

Action and agency in current research. Editor's note

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The concepts of action and of agency have recently received systematic attention in various domains, such as linguistics, philosophy, anthropology or even psychology, but interest in these concepts started a long time ago, with Aristotelian ethics. Despite their long existence, these concepts are still very difficult to define (see Cruse 1973). Duranti (2004, 453) put forward the following definition of agency: “the property of those entities (i) that have some degree of control over their own behaviour, (ii) whose actions in the world affect other entities’ (and sometimes their own), and (iii) whose actions are the object of evaluation (e.g. in terms of their responsibility for a given outcome)”.

The present issue puts together articles from the fields of linguistics, literary and cultural studies with a focus on these two concepts. From a semantical-syntactic point of view (Verstiggel and Denhière 1990, 37), agency is related to the semantic role of Agent and to the idea of control. Irrespective of whether language is discussed as a system of signs or as a form of social action, as a means for doing things, a cultural resource, and a set of socio-cultural practices, we put forward the idea that natural language use has a complex architecture and the focus should be on “human beings who use language in dialogic interactions” (Weigand 2017, 3). Thus, language is seen as a complex communicative system used by humans who need to adapt to the ever-changing real-life situations, because “through linguistic communication, we display our attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and wishes” (Duranti 2004, 452). Literary texts can also be the site for the manifestation of agency, or for the silent witnessing of historical and cultural events that have impacted generations. In their articles, the authors portray action and agency as inherently present in a variety of discourses: from the language of prisons to media representations, from teaching a foreign language to understanding language as an *agentivity continuum*, from the not so covert agency of political discourses to the overtly manifested agency of the scientific discourse, from WWII events and their aftermaths in Korean and Romanian societies to the metaphors included in discourses that conceptualize the idea of an university.

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The section dedicated to LINGUISTIC STUDIES opens with Raluca ALEXE's article on "Aspects of integrating culture in the Spanish as a foreign language (SFL) classroom". The author argues for growing awareness among teachers regarding the necessity of combining language learning/teaching and culture learning/teaching. The article accounts for the techniques and classroom activities aimed at integrating culture in the foreign language classroom, also discussing the overall efficiency of the different techniques, specific activities, and teaching materials employed with her groups of SFL students coming from different curricular areas and having different linguistic competence of Spanish.

In his article, "Emotions in the political discourse of Romania. A corpus-driven analysis of multiword expressions", Daniel BIRO explores the profiles of the Romanian political actors as they are constructed by means of multiword expressions of emotions in spoken presidential texts from 1992 to 2004. The author argues that emotions in political language use can have considerable repercussions on a society, especially on the expression of solidarity and ostracism, which are closely connected to the emotions of trust and aversion. The research draws from Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions and the Romanian Emotion Lexicon (RoEmoLex) and focuses on finding hints for trust and aversion. The results express the change of paradigm from topics such as internal stability and security to global cooperation and responsibility.

The next article, Alice BODOC's "Action and agency in complex sentences from present-day Romanian", aims at describing the influence of action and agency on the structure of Romanian complex sentences. The author makes use of both qualitative and quantitative analyses, conducted on an extensive online Romanian corpus (CoRoLa), and based on the semantic typologies of the verb included in some of the reference Romanian grammars. One of the most important results of the analysis was the phenomenon of *agentivity continuum* that presents particular features in Romanian language.

Gabriela CHEFNEUX, in "Evaluative language in Romanian and US regional newspapers. A comparative approach", employs an analytical framework based on Martin and White's (2005) definition of appraisal in terms of attitude, engagement and graduation. The analysis focuses on the similarities and differences between the two articles in terms of evaluation and its linguistic realizations.

"Agency in scientific discourse", by Tobias WEBER and Mia KLEE, concludes the section dedicated to linguistic studies. The authors debate on the critical issue of the agency in speakers' language use and, simultaneously, in the researchers' description and interpretation. The aim of objectivity in scientific discourse demotes, by default, the role of the subjects, often by imposing structures to limit agency. The article aims to address issues pertaining to agency as opposed to the

goal of reproducibility, where the researchers' and consultants' agency on different aspects of the research process shape its outcomes. The authors also advocate for the necessity of training early career researchers and students in using their agencies responsibly in order to pass on the practices of their field.

The LITERATURE section opens with Elena BUJA's article on "Korean and Romanian women: victims of foreign and native violence". The aim of her research is to bring to light the common fate of women in two spatially distant and culturally different societies (Korean and Romanian), showing that in the past century they were victims of both foreign and native violence during and post WWII. To illustrate their sad fate, the author has employed fragments excerpted from various Romanian and Korean novels, as well as secondary data, within the framework of *social theory*. In this account, "agency/action and social structure are recognized as major dimensions of social reality" (Sibeon 2004, 117) and are in strong connection with power and interests. The author argues that, irrespective of whether the men who were the agents/actors of women's abuse had physical or political power over their victims, what happened to the Romanian and Korean women (and most probably to women in other parts of the world) is unpardonable.

Adam WARCHOŁ's article, entitled "The culture-induced creativity of metaphors. A comparative corpus-based study", discusses the variation of the conceptual metaphors along two major dimensions: intercultural (cross-cultural) and intracultural (within-culture), by employing John Henry Newman's (1801-1890) vision of university education, formulated in Ireland almost two centuries ago in *The Idea of a University* (1858), and contemporary texts referring to Polish universities excerpted from the National Corpus of Polish. Besides the time divergence, the research checks whether the same metaphors occur in two completely different countries. The results obtained in the corpus-based study indicate that some of Newman's metaphors seem to be valid in a different culture-specific context, in Poland.

The section of CULTURAL STUDIES opens with Marco BRANCUCCI's paper, entitled "The language of prison re-education between agency and responsibility". The author has extensive experience as a practitioner of juvenile penitentiary re-education, trying to re-educate young offenders in a prison, by teaching them the capacity/ability of choice between alternative life experiences, which should be inspired and embodied by the educational authority of the adults. As agency is a constitutive element of a capability, the author seems interested in who the agent was - the educator or the inmate himself. In his opinion, penitentiary educators should adjust their approach, improving their language-as-dialogue tools first, just because the relationship with inmates is based on a dialogic axis. He investigated the agency level of penitentiary educators and cultural/linguistic mediators,

working together synergistically and/or autonomously, in the context of a pandemic, in which the proximity with the inmates fades away, or is temporarily interrupted, even turning into a virtual telematic educational approach. Thus, the challenge becomes transforming the consolidated educational-linguistic-dialogic practices into a new bidirectional way to think, act/react (from prison personnel towards inmates and vice-versa), because of the social distance required by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The final article of this section, entitled “From *swan eaters* to *national heroes*: representations of the Romanian diaspora in public discourse”, presents Kinga Kolumbán’s research on the emergence of the Romanian Diaspora as an important social actor, being closely related to socio-political events that have taken place in the home country. This study analyses pieces of political discourse stated around key moments in the recent history of Romania: the process of becoming a full member of the European Union (2013) and two presidential elections (2014, 2019). Drawing on the general perception of diaspora communities across the world as representing a significant social and economic potential for home countries, the author hypothesizes and demonstrates a similar Romanian case manifested at the level of political discourse through positive role allocation.

The issue ends with Noémi SZABÓ’s book review of Philip Herdina, Elisabeth Allgäuer-Hackl and Emese Malzer Papp (Hg.) *Mehrsprachensensibel? Monolinguale Sprachenpolitik trifft auf mehrsprachige Praxis / Multilingual sensibility? Monolingual policies meet multilingual practice* (2019).

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