

**Romanian as a second language by
plurilingual speakers in
Luxembourg: Discourse marking
practices in managing agreement
and disagreement**

**Le roumain comme langue seconde
par des locuteurs plurilingues au
Luxembourg: Pratiques des
marqueurs discursifs dans la
gestion de l'accord et du désaccord**

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Abstract

The current article focuses on adult plurilingual speakers of Romanian as a second language in a classroom context at one of the European Union Institutions in Luxembourg. The analysis of the audio data shows stretches of peer talk (referred to as “Learner Inhabited Interaction”, (henceforth LII) interactionally constructed within the overall teacher-learner conversational activity. The two examples of this paper focus on the contribution of discourse marking practices in the management of agreement and disagreement following a stance taking turn.

The analysis employs the tools of Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Two findings are relevant for the analysis of the two examples: (1st sequential) the role of the discourse marking practices as “tying structures” (Sacks, 2006: 633), which contribute to the construction and maintenance of the interaction, and (2nd meta-sequential) the understanding of peer interaction as a resource-constructed space, not only as a physically constructed “peer group” space.

Keywords: Romanian second language, stance taking, peer interaction, conversation analysis

Résumé

Le présent article se concentre sur des locuteurs plurilingues adultes ayant le roumain comme langue seconde dans un contexte de classe au sein de l'une des institutions de l'Union Européenne au Luxembourg. L'analyse des données audio montre des séquences d'interactions entre les pairs (dénommées « Learner Inhabited Interaction ») construites au sein de l'activité conversationnelle entre l'enseignant et les apprenants. Les deux exemples présents dans cet article montrent qu'à la suite de prises de position épistémiques, les participants utilisent des marqueurs discursifs pour gérer l'accord et le désaccord dans l'interaction.

L'analyse utilise les outils de l'analyse conversationnelle (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Deux conclusions sont pertinentes pour l'analyse des deux exemples : (la 1^{ère}, séquentielle) le rôle des pratiques des marqueurs discursifs comme « structures qui connectent » (Sacks, 2006: 633) contribuant à la construction et au maintien de l'interaction ; et (la 2^{ème}, métaséquentielle) la

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compréhension de l'interaction entre pairs comme espace interactionnel
séquentiellement construit, et pas seulement comme un 'groupe de pairs' construit
dans un espace physique.

Mots-clés: Roumain langue seconde, prise de position, interaction entre pairs,
analyse conversationnelle

1. Romanian as a second language in Romania and in Europe

Romanian as a second language within Romania has seen a considerable development. For the purpose of this article, however, we only mention two promoting Romanian institutions: The Romanian Language Institute, Ministry of Education (Institutul Limbii Române) and The Institute of Romanian Language as a European Language, University Babes Bolyai (Institutul Limbii Române ca Limbă Europeană). The target populations for Romanian as a second/foreign language within Romania (RLS-Româna ca limbă străină) (Council of Europe, 2001: 12) are: foreign students studying in Romania, non-student foreign population wanting to learn Romanian while in Romania and Romanian nationals with other first languages. The Romanian children who return to Romania after having studied abroad represent a new type of population. The Romanian Ministry of Education (MEN, 2013) mentions a number of 4874 demands of diploma recognition during the period of July-October 2013 for the primary, secondary and high school levels. Many of these 4874 children have Romanian as a second language during the integration process into Romanian schools, where the language of instruction is Romanian.

The presence of Romanian as a second language within the European Union grew stronger with Romania joining the European Union (EU) in 2007: Romanian becomes an official EU language (24 EU languages at present) and it is taught within the EU institutions.

Romanian as a second language is therefore present in the EU institutions in Luxembourg, a country which registers 44,5% foreigners on its territory (Statec, 2014). Enquiring on the linguistically diverse Luxembourgish context, a European Commission Report shows that in Luxembourg 84% of the respondents are able to speak at least 2 languages in addition to their mother tongue and that 61% of the respondents are able to speak at least three languages in addition to their mother tongue (European Commission, 2012: 13). The place of Romanian in this multilingual context is still to be defined.

2. Plurilingual participants in a multilingual work context

The participants of the current study are six employees of the European Institutions in Luxembourg who had been studying Romanian as a group for three years prior to the recording (2008). The teacher speaks Romanian as her first language and has been assisting the students in their language development since the beginning of the course. The data was collected in an audio format (Durus, 2009).

The group is seated at tables organized in the shape of a semi-circle when the researcher is present but not interacting with them (Durus, 2009). The interactional situation focuses on the architecture of an open-ended conversational activity which builds up on a topic proposed by the teacher. The teacher introduces the topic as the cost of living. She then presents the euro barometer results on the Europeans' standards of living and on their declared degree of happiness. The conversation moves towards a discussion on the environmental issues with the partial participation of the teacher.

The analysis focuses specifically on stretches of interaction managed by students only, which will be further referred to as "Learner Inhabited Interaction" (LII). Seven such stretches of LII talk were retained for analysis on the criterion that they were at least 40 seconds long. The seven stretches begin and end with an utterance by the teacher. These utterances account for approximately 13 minutes out of the total of the 41-minute recording. The teacher is (tacitly) present all throughout the interaction. We also note the possibility of the learners' non-verbal orientation towards her. However, the audio-recorded participation of the teacher cannot be traced in these LII stretches.

3. Discourse marking practices

The interaction constructed in LII stretches makes relevant discourse marking practices following the enactment of stance taking turns.

The discourse markers are understood as "sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk" (Schiffrin, 1996: 31), and as "participants' own orientations to particular actions and the way those actions are accomplished through turns at talk"

(Hellermann, 2009: 96). We analyze how the discourse marking practices are accomplished in the Romanian language through the use of “dar” (but), “nu” (no), “da” (yes), and “și” (and).

The examples below discuss discourse marking practices following a stance: “Through stance and stance-taking, speakers position themselves relative to objects and to other speakers” (Edwards, 2009, ii). More specifically, an epistemic stance “refers to the knowledge or belief vis-à-vis some focus of concern, including degrees of certainty of knowledge, degrees of commitment to truth of propositions, and sources of knowledge, among other epistemic qualities” (Ochs, 1996, quoted by Edwards, 2009: 6). The analysis employs the methodological tools of Conversation Analysis (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974), which takes an emic approach on data; that is in line with the priority of the Council of Europe as established in 2001: “what learners want to **do** with a language, in order to communicate effectively, over the actual linguistic forms used for that purpose” (Council of Europe, 2001: 9, emphasis in original). The transcription of the data follows the GAT conventions (Selting et al., 1998), with English translation in italics.

3.1 Managing agreement following an epistemic stance

In the interaction, five adult learners of Romanian (Cay, Kate, Mar, Inga, Theo) having various first languages and plurilingual backgrounds manage and display a preference for agreement through the use of discourse marking practices:

3.1.1 Example 1²

023 Cay: ce fac EU, (-)
what do I do, (-)
024 sunt O persoană dintre 6 miliarde (1.0) äh:
I am ONE person out of 6 billion~~s~~ (1.0) äh:
025-> important este să: schimbăm TOȚI-
important is tha:t change ALL-
026 Kate: <<p>toți> 'da dacă TOȚI (1.2)
<<p>all> 'yes if all (1.2)
027 Mar: [.hhh e important]
[.hhh it=s important]
028 Inga: [avem nevoie schimbă]

² The original recordings of extracts 1 and 2 can be found at: www.dica-lab.org

- 029 *[we need change]*
dupa mine poto[pul] äh::
after me the fl[ood] äh::
- 030 Kate: [schim]băm
 [chan]ge
- 031 Theo: și nu schimb [ă:m automatic (.) 'nu]
and we don't chan[ge: automatically(.) 'no]
- 032 Inga: [vom schimba și : măsurile]
[will change a:nd the measures]
- 033 economice ajută (1.0)
economic help (1.0)
- 034 Ukn: ()
- 035 Inga: ajută mult 'äh
help a lot 'äh
- 036 Cay: (să vedem) dacă facem o comparație
(let=s see) if we make a comparison

In line 23 of example 1, Cay makes use of a rhetoric question, with self-reference and rising intonation, recycling lexical items from the question in the first elements of the answer. The use of rhetoric questions of the type of “ce” (en: what) is systematic in the LII stretches as opposed to the directly other-addressing questions (only two occurrences). Sacks’ s finding that “questions are used to generate accounts and accounts are used to control activities” (Sacks, 2006: 11) serves our argument. The fact that the LII stretches identified in the data shows only two examples of direct questions can suggest conclusions at the opposite pole, namely that “asking” without using a “question” when doing so, has “implications of (non-) accountability” (ten Have, 2007: 16), specifically in peer-to-peer interaction management. Outside peer-to-peer stretches, the teacher-expert is the one who asks direct questions, displaying her role as an expert and eliciting accounts from the learners.

In line 25, we identify the epistemic stance (Sacks, 2006: 8), prefaced by a (1.0) pause and a hesitation. Cay’s turn is followed by the concerted reactions of four of the five learners. The last element in line 25, “TOȚI” (everybody) is emphasized and it is this element that is taken up in the next speaker’s turn, which is backed up by a falling intonation “da dacă TOȚI” (yes if everybody). Kate does not complete her if-utterance in this turn (line 26), but she continues it in line 30. Mar and Inga overlap in lines 27-28 following a 1.2 pause. Mar announces her turn with an aspiration and recycles the element “important” from line 25. She doesn’t get to finish her utterance, as Inga continues her turn after the overlapping items. It’s Theo’s turn to take the floor in line 31 with a turn that begins with “și” (and) and recycling another element,

“schimbăm” (we change; line 25), which is available from previous turns. His turn ends in a falling intonation “nu” (no) in overlap with the next speaker’s turn.

The first turn that follows the epistemic utterance (line 25) refers to an agreement shaped in the form of a “same evaluation” (Pomerantz, 1984: 66): “da dacă TOȚI” (yes if everybody). Atkinson & Heritage’s finding that ‘preferred activities are normally performed directly and with little delay’ (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984: 53) applies to our example. Kate’s turn comes immediately after Cay’s utterance; there is no pause in between. The fact that all the following five turns have moments of overlapping supports, in our view, the same claim as for preferred activities. “Nu” (no) is being used twice in line 31, but with an effect of positive alignment with the stance in line 25. Two different turns in example 1 make use of “și” (and) with two different functions: Theo’s turn (line 31) as a way of latching with the epistemic stance from line 25 and Inga’s turn as a way of topic initiation (line 32). Both lines recycle a lexical item from line 25. Deborah Schiffrin identified these with two roles: “and” which she frames as “coordinating idea units” and “continuing a speaker’s action” (Schiffrin, 1984: 152). In line with that, Schegloff identifies it as a “continuation marker” (Schegloff, 1996: 17). Inga uses “și” (and) in order to reinitiate the topic of the economic measures which had already been present in one of Cay’s previous turns in the interaction. Nevile highlights “the role of *and* for “back-connecting” (or “skip-connecting”)” (Nevile, 2007: 236 original italics), which serves “to establish and maintain an orientation to the course-of-action character of (...) talk across sequences” (Nevile, 2007: 282, quoting Heritage & Sorjonen), which further achieves “the maintenance of a larger activity” (Nevile, 2007: 282). In our case, in line 31 of example 1, Theo is orienting to the statement from line 25, maintaining in this way the orientation across turns. A last remark concerns the opposites: “EU” (I, line 23) - “6 miliarde” (6 billion, line 24); “EU” (I, line 23) - “TOȚI” (ALL, line 25); a similar opposition is observable in Inga’s turns at lines 28 and 29: “avem nevoie” (we need)- “după mine potopul” (after me the flood). The agreement, which serves as the alignment with the stance, is therefore visible not only at the level of the lexical recycling (TOȚI, schimbă, important), at the level of the discourse marking practices, but also at the linguistic recycling level (the use of the “we” form as common ground). The recycling contributes to the phenomenon of “shared stances” (Edwards, 2009: 12), which takes place as “speakers deploy stance-taking in response to the stance(s) of other subjects, thereby aligning and

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 disaligning with the stance of prior speakers” (Edwards, 2009: 12), for example lines
 27, 31 and 32-33.

In example 1, we analyzed the sequential development, which follows an epistemic stance, showing the ways in which this contributes to the maintaining of progressivity of peer talk-in-interaction, and to the creation of opportunities for the very existence of peer-to-peer stretches in the overall teacher-student interaction.

3.2 Managing disagreement following an epistemic stance

Example 2 is relevant to the way disagreement is being managed by the students through the use of discourse marking practices in LII stretches following an “I think” epistemic stance (line 46).

3.2.1 Example 2

046-> Mar: asta e o problemă cred; (---) eduCAȚia.
this is a problem I think; (---) eduCAtion.
 047 (2.2)
 048 Ann: trată educație (-) dar ăh sunt de acord
it's about education (-) but ăh I agree
 049 cu Cay ca .h măsurile economice
with Cay that .h the economic measures
 050 ajută foarte (-) foarte mult ai-aici
help a lot (-) a lot he- here
 051 în (-) în (--)vest
in in (-)the (--)west
 052 Cay: -hm [-hm]
 053 Ann: ['hm] ăh:: decât
 ['hm] ăh:: than

In line 46, Mar offers an utterance, which projects an ending (systematically observed in the corpus) through the use of “cred” (I think) and falling intonation “educația” (education). The stance in line 46 is followed by a 2.2 pause, which is often a sign of disagreement. The disagreement is projected by Ann’s first move in line 48, a weak agreement recycling a lexical item of the stance, “trată educație (-)” (it’s about education), and in a stance taking form. The disagreement utterance is introduced by “dar” (but) “dar ăh sunt de acord cu Cay” (but ăh I agree with Cay) and resembles the

“I think” epistemic stances. The reference of affiliation to Cay’s position is followed by an acknowledgement token in line 52 by Cay.

The analysis of these sequential developments supports observations on disagreement in interaction (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984: 53-54), which is known to be accomplished by various interactional means allowing for a non-direct management of disagreement.

4. Findings

The two examples open sequentially with epistemic stances which encompass either an impersonal or a “we” reference. In both examples, the first part of the turn holds an impersonal form and the second part a “we” (example 1) or an “I” (example 2) form. If stance taking “serves to create a particular structure of stance relationships that involve not only the speaker (the subject) and the object, but also *other* subjects” (Edwards, 2009: 10, italics in original), then discourse markers like “dar” (but), “nu” (no), “da” (yes), and “și” (and), serve the function as “tying structures” (Sacks, 2006: 633) in the construction and maintenance of the peer relationship. Moreover, we have found that a first speaker’s stance taking is followed by stance taking turns of other speakers (“shared stances”, Edwards, 2009: 12) and that lexical and linguistic recycling play a big role in their construction.

The analysis (examples 1 & 2) shows that LII stretches exist as “islands” in an open-ended teacher-student conversational activity when the students-actors (Ziegler, 2008: 39) accomplish the management of the interaction on their own, selecting available discourse marking practices in organizing agreement and disagreement. In conclusion, peer interaction can be a resources-organized space without necessarily being a physical space-organized interaction.

5. References

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6. Annexe 1 - Abbreviations

LII-Learner Inhabited Interaction

RLS-Limba română ca limbă străină [Romanian as a foreign language]