DISCOURSE STRATEGIES IN CURRENT-DAY DIGITAL COMMUNICATION. LANGUAGE-CONTACT PHENOMENA IN INSTAGRAM REELS

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Abstract. The rise of social media platforms, where users from diverse linguistic backgrounds interact, has intensified the phenomenon of language contact over the past decade. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok facilitate and accelerate various linguistic phenomena, including code-switching, lexical borrowing, translanguaging, and the use of internet-specific discourse markers. Our research focuses on identifying specific types of linguistic interferences resulting from language contact between English and Romanian, which we will refer to as discourse strategies. Given that English often serves as a lingua franca on the internet, it plays a dominant role in shaping these interactions. We will analyze social media content across various domains (fashion, beauty, lifestyle, entertainment, etc.), examining the contexts in which these linguistic phenomena occur and their frequency. The main objective of this study is to uncover the reasons behind the linguistic choices users make in social media discourse. Does the use of certain language strategies (code-switching, borrowing, discourse markers, etc.) make the discourse more engaging? What types of code-switching characterize the discourse of reels, and what lexical elements tend to be borrowed? For our analysis, we collected Instagram user-generated content, including posts, captions, but mainly reels, that target the Romanian public. This dataset includes a range of content types, allowing us to examine how language contact and discourse strategies are expressed within this type of social media interaction.

Keywords: language contact, code-switching, lexical borrowings, discourse strategies, social media.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper deals with language-contact phenomena in Instagram reels, as particular types of discourse strategies in current-day digital communication.

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Language contact (LC) is a social and linguistic phenomenon in which speakers of different languages interact with one another, leading to the transfer of linguistic features. Language contact is defined as a very heterogeneous phenomenon insofar as contact may occur either between genetically related or unrelated languages, and the interacting speakers may display different patterns of multilingualism (see Auer 2021: 147, Thomason 2001a: 1–3).

Language contact phenomena such as code-switching emerge naturally in communities of multilingual speakers. Code-switching is a "mechanism by which contact-induced changes are introduced" (Thomason 2001a: 131). Hence, code-switching is a mechanism which facilitates borrowing, which we will refer to in the following chapters in relation to lexical borrowing (loanwords) and pragmatic borrowing (discourse markers). On the other hand, Poplack and Dion (2012) discuss the relationship between code-switching and lexical borrowing, which they consider to be two distinct processes which integrate other-language items.

In digital communication, code-switching serves as a strategy to enhance message appeal and audience engagement in social media discourse. *Methodologically speaking*, in order to analyze language contact phenomena in social media discourse, we compiled a corpus by selecting Instagram influencers from diverse fields, including beauty, lifestyle, fashion, and food. We transcribed one or more reels from each influencer, resulting in a corpus exceeding 9,000 words. Our main objectives are to identify, analyze and categorize the main types of code-switching displayed in our corpus.

In section **2** we define the reel as a special form of digital communication, in section **3** we introduce the main structural types of code-switching and their characteristics, and in section **4** we continue with an analysis of the corpus.

2. WHAT IS A REEL?

A reel is Instagram's short-form video, designed specifically to compete with TikTok. This feature allows users to film videos up to 90 seconds long, made up of a single clip or multiple clips edited together. Content on reels can be enhanced by adding music, text overlays, effects, transitions, captions, stickers, and various filters, or by uploading multiple video clips.

Reels are also used for brand and product promotion, self-promotion, and they indirectly aim for audience engagement like textual reactions and other feedback. We observed that the most representative language-related characteristics of reels are:

(a)   the dominance of English influence, particularly in specialized fields such as beauty, fashion, and lifestyle;

(b)   an informal style, characterized by a casual, conversational tone that reflects everyday communication;

(c)   language dynamics: constantly evolving vocabulary and expressions, influenced by trends and popular culture;

(d)   an interactive component: the use of direct engagement with audiences through comments, polls, and user-generated content.

3. CODE-SWITCHING. FEATURES AND GOALS

Code-switching is largely defined as the ability of bilinguals to alternate effortlessly between the two languages they master. More specifically, code-switching refers to contact-induced synchronic variation in the language of bilingually competent speakers.

In the case of interference between Romanian and English, we are dealing with a specific type of LC, an indirect, culturally determined one. Its impact is largely lexical and may show pragmatic inferences, but it may also affect syntax, morphology, and phonology (Weinreich 1953, Mackey 1968, 1976, Thomason 2001b).

Studies on code-switching (Maschler 1994, 2000, Matras 2000, Goss and Salmons 2000, among many others) differentiate between the following structural types, which we will investigate and illustrate in the following sections of the paper, using examples found in our corpus: (a) *intrasentential code-switching*, occurring within a sentence; (b) *intersentential/extrasentential code-switching*, occurring between sentences (e.g., in a complex sentence); (c) *emblematic code-switching*, which concerns tags, interjections, and idiomatic expressions (Poplack 1980: 614).

3.1. Situational vs. metaphorical code-switching

Linguistic codes may be closely related to specific settings; from this perspective, it is generally predictable which code will be selected by participants in a given conversation. This type of code-switching is referred to as situational code-switching. When the switch to another code may be related to the psychological distance manifested by the speaker, this constitutes a metaphorical process, signaling the changing of interpersonal relationships (between speaker and listener). This is generally referred to as metaphorical code-switching (Gumperz 1982).

The main characteristics of situational code-switching are: (i) it occurs when speakers switch languages based on the situation or setting they are in; (ii) the switch typically happens because of external factors like the social context, the formality of the situation, or the presence of specific interlocutors; (iii) the choice of language is directly tied to the context or the social role of the interaction, not the message being conveyed.

Metaphorical code-switching is characterized by: (i) switching languages to convey a different meaning or to express a specific attitude, feeling, or idea; the switch is not determined by the situation, but by the intended meaning or the emotional or stylistic effect the speaker wants to achieve; (ii) it's often used to add emphasis, evoke a certain image, or reflect an identity that resonates with the audience. This switch may happen within the same situation, but the choice of language is more about what the speaker wants to convey symbolically.

### 3.2. Discourse variation across cultural and social contexts. Means of expression

Gumperz (1982) explores how individuals use language in social interactions, particularly focusing on how discourse varies culturally and socially. Among the means identified, he mentions:

(i)   contextualization cues, available through verbal and nonverbal signals, like intonation, pitch, and body language, that help convey meaning and context during interactions. Such cues in cross-cultural exchanges guide listeners to interpret the speaker's intentions, and manage how messages are received;

(ii)   inference and conversational implicatures, which have to do with the fact that speakers rely on shared cultural knowledge and assumptions to imply meanings indirectly. This often involves conversational implicatures, where the listener deduces meanings that go beyond the literal meanings of the words uttered;

(iii)   repair and conversational accommodation: speakers adjust their language in response to misunderstandings or to accommodate their conversational partner's background, helping to maintain smooth communication. Repair strategies are used to clarify or modify speech especially in intercultural communication;

(iv)   framing and footing: speakers use framing and footing to establish roles and positions within interactions. Framing helps participants understand the type of conversation (e.g., formal, informal) while footing reveals shifts in speaker stance or alignment with particular viewpoints;

(v)   politeness and face management – discourse strategies include managing politeness to maintain social harmony and respect. This can involve indirect language, honorifics, or deferential forms, depending on cultural norms;

(vi)   *code-switching*: speakers alternate between languages or dialects within a conversation, often to achieve specific social effects, like signaling group identity or solidarity.

According to Hoffmann (1991), there are several reasons to switch between languages, namely: the need to approach particular topics; to fill lexical gaps, especially in introducing specialized terminology; the necessity of quoting somebody else; to provide explanations for clearer or less intrusive recommendations; to express certain emotions emphatically through cursing or exclamations; the essential need of using interjections; to create a sense of belonging or solidarity within a community (to express group identity); to facilitate communication by adapting one's language to fit in or to ensure successful interaction (to change register).

4. CORPUS ANALYSIS

Regarding the quantitative analysis, the chart below shows the distribution of English-origin elements in our Romanian corpus, categorized by type and degree of integration. Technical borrowings are the most frequent (55 occurrences). Non-standard but frequently used borrowings (40) reflect widespread informal usage not yet codified in the *Ortographic, Ortoepic and Morphological Dictionary* (DOOM³). Code-switching, both intrasentential and intersentential, occurs 35 times. 20 borrowings are included in DOOM³, illustrating the partial institutional acceptance of English terms. Pragmatic borrowings (15), including discourse markers and interjections, contradict our initial hypothesis that such markers would occur more frequently in social media discourse. Other lexical borrowings (10) are less frequent and generally context-specific. The data supports the existence of a continuum between code-switching and borrowing, with many English terms gradually integrating into Romanian, especially in digital and informal registers.
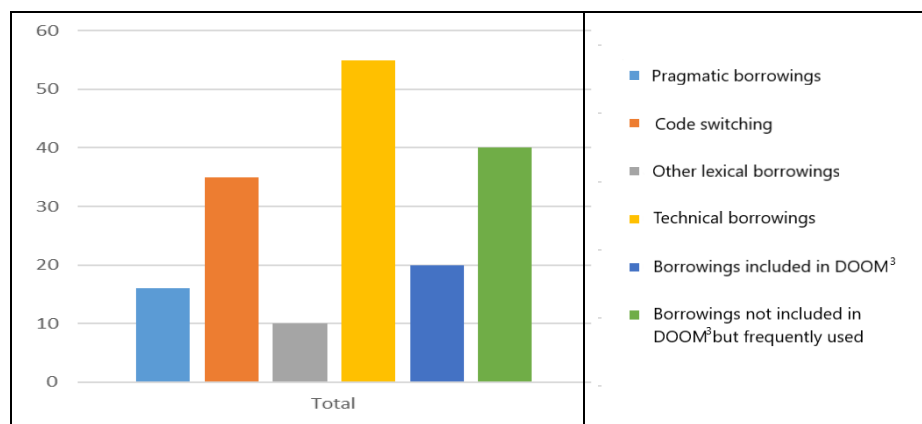
Language contact phenomena chart

Our analysis suggests that there is a fluid continuum between code-switching and lexical borrowing, particularly in the case of single-word insertions. While some English items appear as isolated instances of code-switching, often marked, stylistic, or context-specific, others show signs of structural integration into Romanian, indicating that they function as borrowings. This continuum is especially evident in the behavior of nouns and verbs, which may start as code-switches but gradually adopt Romanian morphological patterns, thus entering the lexical system permanently. The boundary between the two phenomena is not always clear-cut, and categorizations often depend on frequency, degree of integration, and speaker perception. As such, a comprehensive understanding of language contact phenomena in digital discourse requires paying attention to both the grammatical and pragmatic dimensions of these insertions.

4.1. Intersentential code-switching

Our corpus illustrates instances of intersentential code-switching through independent sentences that convey conventional, habitual, or generic content, as well as through adjunct clauses. Many of these occur with noticeable frequency in the source language, and some represent fixed or idiomatic expressions.

Intersentential switches may take the form of declarative statements (1–2), rhetorical questions (3), or exclamatory utterances (4–6), each fulfilling distinct pragmatic functions, such as marking emphasis, asserting identity, signaling conclusions, or providing affective closure. In our data, these English-language insertions frequently appear at the end of a speaker's turn, functioning as closing lines. We argue that ending discourse with an English sequence serves as a strategic choice, one that amplifies the rhetorical impact and leaves a memorable emotional impression on the listener. In this sense, intersentential switches are often both affectively and rhetorically marked.

(1)   Din anumite puncte de vedere știu că e mai greu să faci reașezare în viață când lucrurile sunt OK sau *OK-ish*, decât atunci când există un disconfort major. **It's easy to settle**. (@*cristina.otel*)

'In some ways, I know it is harder to make changes in life when things are OK or OK-ish than when there is major discomfort. It's easy to settle.'

(2)   Personal, mi-am antrenat *frame-ul* pozitiv de-a lungul anilor, că d-aia nu renunț, d-aia mă ambiționez mai tare […], funcționez în el în 95% din cazuri, dar mai alunec uneori în negative… **deh, we're all humans!** (@*aluziva*)
'Personally speaking, I've trained my positive frame of mind over the years, that's why I don't give up, that's why I'm more ambitious […], I function in this frame of mind 95% of the time, but sometimes I slip into negativity… deh, we're all humans!'

(3)   Așa că […] încercam să mă fac cât mai invizibilă ca nu cumva cineva să îmi ceară părerea… **Does this ring any bells?** (@*cristina.otel*)
'So… I was also trying to make myself as invisible as possible lest somebody ask for my opinion. Does this ring any bells?'

(4)   Conține retinol microdozat, peptide și ceramide. **Look at that glow!** (@*ioanagrama*)
'It contains microdosed retinol, peptides and ceramides. Look at that glow!'

(5)   Este nuanța ideală, perfectă pentru mine, de *nude*… **I love it!** Iar acum voi folosi acest ruj de la Dior în nuanța 100. Puțin *gloss* de la Lancôme… **and I am done!** (@*ioanagrama*)
'It's the ideal, perfect nude shade for me, I love it! And now I'm going to use this Dior lipstick in shade 100. A little bit of gloss from Lancôme… and I am done!'

(6)   […] după ce ani de zile am fost criticată pentru faptul că n-am tăcut în fața unor nedreptăți, **well... look at me now!** (@*aluziva*)
'after years of being criticized for not remaining silent in the face of unfairness, well… look at me now!'

4.2. Intrasentential code-switching

The first two examples below, (7) and (8), sit at the intersection of intra- and intersentential code-switching, as they involve English clauses inserted parenthetically within larger Romanian sentences. Although syntactically independent, these inserted clauses are functionally integrated into the structure of the main clause.

In both cases, the English segments serve as modifiers: the conditional clause "if that's your jam" in (7) qualifies "poate familie și copii" ('maybe a family and children'), thereby adding a subjective, evaluative nuance; while the relative clause "which I find very therapeutic, in a way" in (8) modifies "zdrobim bananele" ('we mash the bananas'), offering a commentary on the event.

(7)   Când aparent nu ai motive să te plângi, ai o carieră bună, un venit decent, poate familie și copii, **if that's your jam**, dar pe interior simți durere […] (@*cristina.otel*)
'When apparently you have no reason to complain, you have a good career, a decent income, maybe a family and children, if that's your jam, but on the inside, you feel pain […]'

(8)   Prima dată zdrobim bananele, **which I find very therapeutic**, **in a way**, până ajunge totul cam de consistența asta. (@*malinairimia*)
'First, we mash the bananas, which I find very therapeutic, in a way, until everything reaches this type of consistency.'

In example (9), the English sequence introduced by the contrastive conjunction *but* is pragmatically bound to the preceding Romanian discourse. It continues the same line of reasoning by offering a concessive suggestion, functioning beyond the sentence level, rather than within the grammar of the sentence.

In example (10), the switched segment is syntactically integrated: the Romanian adverbial clause of concession "indiferent care va fi rezultatul final" ('no matter what the final result will be') is embedded within the broader English main clause. It serves as a subordinate clause that semantically modifies the main directive ('try to have fun during the process'), thereby forming a unified sentence structure across two languages.

(9) El mai zicea și ceva de niște pesmet aicea la final, da' eu n-am mai adăugat și pesmet că am zis că are șnițelul destul pesmet, **but you can do it**. (*@malinairimia*)
'He also mentioned something about breadcrumbs at the end, but I didn't add any more because I thought the schnitzel already had enough, but you can do it.'

(10) **And last but not least, try to have fun during the process**, indiferent care va fi rezultatul final. (*@malinairimia*)
'And last but not least, try to have fun during the process, no matter what the final result will be.'

In the following examples, all English elements, predominantly adjectives and common (non-technical) nouns, are grammatically integrated into Romanian sentences. For this section, we excluded lexical/technical borrowings (such as brand or product-specific terms), which are discussed separately in section **4.5**. Among these examples, we observe the incorporation of coordinated constructions, fixed or semi-fixed expressions, like *ups and downs* (12), *light and cool* (11), which mirror idiomatic binomials in English. A particularly interesting phenomenon is the insertion of English adjectives modified by Romanian intensifiers, such as *mult mai nice* (14), *mai strong* (15), *foarte excited* (16), *atât de excited* (17), and *atât de fancy* (18), which show a high degree of morphosyntactic integration.

(11) Deci până acum avem **light and cool**. (*@sinzianasooper*)
'So far, we have light and cool.'

(12) și să normalizez un pic ideea asta de eșec și de **ups and downs** (*@cristina.otel*)
'and to normalize this idea of failure and ups and downs a bit'

(13) dar să zic în pomeți să se vadă mult mai bine pentru că o să fie pielea mult mai întinsă și o să fie **much nicer**. (*@dr.alex.lupoi*)
'But I'd say it shows up much better on the cheekbones because the skin will be much smoother, and it'll look much nicer.'

(14) […] este o cremă **mult mai nice** pe care o folosești atunci când te demachiezi (*@dr.alex.lupoi*)
'It's a much nicer cream to use when removing your makeup.'

(15) când te obișnuiești și vrei ceva **mai strong**. (*@dr.alex.lupoi*)
'When you get used to it and want something stronger.'

(16) Și-atunci sunt **foarte excited**. (*@sinzianasooper*)
'And then I get very excited.'

(17) Sunt **atât de excited** pentru rochița pe care o s-o port. (*@andonediana*)
'I'm so excited about the dress I'll be wearing.'

(18)   Mă simt atât de elegantă și **atât de fancy** în ea. (*@andonediana*)
        'I feel so elegant and so fancy in it.'

The integration of adjectives as seen in our corpus represents an instance of code-switching. Adjectives are absorbed with their original make-up, and as such behave as invariable lexical items in Romanian; they do not select inflectional endings specific to Romanian adjectives and do not trigger agreement with the noun they modify (see examples from (13) to (18)). However, what generally integrates them into the Romanian morphological system is their use alongside Romanian intensifier *mai* ('more'). More infrequently, adjectives are integrated in the discourse with the original intensifier (13).

4.3. Emblematic code-switching and pragmatic borrowings. Discourse markers

Emblematic (or *tag*) *switches* involve the insertion of discourse elements, such as interjections, tags, or other lexical items, that carry pragmatic meaning rather than contributing to the sentence's syntactic structure (see Muysken 2000). These elements are generally referred to as discourse markers.

(19)   E clar, e o pierdere de vreme, ce rateu rușinos, ce prostie, ce eșec... **geezus!** (*@aluziva*)
        'It's obvious, it's a waste of time…What a shameful failure, what nonsense, what a failure… Jesus!'
(20)   Aș putea spune chiar magic, *but I don't wanna sound cheesy*, **you know?** (*@malinairimia*)
        'I could even say magical, but I don't wanna sound cheesy, you know?'

In examples (19) and (20) we can observe that the insertion of these elements is accompanied by the transfer of the pragmatic functions they bear in the source language, where *Jesus* is used to mark the speaker's attitude of disappointment, and *you know* is used to maintain contact with the interlocutor. As Cojocaru (2020) points out, instead of using the Romanian correspondent *Isuse!*, speakers prefer the English *Jesus!* to avoid the religious connotation associated with its Romanian counterpart. Andersen (2014) argues that the insertion of pragmatic items signaling speaker attitudes, the speech act type, or discourse structure, are instances of *pragmatic borrowing.*

According to Andersen, pragmatic borrowing is "contact-induced language change" and "concerns the incorporation of pragmatic and discourse features of a source language into a recipient language" (Andersen 2014: 21). Pragmatic borrowings carry information about speaker attitudes, the speech act performed, discourse structure, politeness, etc., and is characterized by functional stability or functional adaptation in the transfer from the source language (SL) to the recipient language (RL). Pragmatic borrowings tend to be recurrent in the speech of individuals and are widespread across a given community, ultimately becoming available even to monolingual speakers (Andersen 2014).

When a discourse marker from English appears sporadically in Romanian discourse, it is best described as an instance of emblematic code-switching. When such items become conventionalized and are used frequently and seamlessly within Romanian (or in another

language) without signaling a shift in language, they may be considered pragmatic borrowings. In our corpus, items such as *Jesus!* may initially function as emblematic switches but could evolve into pragmatic borrowings if their use becomes more systematic and widespread. However, in the absence of a larger dataset and statistical analysis, most occurrences of English discourse markers in our data are more accurately analyzed as emblematic switches, rather than as evidence of full pragmatic integration.

One of the effects of languages in contact and bilingualism is the transfer of discourse markers from one language to another. The class of transferred discourse markers has been referred to through various terms such as "code-switching" (Maschler 2000, de Rooij 2000), "tag-switching" or "emblematic (code) switching" (Poplack 1980, Bullock and Toribio 2009, Goss and Salmons 2000), "borrowing" (Torres and Potowski 2008, Matras 1998, 2000, de Rooij 2000) and "pragmatic borrowing" (Andersen 2014). It is commonly thought that discourse markers have a higher degree of borrowability compared to other classes of elements, due to their specific phonological, syntactic, semantic, and functional features.

Discourse markers constitute a dynamic and heterogeneous functional category that includes adverbs (*well*, *now*, *basically*), coordinating and subordinating conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *because*), interjections (*oh*, *gosh*, *boy*), verbs (*say*, *look*, *see*), and clauses (*you see*, *I mean*, *you know*). Hansen (2024) mentions that discourse markers have contextual meaning – and the addition of (inter)subjective interpretations also play an important role – while they are used to coordinate, negotiate, and maintain coherence between discourse segments or between the lines of a dialogue. They have a macrosyntactic behavior, which means they are not integrated into the structure of the sentence, so their position varies and often tends to be peripheral. Being phonologically reduced or condensed, they tend to be part of a separate tone group. Discourse markers are multifunctional, simultaneously operating on several linguistic levels, and they are one of the most perceptually salient features of oral speech, where they appear with high frequency (Brinton 1996).

Borrowed discourse markers are perceived as more salient than native ones, and the motivation for switching languages and using discourse markers has to do with highlighting contrast and thus maximizing the saliency of their functions (Maschler 2000). Consequently, the speaker's intention to code-switch becomes a standalone discourse strategy, a contextualization cue "that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions" (see Gumperz 1982: 131). Conversely, according to Matras (2000), the motivation for using borrowed discourse markers from a "pragmatically dominant language" is a cognitive, rather than strategic process, because the speaker directs maximum mental effort towards a specific or dominant language during a given linguistic interaction.

In our corpus, we notice a speaker preference for using discourse markers borrowed from English for organizing the discourse structure or for expressing different kinds of attitudes. These markers fulfill a wide range of pragmatic roles such as those of topic switchers, boundary markers, hesitation markers, hedging devices, confirmation seekers, and attitude markers (Jucker and Ziv 1998: 1).

In examples (21) to (23), the phatic markers *ladies*, *guys* and *people* have the interpersonal function of addressing the interlocutor and capturing their attention. They also have a boundary-signaling function by opening/ starting the interaction (21), (22) or by closing it (23).

(21)   **Ladies**, am pregătit o salată de probiotice excelentă. (*@angelinacozma*)
        'Ladies, I prepared an excellent probiotic salad.'
(22)   **Hey guys**, vorbim foarte mult despre rutina de dimineață. (*@giulianahmany*)
        'Hey guys, we talk a lot about morning routines.'
(23)   Sunt bucuroasă și recunoscătoare, **people**! (*@aluziva*)
        'I'm happy and grateful, people!'

The marker *by the way* is used as a topic shifter (24), while *basically* (25) functions to summarize or conclude the preceding content of the utterance; both have an impact on the sequential level of the discourse. On a secondary level, *basically* also has an interpersonal function, since the speaker wants to convey the message that the procedure the interlocutor must complete is simple:

(24)   apoi am sărit în apă care era efectiv ciorbă, adică avea vreo 30 de grade. **By the way**, nisipul de pe plaja din Larnaca este cred că cel mai fin din ce am întâlnit până acum. (*@malinairimia*)
        'then I jumped into the water which was practically soup, meaning it was about 30 degrees Celsius. By the way, the sand on the beach in Larnaca is probably the finest I've ever encountered.'
(25)   **Basically**, te înscrii în aplicație, îți completezi profilul, cauți oportunități și când ai găsit ceva potrivit pentru tine […]. (*@malinairimia*)
        'Basically, you sign up for the app, fill out your profile, look for opportunities, and when you find something that suits you […].'

I guess (26) is used as a hedging device to express the speaker's epistemic stance of uncertainty. The marker occupies the final position in a discourse segment entirely formulated in English "So, let's go, *I guess*", used to conclude or to make a final statement.

(26)   Mi-a mai rămas niște smântână de gătit și am văzut pe tik tok că poți să faci unt de casă din ea. *So, let's go,* **I guess**. (*@malinairimia*)
        'I have some cooking cream left over and I saw on TikTok that you can make homemade butter from it. So, let's go, I guess.'

The attitude markers encountered in our corpus reflect a diverse spectrum of emotions or emotional states. *Oh, my God!* is maybe one of the most used English discourse markers in Romanian alongside *ok* (Cojocaru 2020). In the corpus, the former is used to emphasize the speaker's enthusiasm (27), in contrast to the marker *Jesus!* used in (19) to underline disappointment. The state of disappointment or failure to meet expectations can also be expressed by a marker originating from the interjection *meeh!* (28), while at the opposite pole of the emotional scale, *I love it* marks strong positive emotion, e.g., of delight (29).

(27)   Ei bine, acum ce spuneți de *cherry girl makeup*. Pare să fie un trend mult mai fain. **Oh my God**, vreau să recreez machiajul ăsta neapărat. (*@andonediana*)
        'Well, now what do you think of cherry girl makeup. It seems like a much cooler trend. Oh my God, I really want to recreate this makeup look(?).'

(28)   **Meeh!** E un contrast mult prea mare și nu se armonizează. (@*sinzianasooper*)
       'Meeh! It's too much of a contrast and doesn't harmonize.'
(29)   *blush-ul* lichid *Made me blush* de la YSL… **I love it!** (@*ioanagrama*)
       'YSL's *Made me blush* liquid blush... I love it!'

4.4. Lexical borrowings

Lexical borrowing denotes the process by which lexical items from one language (the donor language) are replicated in another language (the recipient language – RL). The integration of loanwords (borrowings) often involves their remodeling to fit the morphological and phonological system of the RL (Gumperz 1982: 66, Poplack 2004: 590). Lexical borrowings include technical terms as well as basic vocabulary.

In our paper, we are unable to establish a clear-cut separation between lexical borrowings (loanwords) and code-switched lexical units, since neither of them is absorbed into the RL.

In the modern period, and especially in modern Romanian, a large number of borrowings entered the language: while many were immediately absorbed without being morphologically adapted, others were assimilated into the morphological system of Romanian, adopting the internal make-up of Romanian nouns.

In our corpus, the lexical borrowings identified are predominantly *nouns*, although a few *verbs* were also found. The prominence of nouns among borrowings points to the very fact that nouns show a high degree of borrowability. As put by Matras (2009: 168),

> the high borrowability of nouns is thus primarily a product of their referential functions: nouns cover the most differentiated domain for labelling concepts, objects, and roles. This includes industrial and agricultural products, artefacts, institutions and institutional agents, procedures, conceptual innovations, as well as technical innovations and instruments. It is not a coincidence that institutional, social, and technological innovations are often expressed by loanwords in the languages of cultures that absorb foreign influences.

4.4.1. *Technical borrowings*

In product placement reels, there is a notable tendency to incorporate technical terms or multiword expressions and to maintain them in their original English form, especially when they are associated with specialized fields. This phenomenon is particularly evident in two lexical categories:

(i) industry-specific terminology, particularly from the beauty and cosmetic domain, often appears as multiword units or compounds: *skincare*, *lip flip*, *lip lift*, *texture*, *facelift*, *power peptides*, *make-up*, *lip liner*, *lip gloss*, *inner corner*, *cat-eye*, *peeling*, *blush*, *outfit*, *concealer*, and others;

(ii) abstract nouns referring to general concepts (e.g., *boost*, *set-up*, *shift*, etc.), some of which have already been partially assimilated morphologically and widely spread into Romanian (e.g., *trend*, *check-in*, *mindset*, *feedback*, etc.), while others remain peripheral and are likely to fall out of use (e.g., *unbecoming*).

Once integrated, many of these borrowings undergo morphological adaptation to the Romanian inflectional system, receiving grammatical endings consistent with Romanian

morphology. English nouns are typically assigned to the neuter gender in Romanian, and take the singular definite article *-ul: blush-ul* (29), *concealerul* (30), *peelingul* (31), *lip liftul* (32), *inner cornerul* (42). For the plural, they often take the *ending -uri* (*nice to have-uri* (34), *tooluri* (35), *hackuri* (36)), and may also combine with the plural definite article *-le* (*toolurile*) or the genitive/dative article *-lor* (*hackurilor*), signaling advanced morphological integration. However, there are exceptions; for instance, *beanbegi* (33), representing the plural form of English *beanbags*, is assigned masculine gender, indicated by the masculine plural ending *-i*.

(30)   **concealerul** de la Pat McGrath, are o acoperire destul de mare, așa că trebuie să am grijă să pun puțin produs (*@ioanagrama*)
        'Pat McGrath's concealer has quite a lot of coverage, so I have to be careful to use only a little bit of product.'

(31)   Există și alte mituri legate de **peelingul** chimic, de exemplu, **peelingul** face pielea mai subțire. (*@dr.annacraciun*)
        'There are other myths about chemical peels, for example, that peeling makes the skin thinner.'

(32)   Mai sunt și variante chirurgicale, cea mai comună dintre ele fiind **lip liftul**, care e o intervenție chirurgicală [...]. (*@dr.alex.lupoi*)
        'There are also surgical options, the most common is the lip lift, which is a surgical procedure [...].'

(33)   Atenție mare că facem ditamai *unboxing-ul* ca să vedeți tot ce am cumpărat pentru centrul educațional din Buzău. Începem cu cei douăzeci de **beanbegi** de diferite culori, pe care copiii îi vor folosi la ateliere [...]. (*@aluziva*)
        'Pay close attention, we're doing a big unboxing so you can see everything we bought for the educational center in Buzău. We're starting with the twenty beanbags of different colors, which the children will use in workshops [...].'

(34)   și mai există și varianta, scenariul, în care... […] să vrei să supracompensezi și să umpli programul, ca și conținut, cu lucruri care nu sunt necesare și care nu sunt relevante… sunt, dacă vrei, **nice to have-uri**. (*@cristina.otel*)
        'and there is also the option, the scenario, in which... […] you want to overcompensate and fill the program, in terms of content, with things that are unnecessary and irrelevant... they are, if you like, nice-to-haves.'

(35)   despre cum uneori e mai bine să ne folosim de **tool-urile** pe care le avem deja la dispoziție (*@malinairimia*)
        'about how sometimes it's better to use the tools we already have at our disposal'

(36)   Sunt destul de nouă în lumea **hack-urilor**. (*@malinairimia*)
        'I'm pretty new to the world of hacking.'

        Integrated elements may also retain features of the source language, such as the plural ending *-s* or the definite article *the*, which appear in Romanian discourse without morphological adaptation:

(37)   Apoi, am aici iaurt grecesc, […], am niște **wraps**, **high protein wraps**, important este să avem fibrele, proteinele, grăsimile sănătoase, asta este, de fapt, esențialul. (*@giulianahmany*)

'Then, I have Greek yogurt here, […], I have some wraps, high protein wraps, the important thing is to have fiber, protein, healthy fats, that's really the essentials.'

(38)   un alt ingredient important este… **the egg** (@*giulianahmany*)
         'another important element is… the egg'

This demonstrates both morphological assimilation and surface-level borrowing, reflecting different degrees of integration, along with the influence of domain-specific terminology on language contact dynamics.

An interesting case of lexical borrowing is the frequent use of the English word *hype*, which appears to be a trend-driven term spreading through online and social media contexts. In our corpus, it is used as a noun, as can be seen by the use of the definite article ending -*ul*.

(39)   Hai să vedem care este **hype-ul** cu această combinație minune. (@*andonediana*)
         'Let's see what all the hype is about with this miracle combo.'

(40)   Testez primul meu ruj Mac. Merită **hype-ul**? (@*victoriaxgheorghe*)
         'I'm trying my first Mac lipstick. Is it worth the hype?'

According to *Cambridge Dictionary*, *hype* is defined in its general sense as "a situation in which something is advertised and discussed a lot in order to attract attention". We believe that the Romanian usage more closely reflects an American English connotation of *hype* – namely, "information that makes something seem very important or exciting," a distinction also noted in *Cambridge Dictionary*.

This connotation aligns with the way the term is employed in Romanian social media: *hype* is used to describe viral trends, social buzz, or heightened expectations around products, styles, or cultural moments. These are often detached from traditional media and are rather centered around online virality.

4.4.2. *Verbal domain*

Wichmann and Wohlgemuth (2007) list four different types of strategies for integrating verb loans: (a) no modification of the original form of the verb ("direct insertion"); (b) morphological modification of the original form of the verb ("indirect insertion"); (c) insertion of the original form of the verb into a compound construction, where it is accompanied by an inherited verb ("light verb"); (d) importation of the original verb along with its original inflection ("paradigm transfer").

Romanian presents an in-between position with respect to verb loans, as it does not overtly modify the original verb form (i.e., "direct insertion"), but assigns it to a specific inflection class. Some verbs, as attested in our corpus (see examples (41) and (43)), are integrated into the **-*i*** infinitive verb class, and select the suffix -*esc*: *blenduiesc* 'I blend' (*a blendui* < Engl. 'to blend'; *a treckui* < Engl. 'to track'). Other verbs are assigned to the -*a* infinitive class, selecting the suffix -*ez* in the present indicative and subjunctive (42): *eversez* 'I twist' (*a eversa* < Engl. 'to evert'; with modification of the original verb form).

(41)   Vin cu acest fard în pliu apoi cu unul alb pe pleoapa mobilă, *inner cornerul*, mascara, **blenduiesc** puțin fard și pe pleoapa inferioară. (@*andonediana*)

'I apply this eyeshadow in the crease, then a white one on the mobile eyelid, the inner corner, mascara, and blend a little eyeshadow on the lower eyelid.'

(42)   dacă vrei să-ți mărești buzele practic ai două variante: una este ori să-ți pui *filler* sau o grăsime ca să le mărești în volum și a doua este doar **să** le **eversezi** adică să fie un pic mai ridicate și chestia asta poți să o faci cu toxină botulinică […] (*@dr.alex.lupoi*)

'If you want to enlarge your lips, you basically have two options: one is to use filler or fat to increase their volume, and the second is to just evert them, making them a little higher, and you can do this with botulinum toxin'

(43)   care îți face un link personal ție prin care se pot **treckui** numărul de oameni care au venit să cumpere produsul respectiv. (*@cristian.chifoi*)

'It gives you a personal link through which you can track the number of people who came to buy that product.'

5. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis confirms that code-switching is central to enhancing message appeal and audience engagement in digital communication. Of the three conventionally recognized types of code-switching, intrasentential code-switching is the most frequently attested type in our corpus, followed by a substantial number of intersentential switches. Contrary to our expectations, tag or emblematic switches appear relatively infrequently (see the chart above).

The data reveals a continuum between code-switching and borrowing, where certain lexical items are integrated into Romanian grammar, while others remain unassimilated, reflecting their ongoing evolution. Pragmatic borrowings serve as tools to emphasize enthusiasm, summarize ideas, or shift topics, showcasing the dynamic and interactive nature of the discourse of reels. They are not just linguistic imports, but function also as cultural signals, aligning the speaker with globalized trends.

Code-switching is an effective strategy for maintaining a conversational tone while adding stylistic and emotional depth to messages. It allows influencers to highlight key concepts, express emotional nuance, and build a sense of group identity or solidarity with their audience. Code-switching reinforces the influencer's stance as a specialist. By selectively using English terms and expressions, they align themselves with professional or global discourses, enhancing their credibility and authority in their field. This strategy helps influencers maintain their expert *persona*, bridging the gap between accessible, informal communication and specialized, authoritative language.

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