Keywords: didactics of romanian as a foreign language, eccentricity, foreign language acquisition, lexical acquisition, lexical competence, interlanguage, microlanguage, Romanian as a foreign language (RFL), Romanian in the world

JĘZYKOWA „EKSCENTRYCZNOŚĆ”: FORMY INTERJĘZYKOWE W PROCESIE UCZENIA SIĘ JĘZYKA RUMUŃSKIEGO PRZEZ CUDZOZIEMCÓW

Streszczenie: Działania związane z nauczaniem języka rumuńskiego i oceną kompetencji językowych zostały zorganizowane zgodnie z Europejskim Systemem Opisu Kształcenia Językowego (CEFR), który określa niezbędną wiedzę i umiejętności, aby uczniowie wykazywali skuteczne zachowania językowe. Zagraniczni studenci zapisani do programu roku przygotowawczego uczyli się rumuńskiego w celach komunikacyjnych, zdobywając podstawowe słownictwo i struktury konwersacyjne wymagane do interakcji i zrozumienia z innymi. Obejmuje to elementy związane z połączeniami interpersonalnymi i ich czynnikami determinującymi, implikacjami i konsekwencjami. Przystawianie języka rumuńskiego zostało umiejscowione w kontekście kulturowym, zapewniając kluczowe wsparcie językowe.

W niniejszym artykule zamierzam przeanalizować rozwój kompetencji leksykalnych w języku rumuńskim wśród studentów zagranicznych. Analiza ta obejmie badanie strategii nauczania, uczenia się i oceny stosowanych w przyswajaniu słownictwa, a także badanie metod zwiększania retencji nowych słów.

Znajomość rumuńskiego słownictwa przez studentów zagranicznych umożliwia im generowanie i interpretowanie komunikatów, a także negocjowanie znaczenia w określonych kontekstach. Konteksty te, dostosowane do różnych sytuacji komunikacyjnych, obejmują domeny edukacyjne, zawodowe, publiczne i osobiste. Przystawienie leksykalnego komponentu języka stanowi największe wyzwanie, a trudności w nauce języka obcego w dużej mierze zależą od stopnia podobieństwa lub różnicy między językiem docelowym a językami ojczystymi uczniów. W mojej analizie zbadam różne aspekty transferu językowego, w tym języki ojczyste uczniów, podobieństwa i różnice między językiem ojczystym a językiem docelowym oraz zakłócenia wynikające z języka ojczystego.

Słowa kluczowe: dydaktyka języka rumuńskiego jako języka obcego, ekscentryczność, przyswajanie języka obcego, przyswajanie leksykalne, kompetencja leksykalna, interjęzyk, mikrojęzyk, język rumuński jako język obcy (RFL), język rumuński na świecie

Introduction

The study program *Romanian Language Preparatory Year for Foreign Citizens* stands out as a modern and efficient didactic resource, designed to promote Romanian language and culture through modern communication tools. The national network of Romanian language departments for foreigners in Romanian universities reflects, in fact, the area of strategic interest of our country in the context of the dynamic social, economic and demographic trends specific to the contemporary world. Initiatives to strengthen Romania's image have begun to actively integrate the promotion of the Romanian language, leading to the perception of language programs as providers of valuable “international goods.” The implementation of

such a study program, dedicated to the promotion of Romanian philology, language, and culture, highlights Romania's historical achievements and modern advancements, reaching a global audience from diverse regions of the world.

The work carried out by the Romanian language departments for foreigners in the field of Romanian philology is, in fact, a strategy to strengthen Romania's soft power. The implementation of an active scholarship policy aimed at attracting international students, along with the promotion of lasting relationships with international alumni of Romanian universities, significantly contributes to achieving this goal. In this context, Romanian philology, taught within specialized departments, not only facilitates the preservation of national identity beyond the country's borders but also transforms into an essential tool for Romania's international branding.

The Romanian Language for Foreigners Chairs stand out for the essential role they play in promoting Romania, its culture, history, science, language and national heritage. The activities conducted by these departments facilitate a better understanding of the Romanian cultural code among audiences from diverse cultural backgrounds. In addition to their primary mission of coordinating state activities governing the internationalization of academic and research institutions in Romania, these departments significantly contribute to the promotion of Romanian philology on the international stage. The fruitful collaboration facilitated through these departments promotes the development and enhancement of cultural relations between Romania and the home countries of international students, while also facilitating the cultural transfer necessary for intercultural communication.

Aim of the Research

In my article, I will refer to the oral and written productions of students from the *Preparatory Year* program that are considered "incorrect" from the perspective of native Romanian speakers, specifically focusing on deviations from standard norms. I will address these errors from the interlinguistic perspective discussed by Py (2004) and Masiewicz (2012), aiming to analyse the potential impact of these deviations from linguistic norms and typical linguistic behavior on the effectiveness of intercultural communication, considering the role of interferences. The researched corpus consists of their productions collected during Romanian as a foreign language lessons at different levels.

Department of Romanian Language for Foreign Students

The Romanian Language Department for Foreign Students was established in 1974 and operates within the Faculty of Letters at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași. Currently, it is integrated into the Department of Romanian Studies, Journalism – Communication Sciences, and Comparative Literature. The study

programs offered include, for example, the Preparatory Year Program in Romanian for Foreign Citizens, designed for individuals intending to pursue undergraduate or postgraduate studies in Romania, conducted in the Romanian language.

In addition to the Romanian language courses for foreign students admitted to undergraduate or postgraduate programs in Romanian, since 1998, the Department of Romanian Language for Foreign Students has expanded its Romanian language teaching activity within international programs. Thus, every semester, intensive Romanian language courses are organized for foreign students who come to study for a semester or an academic year at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, through international academic exchange programs and projects, such as Erasmus Plus, Erasmus Mundus projects: AL IDRISI, IANUS, EDEN, EMERGE, SILKROUTE, etc.).²

The Preparatory Year Program

The Romanian language preparatory program for foreign citizens is a traditional program offered by the Faculty of Letters at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași. This program is intended for foreigners who do not know Romanian and wish to pursue undergraduate or postgraduate studies in Romania, with Romanian as the language of instruction. Its aim is to prepare foreign students to learn Romanian and to acquire the necessary specialized languages so that they can cope with the various communication situations in everyday life, as well as the academic requirements of the Romanian language study programs.³

Mission and Objectives of the Romanian Language Preparatory Program for Foreign Citizens

The purpose of the Romanian language preparatory program for foreign citizens is to train international students accepted in undergraduate or postgraduate programs conducted in Romanian in an academic institutional setting, with the aim of developing their general and professional linguistic communication skills in Romanian, according to the requirements of the minimum level B1 as defined in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* of the Council of Europe.

The Preparatory Year Program in Romanian for Foreign Citizens aims to facilitate the development of Romanian communication skills, both written and oral, at the minimum B1 level (independent user). This level is required for admission to undergraduate or postgraduate programs conducted in Romanian within the

² For documentation, the official website of the Romanian Language Department for Foreign Students was consulted: <https://lrlsuaic.wixsite.com/uaic/lrls> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

³ For documentation, the official website of the Romanian Language Department for Foreign Students was consulted: <https://lrlsuaic.wixsite.com/uaic/lrls> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

higher education system in Romania. The linguistic learning process is structured according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). In addition to acquiring language skills, the program includes a component focused on Romanian cultural and civilizational aspects, thus contributing to the development of adaptation and interaction skills in a new sociocultural context for participants.⁴

How Do Language Errors Occur in Foreign Students?

The traditional understanding of a linguistic error as an unconscious deviation from the applicable linguistic norm (cf. Markowski, 2011) is not always useful in analysing the utterances of students learning a foreign language, as they employ an interlanguage that evolves dynamically. When analysing the linguistic output of students acquiring a foreign language, it is valuable to evaluate deviations from the norm in their utterances through the lens of interlanguage.

The issue of linguistic errors among foreign language learners is examined through various theories of second language acquisition and, correspondingly, from the perspective of different teaching methods. The approach to linguistic errors has undergone significant evolution, shifting from a categorical perspective advocating for their unconditional elimination to a more tolerant appreciation within communicative approaches. This evolution has culminated in the recognition of errors as a natural component of interlanguage and, therefore, as an inevitable stage in the process of learning a foreign language (cf. Py, 2004: 13–23).

Linguistic Eccentricity

My analysis in this article is based on the concept of *linguistic eccentricity* among foreign citizens learning Romanian as a foreign language. This analysis focuses on the forms of interlanguage in their learning of Romanian. In a general sense, the key term of this article, namely the word *eccentricity*, is defined in DEX 2009⁵ as follows: “EXCENTRICITATE,⁶ excentricități, s. f. 1. originalitate; ciudățenie, bizarerie, extravagantă.”

Professors Peterson, Misner, and Dunn define the term in the *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences* within the context of socially or culturally accepted human interactions as follows: “EXCENTRICITATEA⁷ este natura de a fi ciudat; de a prezenta particularități ciudate; sau orice caz de abatere de la un

⁴ For documentation, the official website of the Romanian Language Department for Foreign Students was consulted: <https://lrlsuaic.wixsite.com/uaic/lrls> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

⁵ DEX = *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*, 2nd edition, revised and expanded, Romanian Academy, Institute of Linguistics, Univers Encyclopedic Gold Publishing House, 2009.

⁶ <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/excentricitate> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

⁷ https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_644#citeas [accessed: 27 April 2024].

model sau o normă stabilită; anormal sau împotriva normei; deviere.” The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines the noun *eccentricity*⁸ as describing “the state of being eccentric, an eccentric action, strange, suspicious, and unnatural,” while the adjective *eccentric* is defined as “strange or unusual, sometimes in an amusing way.”

The Great Dictionary of the Polish Language defines the term as something that “attracts the speaker’s attention due to its unusual nature, perceived as deviating from the norm.”⁹

Thus, with regard to *linguistic eccentricity*, it can be defined as referring to linguistic constructions that attract attention due to their unusual nature, perceived as deviations from the norm, errors, or distortions that appear in the verbal productions of foreign speakers, while also serving as a form of creativity and originality.

Linguistic Error

The typology of linguistic errors is discussed, among others, by the Polish linguist and lexicographer Andrzej Markowski, who distinguishes between intra-linguistic (grammatical, lexical, phonetic, stylistic) and extra-linguistic (orthographic, punctuation) errors (cf. Markowski, 2011: 55–60).

The fact that the learner of a foreign language may never be able to use the language without errors has been considered important since the communicative approach. An error has come to be evaluated in terms of “disrupts communication – does not disrupt communication,” as described by the Polish linguist Franciszek Grucza:

The criteria for the communicative evaluation of students’ language errors involve determining whether a particular error causes a disruption in communication. Compared to linguistic evaluation of errors, this type of error assessment is much more challenging but also more valuable, as it addresses the issue of tolerance towards linguistic errors and the prioritization of such tolerance (Grucza, 1978: 36–37).

Therefore, an error is no longer something that must be eliminated at all costs, but rather something that should be tolerated up to a certain point:

Given that it is known that it is not possible to implement a perfect language acquisition program with their behavior, the issue of reasonable tolerance of linguistic errors is particularly important. In such a situation, however, it is necessary to know which errors are acceptable from the perspective of the communicative function assumed in the program for a particular learner or for a specific group or category of learners, and which are not acceptable (Grucza, 1978: 37).

⁸ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/eccentricity> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

⁹ <https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/55553/ekscentrycznosc/5204796/przejaw> [accessed: 27 April 2024].

According to this approach, an error is something undesirable, but it operates within a kind of hierarchical system. Some errors are acceptable, while others are not, and in evaluating the acceptability of an error, the learner or group of learners and their stage of language learning are taken into account. In any case, at different stages of learning, the errors that occur must be eliminated one by one.

Linguistic Error from the Interlanguage Perspective

However, when we look at linguistic errors from the perspective of the interlanguage used by students, the evaluation of linguistic errors takes on a completely different character. Interlanguage is a dynamic phenomenon, an intermediate language that exists between the student's initial language and the target language (acquired language), which changes as the learner's linguistic competence develops. It is an approximate, simplified system in relation to the target language, and the student tries to meet communicative efficiency needs through it (cf. Py, 2004: 14; Masiewicz, 2012: 69).

Linguist Bernard Py analyses the concept of linguistic error in the context of interlanguage. According to him, it is no longer an anomaly indicating the failure of a teacher whose student makes mistakes, but a characteristic feature of a certain stage in the learning/teaching of a foreign language. It is also important to evaluate the impact of an error on communicative efficiency. Py considers this impact in terms of "appropriateness," writing that communicative success is guaranteed by an appropriate utterance, one that is suitable to the context, and not just grammatically correct. In the didactics of the French language, this view of linguistic error marked the transition from defining error through the notion of *faute*, meaning a predictable mistake that needs to be eliminated, to the notion of *erreur*, an error that indicates a continuous process of learning and constructing a new linguistic system in the student's mind, and which may result from *transfer* (cf. Masiewicz, 2012: 68). Transfer refers to "the transfer of patterns from the mother tongue, the first language, to a foreign language during the course of mastering it" (*Encyclopaedia of General Linguistics*, 2003: 559). Transfer is also referred to as *interference* (cf. *New Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, 2010: 291). When we analyse students' linguistic errors, we are actually analyzing their *interlanguage at a certain stage of development*. A particular stage of interlanguage development is highlighted not only by the knowledge and ability to apply grammatical rules but also by the ability to adapt appropriate linguistic behavior to the communication situation.

The theoretical reflection on linguistic errors committed during the process of learning a foreign language finds its validation in teaching practice, during which the teacher strives to meet the linguistic needs of the students.

Speaking a Language Imperfectly

My experience as a teacher of Romanian as a foreign language has allowed me to conclude that, even at the lowest levels of proficiency, the main goal of learners is to master the ability to speak and, consequently, to be able to converse with Romanians. At the beginning of each new semester, most students mention speaking ability as the skill they are most interested in developing. In trying to meet this goal, the question often arises: what kind of communicative competence should be taught? The question is whether to provide students with ready-made speech fragments that can be used in the simplest real-life situations, or to familiarize them with rules (especially grammatical rules) that will, in retrospect, enable the student to behave autonomously during and after the language learning process.

Given that Romanian is an inflected language, particularly a language with declensions, it is necessary for students to be familiar with grammatical rules that not only allow them to produce intelligible utterances but also to recognize known words in a text when they appear in different grammatical forms, of which students are not always aware. The realization that it is possible to speak Romanian, but imperfectly, due to a lack of knowledge of the grammatical system, typically comes later, when the learning process has already lasted several years and graduates reach higher levels of proficiency. Therefore, is it the teacher's role to try to eliminate students' mistakes as quickly as possible in the name of teaching effective communication in everyday situations? And even after mastering the rules of the target language, will the student be able to use them naturally and appropriately in daily life?

Knowledge of the Target Language System and Performance in the Target Language

Even if the learner's knowledge of the target language system is excellent, the communicative exchange with the native speaker may be disrupted by a misinterpretation of the interlocutor's linguistic behavior. This disruption may occur because every communicative exchange between a foreigner and a native speaker is an intercultural communicative exchange. The learner of a foreign language is thus confronted with rules of behavior typical of the language he or she is just learning and may only just begin to master. Thus, their interlanguage is constituted not only from knowledge of the target language system and linguistic competence, but also from pragmatic knowledge of interaction rules. The inadequacy of a linguistic utterance due to ignorance of or non-compliance with the interaction rules typical of the language can also be considered a linguistic error.

The issue of interference in intercultural communication receives greater attention from linguist Zarzycka. She cites a list of reasons for failures in intercultural communication. These causes include: the belief among people from different cultures trying to communicate that all people in the world are the same;

differences between the languages used; misinterpretation of non-verbal behavior; prejudices and stereotypes; and a high level of tension accompanying intercultural interactions (the so-called "cultural shock") (cf. Zarzycka, 2001: 244). These reasons are considered insufficient and incapable of classifying the various types of communication breaches that occur among members of different cultures speaking a foreign language. Consequently, Zarzycka views intercultural communication as communication in general, analysing it from the perspective of different communication models.

A disruption in the communication process will occur when at least one of the necessary elements of communication is inadequate. This disruption can vary in intensity, ranging from causing confusion in communication to making it awkward or even completely impossible. Among the necessary elements of communication, the following are considered disruptions if not taken into account: norms and rules governing the interaction itself and the principles of its interpretation; the goals of the communication; and the sequence of events.

Zarzycka considers that the most severe consequences for communication exchanges will be the failure to adapt interaction rules to the context, as well as the use of inappropriate rules for interpreting behavior. Therefore, she proposes distinguishing between two categories of disruptions:

- (1) disruptions related to interaction rules;
- (2) disruptions in the interpretation of interaction norms (cf. Zarzycka, 2001: 245).

Disruptions in the interpretation of interaction norms occur especially when specific linguistic behavior is interpreted by a native speaker of a particular language, leading to false conclusions about the speaker or the situation they are in (cf. Zarzycka, 2001: 245–251).

Interlanguage

In Romanian literature, the appearance of the term *interlimbă* (*interlanguage*) is sporadic and relatively isolated. The concept of interlanguage, referred to as *interlanguage* in the English literature and *interlangue* in the French literature, is mainly discussed in Romanian language teaching studies, often in the context of the concept of *linguistic interference*. However, Pop and Marton's work lacks a detailed and in-depth analysis of interlanguage as a distinct phenomenon.

The term *interlanguage* was introduced by the linguist Larry Selinker in 1969 in his study "Language transfer". It was redefined a few years later to describe language varieties specific to foreign language learners that do not completely overlap with the target natural language. Stephen Pit Corder defined interlanguage as a person's own linguistic system, held by a person at a given point in the learning process. Its linguistic activity is guided by specific rules, allowing a detailed linguistic description (Corder, 1980: 29).

Although it has received enthusiastic reception in the international academic community, the concept of interlanguage has not achieved similar popularity in Romania (cf. Platon, 2021: 344). This discrepancy can be considered paradoxical, given its importance in the field of foreign language acquisition.

The lack of interest in the concept of interlanguage in Romania could be attributed to several factors.

One reason might be the hybrid and unstable nature of interlanguage, situated between the native language (L1) and the foreign language (L2) (cf. Platon, 2021: 344). This characteristic makes it challenging to study and fit within traditional linguistic paradigms. Traditionally, linguistics has focused on the study of natural languages as stable and well-defined systems, perceived as invulnerable and comfortable. This approach emphasized the essential aspects of language while overlooking variability and individual particularities. Interlanguage, with its fluid and dynamic nature, does not easily fit within this traditional perspective. Due to its hybrid and unstable nature, interlanguage is often perceived as a linguistic system “suspended” between two languages (cf. Platon, 2021: 344): the native language (L1) and the foreign language (L2). This intermediate position makes it difficult to classify and analyse within the framework of traditional linguistic paradigms.

The native speaker status of most linguists can be considered a factor contributing to the lack of interest in the concept of interlanguage. Possessing a pure linguistic code of their native language, many linguists have significant reservations about any variation of the language that might be seen as degraded or imperfect. Inexperienced native speakers in exolingual communication tend to be rigid in evaluating the language used by non-native speakers, often triggering behavioral responses such as impatience, irritation, criticism, and even disdain. This attitude is often accompanied by a complete lack of understanding of language mistakes, which can significantly affect effective communication. Commonly sanctioned mistakes include poor pronunciation, grammatical disagreements, and slow speech. This critical approach is often based on a misconception of language as a static and perfect system, ignoring the dynamic and variable nature of intercultural communication.

Didactics was one of the first areas to approach interlanguage as a distinct linguistic reality. Language teachers noted that their students often used language forms that did not completely overlap with the standard target language. Interlanguage was seen as an intermediate step in the language acquisition process that could be used to facilitate learning and improve communication. Language acquisition linguistics has studied interlanguage as a complex language system with its own rules and features. The researchers have analyzed the nature of language errors made by non-native students and identified the linguistic strategies used in interlanguage. Studies in this field have contributed to a better understanding of the language learning process and the factors influencing foreign language acquisition.

Selinker stated that he introduced the concept of interlanguage to facilitate a better understanding of the processes and principles underlying foreign language learning. He identified interlanguage as a distinct linguistic system that naturally forms during the acquisition of a second language.

Corder (1980) introduced the concept of *transitional competence* as early as 1967 to describe “a set of knowledge available to the learner, which they continuously develop and apply during their verbal productions” (cf. Porquier, Rosen, 2003: 8; apud Platon, 2021: 345). This perspective emphasizes the dynamic nature of second language acquisition, highlighting that learners are in a constant state of evolution, developing new knowledge and linguistic skills. Analysing students' errors can be a valuable tool for gaining a better understanding of their learning strategies and processes. By identifying and classifying errors, teachers can obtain insights into the aspects of the language that pose difficulties for students.

After its introduction by Selinker, the concept of interlanguage has attracted significant attention in the foreign literature. Researchers have analyzed interlanguage from various perspectives, including phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. The studies examined in detail the oral and written productions of non-native students, identifying the specific characteristics of the interlanguage and the linguistic strategies used by the students.

Although they contributed significantly to understanding interlanguage, many of the early studies were limited to purely linguistic analysis. This approach did not fully take into account the inter-actual and contextual dimension of communication, ignoring the important role that social and pragmatic factors play in the production of language.

Additionally, the focus on identifying and correcting errors neglected the dynamic nature of interlanguage as an evolving linguistic system. Errors were not seen merely as mistakes to be eliminated, but rather as valuable indicators of learning strategies and language acquisition processes.

Interlanguage from a Pragmatic Perspective

The last decades have seen a significant change in the approach of interlanguage, with a growing orientation towards a pragmatic perspective (Porquier, Rosen, 2003: 10). This paradigm shift emphasizes the context of communication, analyzing how non-natives receive and produce acts of speech in various situations, in order to perform different communicative functions (to thank, ask, explain, correct, etc.). Researchers are now focusing on aspects that are difficult for non-natives to understand, investigating the role and importance of transferring pragmatic rules from the native language to the target language, even at an advanced level of linguistic competence. This approach emphasizes the integration of psychological and social dimensions into the process of foreign language acquisition, recognizing the role of non-linguistic factors in effective communication.

The concept of interlanguage is closely related to the idea of progressively structuring the language knowledge of the learner of a foreign language. During the procurement process, interlanguage is not a static entity, but is constantly changing, becoming increasingly complex and gradually approaching the target language. This progressive evolution reflects the development of non-native student's language knowledge and skills. At first, the interlanguage is characterized by a simple structure and limited vocabulary. As the student exposes to more language inputs and expands their knowledge, the interlanguage develops, becoming richer and more nuanced.

Some Errors that Appear in the Interlanguage of International Students Learning Romanian as a Foreign Language

Variations in the language used by people in the process of acquiring a foreign language, known as an *interlanguage*, have attracted significant attention from researchers in various academic fields. Numerous theoretical studies have focused on the detailed analysis of the specific characteristics of the interlanguage, in order to better understand the mechanisms and principles underlying secondary language acquisition.

Although the concept of interlanguage has been extensively studied in various linguistic contexts, its potential to contribute to the understanding of Romanian language acquisition by foreigners remains insufficiently explored. There is a significant lack of research analyzing the specific characteristics of Romanian interlanguage and the linguistic strategies employed by non-native students in the learning process.

Unlike standard languages, interlanguage is not a coded and fixed linguistic entity, but a dynamic and fluid linguistic reality, produced by individuals in the process of acquiring a foreign language. This feature gives interlanguage direct connection to concrete reality, reflecting how people use language in specific communication contexts.

Although interlanguage can be considered unstable and ephemeral due to its evolving nature, it is not devoid of structure and coherence. Interlinguistic productions are guided by universal linguistic principles, as well as by the influence of both the native language and the target language.

Categories of Errors

The categorization of errors was conducted using the terminology from the collective study by Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982), which provides a classification into four distinct categories of errors: omissions, which refer to the absence of essential linguistic elements in sentence structure; additions, which involve

the unjustified introduction of extra linguistic elements; incorrect syntax, which pertains to the faulty arrangement of linguistic elements within a sentence; and errors caused by a lack of information or insufficient information, which involve incorrect use of information in a sentence, either by omitting essential details or by providing erroneous information.

The Omissions

Errors of omission refer to the unjustified absence of necessary morphemes required for correct and fluent expression. These omissions involve the complete absence of a constituent. The direct consequence is an incomplete, ambiguous, or unnatural expression, which significantly affects the meaning of the sentence or phrase.

Omission of prepositions is a frequent category of errors by omission, particularly affecting prepositional constructions. Lack of preposition can lead to ambiguity, since the meaning of the regent verb remains indeterminate. For example:

Wrong: *Merg universitate.*

Correct: *Merg **la** universitate.* [I go to university.]

In Romanian, the numbers up to 19 (and the compounds) are immediately followed by a noun. Instead, numbers over 19 (and compounds) are followed by the preposition *de* and then a noun:

1–19 + noun

Aici sunt 15 studenți.

20–... + **de** + noun

Acolo sunt 25 de studenți. [There are 25 students.]

Foreign students often omit the preposition in this context, and the error produced comes from language transfer, because in similar contexts, the languages spoken by the target group do not contain the missing morpheme:

Wrong: *Eu am 24 ani și tu?*

Correct: *Eu am 24 **de** ani și tu?* [I'm 24 years old and you?]

Wrong: *Am o soră care are 24 ani.*

Correct: *Am o soră care are 24 **de** ani.* [I have a sister who is 24 years old.]

Wrong: *Eu am 28 ani și tu?*

Correct: *Eu am 28 **de** ani și tu?* [I'm 28 years old and you?]

Another situation is the one in which the preposition *în* is omitted in the context of indicating the time in which an action takes place, and thus, for the realization

of the circumstantial time which is expressed by a noun with reference to the idea of time and preceded by an indefinite or demonstrative pronominal adjective:

Wrong: *Merg la universitate fiecare zi.*

Correct: *Merg la universitate în fiecare zi.* [I go to university every day.]

Wrong: *Nu merg la bibliotecă această zi.*

Correct: *Nu merg la bibliotecă în această zi.* [I'm not going to the library on this day.]

Another context is that in which the preposition *în* is used instead of the phonetically conditioned preposition *într-o/ într-un*:

Wrong: *Eu sunt în oraș frumos.*

Correct: *Eu sunt într-un oraș frumos.* [I am in a beautiful city.]

The article, definite or indefinite, plays an essential role in defining nouns and building noun phrases. Omitting it can lead to a vague expression or a change in meaning, opting for the dictionary form of the words:

Wrong: *Familie mea este în Franța.*

Correct: *Familia mea este în Franța.* [My family is in France.]

Wrong: *Am văzut pisică.*

Correct: *Am văzut o pisică.* [I saw a cat.]

Wrong: *Studenți inteligenți reușesc la examen.*

Correct: *Studenții inteligenți reușesc la examen.* [Smart students succeed in the exam.]

Another error by omission is the avoidance of double negation. Negation is an important element that marks opposition or absence:

Wrong: *Niciodată merg în club.*

Correct: *Niciodată nu merg în club.* [I never go to the club.]

The Additions

Another category of errors by omission are the additions that are defined by the unjustified integration of additional morphemes into correct structures. Unlike omission errors, where an item is absent, addition errors involve the introduction of redundant elements.

A context is one in which students tend to use the co-ordinating conjunction copulatively *și* in interrogative sentences with a meaning predicate. Most of the time, they keep this linguistic behavior even when they advance and can

communicate at a higher level in Romanian. However, this construction is not necessarily considered an error, but a construction that is not natural in the language:

*Eu am 22 de ani. **Și** tu?* [I'm 22 years old. And you?]

*Eu am 29 de ani, **și** tu?* [I'm 29 years old, and you?]

*Bine, mulțumesc. **Și** tu?* [I'm fine, thank you. And you?]

A situation in which errors by addition occur is that in which the noun preceded by the preposition is wrongly determined. Addition errors can have a negative impact on communication, affecting the clarity and intelligibility of the message:

Wrong: *Eu merg la universitatea.*

Correct: *Eu merg la universitate.* [I go to university.]

Wrong: *Eu merg la cantină după cursul.*

Correct: *Eu merg la cantină după curs.* [I go to the cafeteria after class.]

Wrong: *Stau jos pe scaunul.*

Correct: *Stau jos pe scaun.* [I'm sitting down on the chair.]

Incorrect Topic

The topic, defined as the order of words in the sentence, is an essential aspect of Romanian grammar. Proper compliance with the topic is essential for clear, concise and natural expression. This error by incorrect topic, although less common than other categories of errors, can occur especially in the early stages of learning Romanian as a foreign language. This error is mainly due to the linguistic transfer, that is, the influence of the mother tongue of the speaker on the way the words are organized in the sentence.

A context in which this error occurs is the one in which the adjective is antepus or in the one in which the time is expressed:

Wrong: *Trandafirul este o frumoasă floare.*

Correct: *Trandafirul este o floare frumoasă.* [The rose is a beautiful flower.]

Wrong: *Madina are o frumoasă geantă.*

Correct: *Madina are o geantă frumoasă.* [Madina has a nice bag.]

Wrong: *Cursul începe la 9 ora.*

Correct: *Cursul începe la ora 9.* [The class starts at 9 o'clock.]

Wrong: ***Bună** noapte, Ahmed!*

Correct: *Noapte bună, Ahmed!* [Good night, Ahmed!]

Lack of Information/Insufficient Information

The most common category of errors among students learning Romanian is caused by an information deficit. This deficiency stems from the discrepancy between the vast amount of linguistic knowledge required for assimilation and the

limited time available for study. Direct consequence is the frequent occurrence of errors in various aspects of the language.

A context that still has this type of error occurs is the one that refers to the formation of verbal times, especially the compound perfect, where its structure creates analogies with what students know in their native language. The compound perfect is formed from the *auxiliary + past participle of the conjugate verb*. Often, they omit the specific form of the auxiliary for each person and use the present form of the verb “a fi”(“to be”):

Wrong: *Studentul sunt venit.*

Correct: *Studentul a venit.* [The student came.]

Another situation concerns the noun gender or the noun-adjective agreement:

Wrong: *Ea este un vânzătoare la Palas.*

Correct: *Ea este o vânzătoare la Palas.* [She’s a saleswoman at Palas.]

Wrong: *Eu mănânc o pepene.*

Correct: *Eu mănânc un pepene.* [I eat a watermelon.]

Wrong: *Fereastră este deschise.*

Correct: *Fereastra este deschisă.* [The window is open.]

Errors caused by insufficient information create so-called “false friends”. An example is the case of homonymous pairs, where students did not use the equivalent term in Romanian, but that of its homonymous pair:

Wrong: *Eu trimit o literă pentru mama mea.*

Correct: *Eu trimit o scrisoare pentru mama mea.* [I’m sending a letter for my mother.]

Conclusions

According to Bernard Py, *interlanguage*, defined as an intermediate language system distinct from the target language and mother tongue, is not only a stage in the acquisition of language knowledge, it also reflects a stage of development of intercultural awareness of the person learning a foreign language.

During the course of learning a foreign language, students go through various stages, characterized by incomplete and variable language systems. Interlanguage captures this reality, being an individualised language system that integrates elements of the target language, mother tongue and other languages known to students.

The acquisition of a foreign language is also closely linked to a cultural transformation. The interlanguage not only reflects the language knowledge of

the student, but also how he perceives and interprets the world through the lens of the target culture. For example, a student learning Romanian could initially use structures and expressions from his or her native language to express concepts specific to Romanian culture, demonstrating an incipient understanding of the cultural context.

Interlanguage is defined as an intermediate language system distinct from the target language and the native language of the student and reflects not only the student's linguistic knowledge, but also his creativity and intelligence in adapting to the new language system. Thus, the teacher should provide constructive feedback to students, highlighting the strengths of their interlanguage and providing suggestions for improvement. The process of learning a foreign language is not limited to a passive assimilation of grammatical rules and vocabulary. Students not only reproduce existing language structures, but also interpret, adapt and use them in creative ways, contributing to a personal reinvention of the language.

The acquisition of a foreign language is not a linear and perfect process, but also involves a series of errors that can be classified into two categories: errors that correct themselves along the way and errors that tend to fossilize. This distinction highlights the complexity of the learning process and the role of linguistic, social and cognitive factors in language acquisition. Therefore, these deviations from the norm „are not the result of laxity or careless thinking, but of provisional principles of production of a new language” (Dulay, Burt, Krashen, 1982: 150). Dulay's statement, Burt, Krashen highlights an important insight into the errors committed by students learning a foreign language. According to this view, deviations from language norms do not reflect a lack of effort or intelligence, but rather a natural stage in the process of acquiring the new language.

Bibliography

- Baker, M., Saldanha, G. (2009). *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. London–New York: Routledge. https://archive.org/details/routledgeencyclo0000unse_b9k2/page/n1/mode/2up [accessed: 27 April 2024].
- Corder, S.P. (1980). La sollicitation de données d'interlangue. *Langages*, 57, 29–37.
- Dulay, H., Burt, M., Krashen, S. (1982). *Language Two*. New York–Oxford.
- Eccentricity. *Dictionary Cambridge*. [dictionary.cambridge.org. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/eccentricity](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/eccentricity) [accessed: 27 April 2024].
- Eccentricity. *Springer Nature Link*. link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-24612-3_644#citeas [accessed: 27 April 2024].
- Ekscentryczność. *Wielki słownik języka polskiego*. [wsjp.pl. https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/55553/ekscentrycznosc/5204796/przejaw](https://wsjp.pl/haslo/podglad/55553/ekscentrycznosc/5204796/przejaw) [accessed: 27 April 2024].
- Excentricitate. *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române*. [dexonline.ro. https://dexonline.ro/definitie/excentricitate](https://dexonline.ro/definitie/excentricitate) [accessed: 27 April 2024].

- Grucza, F. (1978). *Z problematyki błędów obcojęzycznych*. Warszawa.
- Markowski, A. (2011). *Kultura języka. Teoria. Zagadnienia leksykalne*. Warszawa.
- Masiewicz, A. (2012). Le statut de l'erreur dans l'enseignement/apprentissage d'une langue vivante. Exemple du Polonais langue étrangère. In: K. Siatkowska-Callebat, A. Synoradzka-Demadre (red.). *L'Enseignement du Polonais en France*. Paris, pp. 68–82.
- Platon, E. (2021). *Româna ca limbă străină (RLS). Elemente de metadidactică*. Cluj-Napoca.
- Porquier, R., Rosen, É. (2003). Présentation. L'actualité des notions d'Interlangue et d'interaction exolingue. *Linx. Revue des linguistes de l'Université Paris Ouest Nanterre la Défense*, 49, 7–17.
- Py, B. (2004). A propos de quelques publications récentes sur l'analyse des erreurs. In: L. Gajo, M. Matthey, D. Moore, C. Serra (red.). *Un parcours au contact des langues Didier*. Paris, 13–23.
- The official website of the Department of Romanian Language for Foreign Students, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi. <https://lrlsuaic.wixsite.com/uaic/lrls> [accessed: 27 April 2024].
- Zarzycka, G. (2001). Typy zakłóceń w komunikacji międzykulturowej. In: G. Habrajska (red.). *Język w komunikacji* (3). Łódź, 243–258.