

ANDRA VASILESCU, MIHAELA-VIORICA CONSTANTINESCU, ARIADNA ȘTEFĂNESCU, ȘERBAN HARTULAR (eds), *Insights into Romanian Political Discourse*, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024, 511 p.

Deploing the deterioration of English and other European languages as a result of war and totalitarian regimes, Orwell created his Newspeak from the assumption that “if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought” (1946). Political animals can only be articulate mammals, argued Chilton, because political activity would be impossible in the absence of language, which allows for cooperation to exist and for people to build communities and *poleis* – cities and states (2004). There is an interdependence between language and politics, as language helps build a community and its political life based on communicated shared perceptions and values, and is used in turn by politics to acquire and maintain its power and to further its aims. In times of crisis and political upheaval, such as the ones we are currently experiencing, studying the political use of language to create or modify perceptions, i.e. political discourse in all its presentations, has become a matter of urgency. Although research on Romanian political discourse has grown considerably after the Revolution of 1989¹, no volumes have focused expressly on the *language* of politics in contemporary Romania – an emergent democracy at the crossroads of multiple influences (the West, the East, and the South) – while aiming to cater to a wider, international readership. Analysing samples of various political discourse genres – from presidential debates and ceremonial addresses to parliamentary debates, talk shows, and political memes – *Insights into Romanian Political Discourse* is thus, and as announced in its Introduction, the first book of its kind, highlighting, through pragmadiscursive, interactional, and rhetorical lenses, the influence of language in shaping present-day Romanian political identity, power relations, and public engagement.

The 14 contributions in the book are organised into four sections, each covering distinct genres within the Romanian political sphere and approaching Romanian political discourse from different angles. While focusing on miscellaneous genres (presidential debates, party programs, political statements, and talk shows), the five chapters in the first section, “Intersections Between Politics and Language in Use”, are united by the pragmalinguistic perspective adopted in their analyses of political identity construction and negotiation. The second and the third sections in the book approach the genres of festive addresses and parliamentary debates, respectively, while the contributions in the last section cross over to “the other side” of the political arena, widening the scope to include citizen engagement as well, through the analysis of crowd-based political slogans and memes.

In *Impoliteness Strategies in some Romanian Presidential Debates*, the first chapter in the book, Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu examines the strategies used by the candidates who qualified in the final rounds of the Romanian presidential elections of 2004 and 2009 to build their public personas during presidential debates. After characterising presidential debates as a genre and introducing the concepts of *face*, *self*, and *identity* in relation to presidential candidates, the author uses Terkourafi’s interactional model of politeness, impoliteness, and rudeness to identify the candidates’ on-/off-record impoliteness strategies as displayed in the debates. The winner of both elections, former president Traian Băsescu, is shown to have adopted a deliberately aggressive positioning towards his opponents in both debates,

¹ Very recent studies include Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu and Constantinescu (2018), Ene (2019), Toader (2021), Ilie (2022), and Roventă-Frumușani (2022).

with a clear preference for on-record direct attacks, supplemented at times by off-record insinuations as well. However, while this strategy of both proactive and protracted aggressiveness helped Băsescu build his image as a tough “player-president”, Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu does not make it the only ingredient to his winning the elections, as larger political and societal movements were at play at the time as well.

The facets of discursive populism in the Romanian 2016 general elections are scrutinised by Andra Vasilescu in the second chapter of the volume, *Populism(s). The Romanian Case (2016)*, which focuses on party programs. The author proposes her own pragma-linguistic definition of populist discourse as a communication style, a definition which incorporates elements from (im)politeness and speech acts theories. According to Vasilescu, in discursive populism politicians and parties use (im)politeness strategies to align themselves with a large number of voters and create a specific in-group identity in sharp contrast with the out-group, to identify face with identity and thus manipulate perceptions. Using the electoral programs of the four major parties participating in the 2016 elections – analysed in terms of slogans, (im)politeness strategies, macro-speech acts, and specific discourse – the chapter outlines a continuum ranging from emphatic consensus-oriented populism to content-oriented counter-populism. Along this cline, the four Romanian party programs examined illustrate four distinct types: the euphoric populism of commitment, the dysphoric populism of radical change, subliminal populism, and counter-populism.

In the third chapter, *Reinventing the Political. (Im)politeness and Interdiscursivity in the Romanian Public Communication Sphere*, Ariadna Ștefănescu proposes an analysis at the crossroads of several fields of inquiry: discourse analysis, (im)politeness studies and media/online communication. This original study investigates how a series of 2016 statements made by the Romanian president Klaus Werner Iohannis were taken over, transported, and morphed within several political action fields – as defined by Palonen (2003) and Muntigl (2002) – and text genres from *polity* (public statements by the Romanian PM), to *politicking* (in an editorial and an op-ed) and *sub-polity* (online comments). The analysis of this case of (inter)discursive polymorphism (the four genres analysed build different representations of the same political event), grounded in concepts such as interaction, footing, communicative style, or perlocutionary effect, highlights the important role of (im)politeness in the establishment, maintenance, and transformation of power relations and the political (discourse) world.

The strategic use of impoliteness in Romanian political discourse is also investigated in Anamaria Gebăilă’s chapter, *Impoliteness in Forms of Address Used in Romanian Political Talk Shows*. Based on a corpus of 2018 Romanian political TV shows, this study focuses on the role of standard and non-standard rude forms of address in the power dynamics and facework of both the host and his guests during primetime debates. After an in-depth analysis of four categories of potentially offensive forms of address used in the shows (allocutive pronouns, first names, interjections, and nominal forms), the chapter distinguishes two main strategies of impoliteness in which they are involved: direct – through the use of forms such as *bă(i)* or *nene* ‘dude/ bro’, inappropriate for the setting, and indirect – in which apparently innocuous forms are embedded into complex impolite tactics that also entail interruptions, irony, insulting attributes or falsehoods.

Chapter 5, *Pragmatic Overtones in the Use of Evidential Markers in Present-Day Romanian Political Discourse* by Cecilia-Mihaela Popescu, examines how linguistic expressions of evidentiality are used in political debates to achieve numerous rhetorical effects – e.g., self-legitimisation, self-assertion, truth negotiation. After an introduction to linguistic evidentiality, its relationship to epistemic modality, and its participation in stancetaking, the study continues with a corpus-based analysis of the main types of evidentials identified in recent Romanian parliamentary speeches. Intersubjective sensory-perceptual evidentiality, expressed by markers such as *iată* ‘here is/are’ or deictics like *acum* ‘now’ or *aceasta* ‘this’, is shown to be much more frequent in the corpus than personal sensory evidentiality – instantiated by evidentials derived from sensory verbs, for instance. The findings suggest that indirect (inferential or reportative) evidentiality is highly productive as a rhetorical tool in Romanian political discourse, and, depending on the source of the information conveyed (personal or shared), it may be used, among others, to reinforce and emphasise the speaker’s positioning or stancetaking, or to negotiate the truth value of shared contents.

The discursual politicisation of patriotism and its conversion into a self-centred emotion used to strengthen the speaker's positive image in an effort to gain power and popularity is the focus of Gabriela Stoica's investigation in *The Rhetoric of Patriotism in Romanian Political Discourse. National Day Speeches—A Pragma-Rhetorical Analysis* – the first chapter in the book's second section, *Festive Speeches*. In the corpus of 56 addresses delivered by Romanian MPs during several National Day Parliament festivities (2018-2019, 2021-2023), patriotic ethos is shown to be pathemised and features as a speech-structuring emotion, being constantly projected in discourse through various lexical-semantic and stylistic means in highly affective and rhetorically charged texts that make ample use of intensifying tropes and schemes. A prototypical affective script of National Day addresses is thus highlighted, in which patriotism, in conjunction with other emotions, is used as a thread linking the first part of speeches – euphoric and retrospective, to their body – usually dysphoric and related to the present, and their ending – euphoric and prospective.

A pragma-rhetorical perspective is also used by Gabriela Biriş in the chapter titled *Romanian Presidential and Royal Christmas Messages*, which juxtaposes the Christmas addresses of three Romanian post-communist Presidents (2001-2013) with those made by King Michael I from 2009 to 2015. The 17 ceremonial speeches are compared and studied along three dimensions: the way in which the speakers project their self-identity, map national identity, and build solidarity. The chapter's conclusions suggest that Romania is no exception to the recent international trend of secular heads of state delivering simpler and shorter festive speeches, probably under the pressure of (social) media constraints as well. On the other hand, just like in other parts of the world, Romanian royal Christmas addresses tend to be more conservative and respectful of rhetorical traditions.

Chapter 8, *Verbal Disagreement and Aggressiveness in Romanian Parliamentary Debates during the Pandemic Period*, authored by Carmen Ioana Radu, is the first in the third part of the book, *Exploring Overt and Covert Aggressiveness* – which approaches various facets of verbal violence in parliamentary debates. Radu's analysis uses the transcripts of 43 meetings of the Romanian Parliament from 2020 and 2021 to show how disagreement and verbal aggressiveness were heightened during the pandemic. Her findings based on Rees-Miller's classification of disagreement types show that instances of strengthened and aggravated disagreement were prevalent and increased in the Romanian Parliament from 2020 to 2021, while instances of softened disagreement decreased by 7% in the analysed period. Three contributing factors to this increase in verbal aggressiveness are identified by the author: an amplification of sensitive topics (like the budget, corruption, or special pensions); the inflammatory discourse and ideology espoused by the members of a far-right party present in the debates; and the general exacerbation of emotions due to the health crisis and rising death tolls.

Other strategies involving verbal aggression and impoliteness are highlighted in the debates accompanying the no confidence vote that led to a PM's resignation on 5 October 2021 in Adriana Costăchescu's *Conflictual Communication and Repair Strategies in a Romanian Parliamentary Debate: Around a Motion of No Confidence*. Drawing on pragmatics and image repair theories, the study reveals a profoundly conflictual communication setting, including numerous instances of irony, sarcasm, and insult – especially in the speeches of the MPs present in the meeting – supplemented by parody, a rhetorical strategy unusual in parliamentary debates, and fallacies. On the other side, the PM's speech contains several image-repair stratagems (like bolstering or shifting the blame). Acknowledging that Romanian political discourse is still experiencing growing pains, the author notes the conflict-prone mindset specific to these debates, in which adversaries are treated like enemies rather than mere political opponents.

A fascinating window into the mindset and language habits of present-day Romanian MPs is also opened in Chapter 10, *Insults and Offence in Romanian Parliamentary Debates. A Metapragmatic Perspective* by Mihaela-Viorica Constantinescu. Backed by solid theoretical considerations and drawing on a corpus of present-day parliamentary debates and political statements, this metapragmatic study gauges the Romanian MP's reflexive awareness in taking/claiming offence, including an inventory of the types of insults predominating in Romania's main deliberative forum. The quantitative data presented are particularly revealing, highlighting, among others, that in half of the examined cases Romanian MPs assume the role of an observer/evaluator who decries an offence caused to other parties,

or that in over 55% of cases the offended party is supposed to be Romania/ the Romanian people. A series of conventionalised insults are shown to be common currency in the Romanian Parliament, e.g., *hoț* ‘thief’, *ipocrit* ‘hypocrite’, *rasist* ‘racist’ or *extremist* ‘extremist’, *nazist* ‘nazi’, or *securist* ‘member of the Securitate’. However, in this offence-filled environment there is also evidence demonstrating the MPs’ willingness to condemn transgressions or to reduce offensive behaviour.

Embedded in the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation, Anca Găță’s chapter, *Unparliamentary Language in Disguise: Information in Excess, or Overspecification, as Strategic Manoeuvring*, uses a corpus of 2016-2018 MP statements to investigate the rhetorical effects of providing excess information about individuals and their actions within the regulated setting of Romanian parliamentary debates. This type of overspecification – in which superfluous modifiers are added to noun phrases and verbs in sentences that may be judged as complete from a pragmatic and semantic viewpoint, at least as far as referent identification is concerned, with the rhetorical goal of discrediting an opponent or their actions –, is discussed in terms of van Eemeren’s concept of strategic manoeuvring and its impolite implications. A key finding is that this type of opponent-related overspecification, which may even take the form of mock politeness, is often used to disguise personal attacks and insults as mere attempts at irony and rhetorical prowess.

The last chapter in this section devoted to Romanian parliamentary discourse, Liliana Hoinărescu’s *Irony and (Im)politeness in Romanian Parliamentary Discourse. A Diachronic Perspective*, adds a historical dimension to the analyses presented so far. Drawing on substantial previous research on irony – viewed through both rhetorical and pragmatic lenses, and in relation to impoliteness, the study contrasts 19th-century Romanian parliamentary rhetoric – which showed a preference for subtle, indirect irony targeting situations rather than people and off-record politeness – with a corpus of 21st-century Romanian parliamentary debates that seem to adopt more direct, confrontational, and personal styles of irony, inspired by American models of informality. This transition reflects broader shifts in cultural norms governing politeness, influenced by context, speaker intentions, and audience expectations. The study also highlights the recent emergence of gendered irony, often characterized by stereotypical references to female MPs, a sign of ongoing developments and tensions in parliamentary communication practices.

“*Like Thieves in the Night.*” *A Pragma-Linguistic Analysis of Protest Slogans in Romania*, the chapter co-authored by Răzvan Săftoiu, Adrian Toader, and Emanuela Tudorache, opens the fourth section in the book, *Participatory Politics*, which broadens the scope to include protest slogans and memes as forms of citizen engagement that combine locally relevant cultural elements with broader communicative practices. The chapter analyzes 300 slogans from Romania’s 2017 #rezist protests, focusing on their pragma-linguistic elements, intended meanings, and underlying communicative strategies within the given socio-political context. The analysis reveals, among others, the main topics, social variables, cultural references or mnemonic devices at play in these texts. Both dialogic and multimodal in nature, the slogans are shown to use a plethora of creative resources (like blending, or rhythmic patterning), various kinds of irony and humour, as well as intertextuality to engage multiple social groups and represent wider cultural influences.

The final chapter in the book, *Romanian Memes on Controversial Policies: Visual and Verbal Strategies of Political Critique* by Bianca Alecu, uses the theoretical frameworks of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) and Political Discourse Analysis (PDA) to analyse a series of Facebook and Reddit.ro memes tackling the Romanian IT tax exemption policy. The memes are categorized in terms of platform-specific representation strategies (e.g., implicit/explicit, tagging/portrayal), group identities, and rhetorical devices (e.g. ellipsis, slang). Political memes are ultimately seen as tools in the expression of public sentiment and dissent towards perceived abuses of power, transforming their creators and users into informal participants in the political sphere.

Besides offering, as its title announces it, valuable insights into Romanian political discourse – approached from a variety of angles and across several genres – the book is also grounded in sound theoretical considerations, providing novel perspectives, definitions, and classifications for some of the discursive phenomena analysed therein. Its chapters reveal not only the diversity and complexity of rhetorical and communicative strategies in both parliamentary settings and political public arenas but

also the shifting norms shaping Romanian political language. Throughout the volume, impoliteness and verbal aggressiveness emerge as a recurring motif, reflecting how present-day Romanian political discourse tends to normalize aggressive verbal confrontation and offence. This tendency echoes Orwell's warning that manipulative language in politics threatens the clarity and integrity essential to public life.

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BIANCA MERTENS, *Le suffixe */-ur-a/ Recherches sur la morphologie dérivationnelle du protoroman*, Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie, no. 449, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020, 326 p.

L'ouvrage de Bianca Mertens, inclu dans la prestigieuse collection *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie*, est basé sur sa thèse de doctorat préparée en cotutelle (à l'Université de Liège et à l'Université de Lorraine) et soutenue en 2018.

Cette étude s'intègre d'ailleurs dans le projet de recherche *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman* (DÉRom), dirigé par Éva Buchi (ATILF – CNRS & Université de Lorraine) et Wolfgang Schweickard (Université de la Sarre) et constitue un traité approfondi de morphologie dérivationnelle, qui envisage le suffixe protoroman */-ur-a/ (avec le corrélat latin *-ūra*) sous tous ses aspects: phonologiques, morphologiques, sémantiques, mais aussi diasystémiques. Pour pouvoir comprendre la réalité concrète de l'histoire de ce suffixe et amplifier aussi les connaissances du système du protoroman (langue encore largement inexplorée), on suit donc la lignée du DÉRom (celle de la grammaire comparée-reconstruction) plutôt que la démarche traditionnelle représentée notamment par le REW³.

Le suffixe protoroman **-/ur-a/*, établi par l'auteur sur la base de la reconstruction de pas moins que 45 dérivés protoromans, a vraiment un caractère prototypique, car il se situe parmi les suffixes les plus productifs de la protolange romane. L'étude historique de ce suffixe illustre, en effet, l'essence du processus de création lexicale de loin le plus efficace dans les langues romanes, celui de la dérivation suffixale, comme sous-domaine de la morphologie constructionnelle, qui est particulièrement intéressante pour la romanistique.

Dans l'Introduction du livre (chapitre 1), on précise le contexte de recherche, ainsi que les questions de recherche fondamentales, qui se réfèrent au comportement du suffixe protoroman **-/ur-a/*, dont les réponses seront données dans le bilan de ce travail (chapitre 5): la catégorie grammaticale de ses dérivés; les types de bases dérivationnelles sélectionnés; son sémantisme; l'existence supposée d'une voyelle thématique entre la base dérivationnelle et ce suffixe; ses possibles allomorphes; sa diffusion aréologique; son degré de productivité; le cadre temporel de son développement.

Le chapitre 2 est vraiment complexe et principalement théorique, de type descriptif-explicatif. Il porte sur la méthodologie adoptée (la même du DÉRom), celle de la double reconstruction en domaine roman: comparative (des unités de différentes langues-sœurs) et interne (des unités d'une seule langue), qui donne accès à l'étude de toutes les formes de variation de la protolange romane: diachronique, diastatique, diaphasique, diatopique et diamésique. On distingue également entre la démarche retrospective adoptée ici (celle de la méthode de la grammaire comparée-reconstruction) et l'approche prospective traditionnelle. L'auteur insiste sur l'importance de la reconstruction morphologique pour ses recherches et présente en outre des généralités sur la morphologie flexionnelle et la morphologie constructionnelle (la dérivation par l'affixation et la conversion, la composition, la formation). On précise la terminologie utilisée pour décrire le processus dérivationnel (base, thèmes, radical, espace thématique des allomorphes), en ajoutant un schéma de l'exemple choisi **/aper't-ur-a/*, illustratif pour la conceptualisation et la terminologie utilisées. On explicite le choix de la nomenclature, effectué en plusieurs étapes, qui comporte finalement 58 unités lexicales, en soulignant que certains étymons du REW₃ (parmi lesquels *albura* s.f. 'caractère de ce qui est blanc', *ambulatura* s.f. 'façon de se déplacer ou de se comporter' etc.) ne connaissent pas de pendant issu de la reconstruction comparative, étant avéré impossible de reconstruire un corrélat protoroman de ces lexèmes du latin écrit de l'Antiquité, ce qui a amené donc l'auteur à exclure ces termes de son étude. Ensuite Mertens envisage la mise en œuvre des processus de ses recherches, dans toutes les étapes du travail, et des exigences conformes à la méthodologie adoptée par DÉRom: la collecte d'informations (l'établissement de la nomenclature définitive; l'analyse des données du REW₃, du FEW et du LEI et de la très ample *Bibliographie de consultation et de citation obligatoires* du DÉRom), la rédaction des différents articles étymologiques, suivie par l'analyse générale du suffixe **-/ur-a/* en protoroman, en témognant aussi de toutes les difficultés de cet approche, ci-incluses les hypothèses parfois contradictoires. On présente pareillement la microstructure des articles étymologiques (le lemme, les matériaux, le commentaire, la bibliographie, les signatures, la date de rédaction de l'article, les notes).

Le chapitre 3, le plus étendu du livre (p. 55–224), réunit d'après l'ordre alphabétique les articles étymologiques des dérivés en **-/ur-a/* (par exemple, **/kalka't-ur-a/* s.f. 'action de fouler (qch.)', **/laβa't-ur-a/* s.f. 'action de laver (qch.); résultat de cette action; liquide qui a servi à laver (qch.)' ou **/u's-ur-a/* s.f. 'intérêts que produit l'argent qu'on prête' etc.), englobant aussi la carte linguistique de chaque dérivé à la fin de la présentation. Ces analyses détaillées et nuancées contribuent substantiellement, en même temps, à l'étymologie et à l'histoire de chaque unité lexicale (proto)romane choisie.

Dans le chapitre suivant (n° 4), on fait l'interprétation de toutes les données obtenues sur le suffixe protoroman **-/ur-a/*: ses propriétés inhérentes (phonologiques, morphologiques, sémantiques), ainsi que ses propriétés diasystémiques (particularités diachroniques, diatopiques, diastatiques et diamésiques).

Dans le dernier chapitre (n° 5), l'auteur répond successivement à toutes les 8 questions de recherche énoncées dans l'introduction du livre. Les réponses clarifient donc les diverses particularités inhérentes du suffixe protoroman **-/ur-a/*: phonologiques (le caractère facultatif de l'ajout d'une

voyelle thématique entre la base dérivationnelle et ce suffixe), morphologiques (l'exclusivité du genre féminin des substantifs dérivés en */-ur-a/; la sélection comme base dérivationnelle des thèmes de verbes généralement transitifs, très exceptionnellement du radical d'un adjectif; l'absence de l'allomorphie), sémantiques (les six sens enregistrés: 'action de [verbe dér.]', 'résultat de l'action de [verbe dér.]' 'objet interne de l'action de [verbe dér.]', sens métonymique 'instrument utilisé pour effectuer l'action de [verbe dér.]', sens métonymique 'lieu où est effectuée l'action de [verbe dér.]', sens métaphorique). On révèle également les traits diasystémiques de ce suffixe: sa productivité modeste dans la phase la plus ancienne du protoroman, mais fortement augmentée dans la phase du protoroman continental (et dans les parlers romans), son développement dans l'ensemble du domaine protoroman, mais aussi sa diffusion aréologique assignant son origine au protoroman commun (ou protoroman *stricto sensu*).

À la fin de l'étude l'auteur montre ses contributions par rapport aux ouvrages pan- et idioromans antérieurs: l'analyse plus minutieuse des unités lexicales à tous les niveaux (phonologique, morphologique, sémantique etc.); le cadrage (par la date et le contexte) de la première attestation du cognat roman (au moins pour le roumain, l'italien, le français, l'occitan, l'espagnol et le portugais); le commentaire des différentes opinions sur l'étymologie d'un cognat roman; la présence de nombreux tableaux synthétiques (de tous les continuateurs héréditaires d'un étymon protoroman, des nomenclatures des autres suffixes protoromans etc.) et de diverses cartes linguistiques (sémantiques, léxico-étymologiques etc.) réellement systématiques et illustratives.

En conclusion, le livre de Bianca Mertens est à la fois exemplaire par la cohérence, la complexité et le rigueur de l'analyse linguistique, et absolument édifiant pour la pertinence et l'apport fondamental de la démarche du DÉRom dans le domaine de la romanistique. Cet ouvrage représente, en fait, le premier travail exhaustif sur un morphème dérivationnel du protoroman, une pierre (nous pourrions dire, certainement précieuse) à l'édifice du système de la protolangue romane.

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