EDITORIAL

The present issue addresses a core concept in pragmatics – speech acts – and proposes a fresh look at the canonical accounts, updated with recent theoretical insights or enriched with facts collected from corpus analyses.

Most papers originate in the workshop organized at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Letters as part of the XVIth Conference of the Department of Linguistics, Bucharest, 25th–26th November 2016. The keynote speaker of the workshop was professor Istvan Kecskes (University of Albany, Suny, New York), founder of the intercultural pragmatics research field, editor-in-chief of the Intercultural Pragmatics journal (Mouton, de Gruyter), and president of the American Society of Pragmatics (AMPRA). We invite our readers to enjoy his contribution in the present issue. At the same time, we are honored to host the article of Jacob L. Mey, for decades one of the most influential figures in pragmatics, doctor honoris causa of the University of Bucharest (2006), who was celebrated in 2016 for his 90th anniversary. Readers will find a presentation of this “party-in-writing” in the present volume.

The generous theme of the issue – Speech acts across time and space – gathers the contributions of three or four generations of Romanian scholars, entirely or partly devoted to research in pragmatics. You can meet them here as article authors (Liliana Ionescu-Ruxandoiu, Liana Pop, Ariadna Ştefănescu, Andra Vasilescu, Mihaela Gheorghe, Liliana Hoinărescu, Mihaela Constantinescu, Gabriela Stoica, Răzvan Săftoiu, Stanca Măda), book reviewers (Margareta Manu Magda, Andreea Dinică, Carmen Radu, Irina Nicula, and our PhD student Georgiana Focşineanu), and as reviewed author (Sanda Golopenţia-Eretescu).

I would also like to evoke the memory of professor Sorin Stati (former professor of linguistics at the University of Bucharest and the first president of the International Association for Dialogue Analysis). In the early 90s, as professor at Bologna, Italy, Sorin Stati strongly supported the development of pragmatics as an area of interest for Romanian researchers and promoted their contacts with scholars worldwide.

The articles of this issue, reflecting some of the authors’ current research interests, have been grouped in four sections. The first one (Theoretical frameworks revisited) surveys pragmatic theories and phenomena from various perspectives, i.e., sociolinguistics, intercultural pragmatics, discourse structure. The second (The anatomy of speech acts) deals with some specific speech acts – questions, refusals, greetings, complaints, and silence – focusing on their definition and/or their functioning, as shaped by several variables like space, time or discourse genre. The third section (The dynamics of speech acts in discourse) addresses the structural and rhetorical functions of speech acts in political discourse. The fourth one (Speech acts and more...) explores some interactions between syntactic structures and pragmatic phenomena or goes beyond speech acts to conceptualizations and lexicalizations of emotions that underlie speech acts.
In a broad transcultural and transsciences approach, Jacob L. Mey discusses the relationship ecology – ecology of language – pragmatics and defines linguistics as “a science of humans who speak in various tongues and in various environments”, and language as “a tool which adapts itself to the user in ways that the user not only perceives, but actively creates”. Conceiving the world as “a coagent of our experiences”, he argues that the internal organization of objects determines a pattern of behavior: on the one hand, objects have a built in functionality which makes them adaptable to our perceptions, and on the other hand, our perceptual activities constitute the functions that characterize the object, because the function is inherent in the object. Speech acts are an illustration of this principle; more than simple speech acts, they are pragmatic acts (practs) since functional properties are co-shared by the language user and the situation in which words are uttered. Back to ecolinguistics, the author proposes “pragmatics inspired linguistic ecology” in dealing, for example, with extinguishing or lesser-used languages.

Istvan Kecskes challenges some influential syntactic, semantic and pragmatic theories of language and proposes a new approach based on evidence from intercultural communication. Defining language as “a system of signs operated by a conceptual base that is the reflection of the socio-cultural background in which the system of signs is put to use”, the author starts by drawing a comparison between intracultural and intercultural communication conceived on a continuum, and concludes that in intercultural communication a shift from “communal” to “individual” occurs. This observation leads to a new understanding of the communication process, especially salient on three dimensions: the type of intersubjectivity, the nature of linguistic creativity and the role of the context in the communication process. The essence of intercultural intersubjectivity is the “not-sure” positioning. While in intracultural communication interlocutors act as common ground seekers and activators relying on socio-cultural frames, prefabricated units, shared conventions, standards and norms, in intercultural communication they interactionally co-construct the common ground paying close attention to the language use: “less metaphorism, more down-to-earth language, preference of literalness, co-interpretation of the actual situational context. It is more like the individuals create the social situation rather than the social situation determines them”. Linguistic creativity is defined as “the ability of combining prefabricated units with novel items (ad-hoc generated items) in a syntax-and-discourse-affecting way to express communicative intentions and goals, and create new meaning”, ranging from conventional-predictable forms to unconventional-unpredictable forms, both in intracultural and in intercultural communication. According to Kecskes, meaning is the outcome of the interplay between prior context (which has a constitutive role) and the actual situational context (which has a selective role). The author reviews current distinctions between sentence meaning, viewed as “the result of collective prior experience of speakers of a given speech community”, speaker’s meaning, viewed as “sentence meaning expanded and/or enriched by prior experience, present situational experience and/or need of a concrete speaker when s/he uses that utterance”, and inferred meaning, viewed as “the reflection of the interplay between prior experience of the speaker and prior experience of the hearer in an actual situational context”. At the same time, he considers that “prior context is present in salience, while actual situational context is present as relevance effect”. Drawing evidence from both intercultural communication (non-native speakers’ interpretation of idioms), and intracultural communication (politically correct language), the author considers that semantics seems to take precedence over
pragmatics. Kecskes’s article in theoretical pragmatics is a reflection on how intercultural encounters in a globalized world might change current views on language use.

In the vein of the Geneva School of Conversation, Liana Pop distinguishes between illocutionary acts (dialogic in nature) and discursive acts (monologic in nature) and aims at defining the conversational status of the so-called “semi-acts” (minimal monophonic units without illocutionary value, but displaying interactive functions, like interpolations, parenthetical, appositions, explicative relatives, citations) and non-acts (which lack intentionality, like false-starts, discourse markers, connectors, back-channels, particles). At the same time, referring to the three levels of textualization (macro – meso – micro), she questions the status of activities, canonically placed between texts and acts. In the framework of discourse spaces, which she elaborated (Pop 2000a, b, 2003, see reference in the article), the author draws attention to the actional continuum and its graduality. Hence, she proposes the category of “discourse operation”, subordinated to acts, which allows placing non-acts, semi-acts, acts and activities on the same functional continuum.

Liliana Ionescu-Ruxándoiu surveys some classical syntactic and semantic approaches on questions and focuses on pragmatic accounts, which seem to solve some issues that have appeared problematic to linguists, logicians and semanticists. Nevertheless, actional pragmatics still misses the complexity of the actual functioning of questions in discourse; for this reason, the author pleads for an interactional account that might reveal the mutual relationships between the communicative situation and speakers’ choices of specific formal or functional (sub)types of questions. For example, rhetorical questions tend to be a frequent option in political discourse, due to their persuasive function and inherent pragmatic features: they are speaker-oriented in nature and strong triggers of presuppositions.

Andra Vasilăescu addresses the speech act of refusal. Elaborating on previous definitions and taxonomies (Searle 1969, Beebe et alii, among others cited in the article) and drawing on Jacob L. Mey’s triad pragmeme – prac – alloprac (2002, cited in the article), she proposes several macro- and micro-parameters that might account for the relationship universal – cultural – (inter)personal in performing this face-threatening speech act. The author argues that the pragmeme of refusal is part of a complex conversational move [trigger – refusal – follow up], which generates a pragmatic space where interlocutors negotiate both content and relationship. Literal, direct refusals invalidate both content and relationship, provoke face loss to the refusee and potential conflict between interactants. For this reason, speakers rather resort to non-literal, indirect refusals in order to invalidate only the content of the conversational offer, but to validate relationship with the interlocutor. The local process of negotiation becomes a matter of persuasion: the refuser aims at making the refusee initiate self-correction by appealing to empathy. The prat of refusal is culturally and socially constrained; the author proposes a grid to enable relevant comparisons between cultures and more accurate predictions of misunderstandings. Interactants’ precise content – form matches within the range allowed by the culture specific pract(s) produce allopracts, i.e., speaker’s free options relevant on the interpersonal level. Interactants’ ability to perform allopracts that adequately reflect their specific relationship and the current purpose of conversation leads to successfully coping with the differendum through an interpract, coined “mutual empathy management”.

With Mihaela Constantinescu, we explore the system of Romanian greetings in a diachronic perspective. The aim of the article is twofold: on the one hand, to define
greetings and design a framework of analysis, and on the other hand, to present the
evolution of greetings in the Romanian culture based on data extracted from a corpus of
written texts from the 17th–19th c. and from several corpora of present-day oral interactions.
Accordingly, the author reviews the classical approach of greetings in the framework of
Austin’s and Searle’s speech act theory and recontextualizes it drawing on European
developments in societal pragmatics as outlined by Jacob L. Mey in the triad pragmeme –
comments and comparisons among alternative models lead the author towards Farese’s
model (2005, cited in the article) enriched with the “illocutionary effect parameter” (Wong
2016, cited in the article), viewed as an economical way of describing the allopracts of
greeting using N(atural) S(emantic) M(etalanguage) inspired by Goddard and Wierzbicka
(1994, 2002, cited in the article). In this frame and in a historical perspective, Mihaela
Constantinescu analyzes and defines several verbal and non-verbal allopracts of greeting in
inter- and intracultural Romanian settings, since the early 17th century up to recently
attested forms: temenea, plecăciune (‘bow’), ziua bună/bună ziua, greeting-wishes, hand
kissing, humiliatives, la revedere, adio, ciao, servus. The article provides interesting data
correlating the social and cultural background with users’ linguistic choices and highlights
the evolution of the Romanian greeting system from producing gratification and confirming
social obligations towards producing gratification, social bonds and projecting a
cosmopolite self-image of the speaker.

Ariadna Ştefănescu approaches the speech act of complaining for two complementary
purposes: a comparative re-evaluation of current definitions of complaints and a corpus-
driven analysis of the discursive functions of the speech act under scrutiny as part of
broader textual configurations. Very minute analyses of the dynamics of three verbal
interactions excerpted from a corpus of present-day spoken Romanian, carried out on two
levels of complexity (the level of participation framework and the level of thematic
structure), highlight differences in the joint management of complaints by the
coparticipants in the communicative event. The observations lead to the categorization of
complaints into genuine complaints indexing “sufficient affiliation”, and strategic
complaints used as face saving strategies, i.e., conversational remedies in building
interpersonal relations with the interlocutor.

Is silence a speech act? In order to answer this question Răzvan Săftoiu carefully
reviews the literature on silence and highlights the complexity of the phenomenon as
revealed by complementary, but interrelated approaches: social-psychological, cross-
cultural and linguistic. He further explores opportunities of integrating silence in the
existing taxonomies of speech acts (Austin 1962; Searle 1969, 1975; Weigand 2010, cited
in the article). Drawing on Weigand 2010, he considers silence a versatile dialogic speech
act, contextually instantiated as an explorative, a directive or a representative speech act.
The in-depth analyzed examples are excerpted from several Romanian corpora of spoken
interactions.

Stanca Măda approaches the Romanian Parliamentary discourse from two
perspectives: the theories of speech acts and the theories of institutional identity
management. By analyzing a thematic corpus (the debate and vote of investiture for a new
government, 28.12.2004) she identifies several macro speech acts, which accomplish
various functions (agenda setting, debating, decision-making, proclaiming) and correlate
with the role pre-assigned to each speaker (chair, designated Prime Minister, members of
the government coalition, members of the Parliamentary opposition). The quantitative and qualitative analysis leads to the following correlations: the chair – declares, the designated Prime Minister – promises, the government coalition – claims support, the Parliamentary opposition – takes a position and criticizes.

Liliana Hoinărescu places her study in the broad context of philosophical debates, whether lying is a form of falsehood or a form of deception, in order to highlight how a pragmatic and rhetorical approach might explain the mechanisms of lying in terms of (meta)speech acts, context dependent intentions, interpretations underlined by cognitive processes, (im)politeness strategies, and argumentative tools used by politicians in the construction of public image/ethos. Specifically, the author compares 3 presidential debates from 3 different cultural spaces, Ségolène Royal – Nicolas Sarkozy (France, 2007), Traian Băsescu – Crin Antonescu – Mircea Geoană (Romania, 2009), Hillary Clinton – Donald Trump (USA, 2016), and analyzes how lying becomes the object of discursive negotiations between/among political opponents via direct and indirect strategies of accusations of lying and counterstrategies of self-defending against the accusation of lying. The author concludes: (a) in political discourses, lying is (indirectly) defined via negative evaluations (immoral and contemptuous behavior meant to compromise the political opponent); (b) political actors use various strategies of defending themselves against the accusation of lying: labeling the accusation as misinterpretation, a different point of view, political dogmatism or an *ad hominem* fallacy; dealing with it in terms of irony and sarcasm; rejecting it without further arguments; simply ignoring it.

Mihaela Gheorghe starts from a brief syntactic and semantic characterization of a structure shared by several languages, currently labeled as “pseudo-imperatives/conditional constructions”: [ imperative sentence + and/or + declarative sentence]: (i) *Open the window and I’ll kill you*; (ii) *Open the window or I’ll kill you*; (iii) *Open the window and you’ll catch a cold*. Judged in pragmatic terms, the imperative sentence in imperative-like conditionals (i, ii) and imperative-like ultimatums (iii) may have a directive or non-directive illocutionary force, reflected in the overall meaning of the structure and the (non)acceptance of speech-act related modifiers/particles (e.g., *please*). The author noticed that unlike in English, in Romanian (a pro-drop, relatively free word-order language, displaying both a genuine and a surrogate imperative), the presence of an overt subject in imperative sentences is allowed under certain conditions. At this point, the aim of the paper is to determine the syntactic–semantic–lexical–phonologic conditions of the subject lexicalization in the imperative sentence and to explore its pragmatic effects, in terms of the speech act conveyed and the mitigation function. The author indirectly demonstrates that subject lexicalization in a pro-drop language as Romanian has more pragmatic effects than the currently invoked contrastive focus.

With Gabriela Stoica’s contribution, we go beyond speech acts to the underlying emotions. The article has two interrelated parts: the first one is a bird’s eye review of the current literature on emotions; the second one is a case study of the conceptualizations and lexicalizations of *love* in Romanian culture, starting with the 16th century until the first half of the 19th century. Integrating various theoretical approaches, the corpus driven analysis highlights the complex constitutive links between emotions, cognition, culture and language. Ten instantiations of *love* are analyzed in terms of semantic configurations, vocabulary, isotopies, stereotypes, ritualistic linguistic and non-linguistic associated behaviors as reflected in texts excerpted from literature: romantic love, brotherly love,
collective love (agápē), hierarchical-official love, filial-parental love, religious love, intellectual-aesthetic love, concrete-hedonic love, self-love and patriotic love. The author offers possible explanations for the evolution of conceptualizations, mutations in mentality, and vocabulary changes, all placed on the cultural background of the period and related to the dynamics of societies in contact. The detailed analysis reaches interesting conclusions for the anthropology of emotions: the evolution of Romanian culture from the sociopetal to the sociofugal orientation of emotions, from collective religious love to romantic love internalized both euphorically and disphorically, from self-love to patriotism. Ethical evaluations according to the ideology of the epoch offer glimpses of the evolution of Romanian mentalities.

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