

## Editors' Note: Constructing and Decoding Meaning

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This issue is mostly based on papers presented at the 21<sup>st</sup> edition of the Conference on British and American Studies: *Constructing and Decoding Meaning*, organized in May 2025 by the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of the Faculty of Letters, Transilvania University of Braşov. The articles included here deal with different aspects of interpreting and producing meaning in interlingual and intercultural contexts. The topics approached by the authors range from language description at the phonological, morphological and syntactic levels, to translation studies, lexicography and language teaching.

The first seven articles investigate topics pertaining to the phonology, morphology and syntax of English, Romanian and other languages. In *The illocutionary complementizer că in Romanian*, **Ioana Stoicescu** offers a well-argued comparison between Romanian and Ibero-Romance exclamative constructions, convincingly situating Romanian *că* within the framework of illocutionary complementizers. The discussion draws on a range of attested examples from colloquial, literary, and online sources, and it applies established diagnostics for exclamatives (presuppositionality, expressivity, scalarity, discourse behaviour) in a systematic way. The author concludes that the modern phonological system is the result of gradual, systematic sound changes shaped by both internal linguistic evolution and external influences, highlighting the rule-governed nature of phonological transformation over time.

**Maria-Cristina Lica** examines in *How L2 English speakers interpret disjunction in negative sentences* the interpretation of disjunction in negative sentences, with a focus on the cross-linguistic variation between English and Romanian. The author presents the results of experimental studies which show that English speakers favour the interpretation according to which disjunction is not understood as a positive polarity item (i.e., the –PPI interpretation), while Romanian speakers interpret disjunction as a positive polarity item (i.e., the +PPI interpretation). Also, the majority of English learners were at an interlanguage stage showing variation

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between the English-like and Romanian-like preferences. The aim of this contribution is to shed more light on the cross-linguistic variation in polarity phenomena and in parameter resetting in second-language learning

In *Feminine role nouns: A focus on Romanian and English*, **Silvia Dragomir** presents and discusses the results of four experimental studies aimed at confirming her two main hypotheses, i.e. gender stereotypes play a crucial part in evaluating role nouns; and the masculine form is used for more prestigious professions, while the feminine form is primarily used for less prestigious role nouns. These experiments replicate previous ones conducted for other languages, but they provide additional information about the situation of gender stereotypes in Romanian, especially in contrast with English.

**Marius Vasilca's** article, *The syntax of the Russian motion-verb system*, delves into the motion-verb system in Russian, concentrating on the lexical elements that combine to express motion events. Starting from the classification of Russian as a Satellite-framed language, the paper analyzes the various syntactic patterns which emerge from the combination of the lexical tools available in the language. Through the combination of verb roots expressing Manner of Motion and a wide array of prefixes and prepositions indicating Path, the author shows how Russian achieves a highly precise and nuanced expression of Motion events.

The following three articles are dedicated to phonological studies, focusing on various topics presented in different contexts, including bilingualism, second language teaching and identity construction. In his contribution, *The voiceless consonantal stops /p/, /t/, and /k/ in code-switched and non-code-switched contexts. A study on Romanian and English*, **Victor Octavian Ionescu** investigates the realizations of the voiceless consonantal stops /p/, /t/, and /k/ by Romanian-English bilingual speakers, in both monolingual/non-switched and bilingual/code-switched language contexts as part of an experiment involving eight bilingual Romanian-English speakers whose speech productions were analyzed using Praat (v. 6.3.09). The analysis shows that code-switching affects the productions of /p/, /t/, and /k/, with the [+aspiration] feature being transferred from English (L2) to Romanian (L1) in code-switched sentences, while in monolingual language contexts, there may also be a transfer of this feature from one language to another.

**Oana-Miruna Măchiță** examines in *Accents in EFL and FLE Textbooks: A Romanian Perspective* the distribution of accents in the audio materials of two EFL and two FLE textbooks used in Romania, aiming to identify the pronunciation models that learners encounter. Using a descriptive, quantitative analysis of more than 25,000 seconds of recordings, the researcher classified accent types and calculated their proportions in each textbook. The findings show a strong dominance of prestige standards – Received Pronunciation and Paris French – while

other accents appear only marginally or in peripheral contexts, reinforcing the ideology of the standard and indicating the need for greater accent diversity in teaching materials.

In *Accents and the supernatural: Code-switching in the TV Miniseries "The Fall of the House of Usher"* (2023), **Alexandrina Nikolaeva Ugrenova** deals with sociolinguistic concepts such as code, situational versus metaphorical code-switching, and the relationship between language and identity, as the author applies these frameworks coherently to a contemporary audiovisual text. The choice to concentrate on a single, narratively and symbolically dense scene allows for an analysis of accent use, character construction, and power dynamics, while the integration of filmic elements (sound design and colour symbolism) enriches the interpretation beyond purely linguistic concerns.

The last six contributions explore topics dealing with translation studies, lexicography and language teaching, the role of language manipulation in literary genre shift, cultural appropriation, and the transmission and survival of myths.

In *Dissidence in seven Romanian alternative translations of "The Great Gatsby"*, **Nadina Vişan** offers a well-informed contribution to retranslation studies, distinguished by its theoretical grounding and detailed comparative analysis. The author aptly positions the concepts of filiation and dissidence within ongoing scholarly debates. The choice of *The Great Gatsby* as a case study is particularly interesting, given the unusually rich Romanian translational series, and the close reading of multiple excerpts across seven translations is done in a nuanced manner. The analysis considers lexical choice, metaphor, gendered language, and culture-specific items, and persuasively illustrates how certain target texts "stand out" through explicitation, marked lexical innovation, or interpretive risk-taking. As the author subtly admits, the discussion sometimes risks overinterpreting isolated lexical choices as evidence of strategic opposition, when alternative explanations (individual style, editorial intervention, or lack of consultation) remain equally plausible.

As its title suggests, **Anca Raluca Romanescu's** article, *Direct, indirect and cultural strategies in "El heredero de la corona" and its Romanian counterpart, "Moştenitorul coroanei"*, investigates various translation strategies identified in the Romanian version of the Spanish folktale "El heredero de la corona". The author looks at the translation of phraseological units from a functional and linguistic perspective, but also at the translation of explicit culture-bound references, illustrating each strategy identified with examples. Her conclusion is that direct strategies prevail in the translation from Spanish into Romanian, as languages of Latin origin, while she also emphasizes the effects of these strategies on the reader.

**Tünde Nagy** proposes a foray into lexicography and language teaching. *Dictionaries still in use? On the applicability of dictionaries in language learning*

brings together two different, but related strands of research. On the one hand, it focuses on a current problem, namely the changing relationship that learners have with dictionaries and other reference works, as illustrated by the results of a survey. On the other hand, the article addresses teachers and the way they could use lexicographic tools (online dictionaries, AI apps, etc.) to create activities aimed at developing vocabulary skills among students.

In *“Hamlet” to “15-Minute Hamlet”: Genre shift through language manipulation*, **Oana Tatu** looks into Tom Stoppard’s *15-Minute Hamlet* with the objective of identifying the linguistic means through which the playwright compresses Shakespeare’s original tragedy and transforms it into parody. Using qualitative textual analysis, the author compares the source play with Stoppard’s adaptation, focusing on lexical choices, syntactic compression, and humorous cues that reshape the dramatic tone. The article proves that the shift from tragedy to parody is achieved primarily through deliberate language manipulation, as condensed structures, character reduction to archetypes, hyper-compressed stage directions and the presence of an intriguing *Encore* as micro-palimpsest collectively subvert the tragic tone of the original text.

**Nada Tka**’s article, *Linear comprehension of cultural appropriation in the business world*, examines how cultural appropriation operates in the global fashion industry, concentrating on the intersections of power, profit, and ethics. Using a critical literature review methodology, the author synthesizes interdisciplinary sources from cultural studies, postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and intellectual property law to analyze how cultural elements from marginalized communities are extracted, commodified, and monetized by dominant fashion businesses. The article concludes that cultural appropriation is not merely an isolated creative act but a structural outcome of colonial and capitalist power relations, and that addressing it requires legal reforms, ethical accountability, and greater engagement with source communities.

This issue ends with **Alton Arnold**’s contribution *Spectacle and Silence: Vampire Tourism and the Erosion of Folkloric Cadence in Romania and Serbia*, which reports on the divergent afterlives of vampire folklore in Romania and Serbia. The author contrasts the faith of the ancestral myth of the *strigoi* (vampire) in Romania where it was rebranded as Dracula and commodified for tourist purposes, with the situation in Serbia where the myth of the *vampir* and *veštica* (witch) survives only in the tales of village elders and is in danger of disappearing along with them. The article draws attention to the fact that both of these paths are indicative of the erosion of *folkloric cadence*, i.e. the lived rhythm through which myth and memory are transmitted, while also commenting on the (ethical) implications of choosing either of them.