Conversational Functions of Intonation within Primary Education Teaching Discourse

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Résumé: L'article représente une tentative ouverte d'exploration de la manière pratique par laquelle, – dans la première étape de l'assimilation consciente de la langue, au niveau de l'enseignement primaire –, l'intonation fonctionne fortement dans l'analyse, la synthèse et la discrimination linguistiques à tous les niveaux: phonétique, lexicale-sémantique, morphologique, au niveau de la syntaxe et au niveau textuel.

Mots-clés: discours, conversation, intonation, prosodie.

1. Teaching Communication in Primary School

Learning the language by students in primary school takes place during the process of communication in discourse practice. To master and use the expressive resources of the language during the Romanian communication classes is not a goal, but a means of student's connection to a trans-linguistic reality. From this communicative-functional perspective, Romanian appears both as a learning and communication tool and as a curriculum to be mastered and assimilated.

Learning the native language from the people around him, the child not only acquires a language, but, in fact, learns to create within it, immersing himself in that language and within its type system.

This process of language acquisition means investigating all its segments, capitalizing the expressive valences of words, discovering connections between language structures, differentiated use of all communication registers as well as the

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development of a logical algorithm of understanding literarity and non-literarity.

Abbé Gabriel Girard considers the grammar lesson «a very methodical Unit» as «the subject was searched into properly to establish general rules, constant and simple principles; for this is the aim of Grammar.»[1]

Receptive or comprehensive language provides receiving and understanding the message sent by the sender. Primary students experience difficulties in language acquisition especially when this involves understanding wider statements such as clauses and phrases, as well as the occurrence of several unknown or abstract concepts, of elliptical, implied statements, or of some stylistically developed phrases.

At this age level, the phonetic level of language raises substantial issues related to collecting and analyzing sounds that have a certain intonation or pitch, a certain length of time or span, including syllables, rhythm, stress and intonation with all its significant values.

At the lexical-semantic level, the difficulties in understanding its meaning and expression in the form of the linguistic sign manifested in word occur most often.

At the beginning of their conscious assimilation, the articulation of all language structures and connections between them creates dysfunctions at the syntactic level.

The stylistic level of language as a transfrastic level brings different opportunities at the individual level in understanding, grasping and producing innovative stylistic structures.

What Jean-Claude Vareille suggests in *Le roman populaire,* 1994 is therefore «not to be above the text, [but] to stand inside it or at the top of it against the monologism and un-ambiguity of the critical discourse, to restore dialogism, i.e. to talk to the text without requiring predefined limits, simultaneously refusing the unique and unifying perspective»[2].

2. Language – Speech – Discourse – Text. Some Necessary Conceptual Definitions

Hegel was stating that language is «voreilig» (‘in advance’), since it contains all forms of spiritual development.

Students see things, but they «acknowledge» them through language, rather through the signs of a private language [...] the act of significance grants things a sort of *to be*.[3] The uptake and internalization of these are possible only with words, as meaningful signs.

Reviewing Eugeniu Coşeriu’s ten arguments, Johannes Kabatek (2015) brings a few accents in understanding the key concepts.

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[1] *Apud* Maria Carpov, *Prin text, dincolo de text,* Editura Universităţii «Alexandru Ioan Cuza», Iaşi, 1999, p.117.

[2] *Apud* Maria Carpov, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[3] Laurenţia Dascălu-Jinga, *Melodia vorbirii în limba română*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, 2001, pp. 133-136.

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Thus «language, as discourse, is definitely considered as communication. But we must distinguish between communicating something [...] and communicating with each other, without which the language is not language anymore [...] as it meets its fundamental otherness».

Only «the contemplation of things» is not knowledge. It takes an intentional, object-oriented action which transforms beings into existence.

Therefore, without language things are not into being able to be recognized or to be submitted; they exist as objects, but they did not become «seres» (‘realities) as distinct linguistic signs.

It is important for this small human being to know and express how «the liquid flowing from the fountain is called?», but, more importantly, «what is *that* which is called (i.e., what others call) *water*?»

«Language is what gives «things» the feature of being: language does not create «beings» but «their being». Such language does not create trees, but it creates that «being a tree» (and not, for example, plants in general):

> [...] things do not talk. I can show an object and say: *this*! but then I report only the *identity itself (ipseity).* But when I associate the object with a sign that may not be associated only with this but with other individual objects, this *acquires* an *identity:* it turns into an item of a class of objects.

The two fundamental functions of language are onomasein and legein, naming and telling. Within the expressed and communicated through telling content, we must distinguish between designation, meaning and purpose.[4]

Teacher’s questions are often both from within the field of naming and telling and from the content of telling, by designation, meaning and purpose.[5]

Designation is the reference to language-independent things.

Meaning is the real possibility of designation given by the signs of a language.

Finally, the *purpose* is the goal of each telling, the very content of a speech as such.

Regarding the speech core, this springs from the way in which language comes into play, for every unit of language that communicates a consistent message may be considered as a discourse.

P. Charaudeau and D. Maingueneau believe that the discourse is interactive, goal-oriented, standardized and integrated into an inter-discourse.[6]

According to E. Coşeriu, the text, as a macro-sign, can be semantically, syntactically and pragmatically investigated. Even if oral communication, the outcome of the statement is also a text (text-discourse) recorded and sent to an

[4] Johannes Kabatek, 2015, *Tradiţii discursive. Studii,* Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, pp. 38-40.
[5] Eugeniu Coşeriu distinguishes between Bezeichnung – designation, Bedeutung – significance and Sinn – meaning.
[6] Rodica Nagy, 2015, *Dicţionar de analiză a discursului*, Institutul European, Iaşi, pp.125-126.

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appropriate analytical treatment[7].

In conclusion, according to Luminiţa Hoarţă-Cărăuşu, the discourse «is *parole* including production that reveals the acting nature of discourse. As *parole* opposes to *langue,* the *language* is a social reality, while *speech* is an individual reality. The phrase does not belong to *langue,* but to *parole*».[8]

Daniela Rovenţa Frumuşani considers that, in a topographically and structurally way, the discourse is upstream and the text is downstream[9].

When an author bases his research on a spoken corpus, he feels the need to define more precisely the aspect of predicative intonation.

Conversation, as a «prototype of the language use»[10] is a typical action and verbal interaction included in the discourse. The introductory, developing and closing structures of the dialogue as well as the specific terms of addressing, the second person, vocative, imperative, interrogative and exclamatory statements are particular to conversational structures.

The inverted roles and the same space-time context are assigned to communication protagonists within the dialogue.

Language is a system of signs of a definite structure, which is based on the principle of representation, achieving the difference between means of expression and the designated object issues and connections with the world it lives. Therefore, language is a system of rules for the connection between sound and meaning.

Considering […] «the reality of the empirical subject, the one that «speaks» runs out within the game of elements (analyzable as reserved units) that make up its text»[11], let's see how a few conversational structures and functions of intonation can be either the dynamic learning or the conversational-discursive game work.

3. Pragmatic Aspects of Intonation

Speaking about the importance of the phatic functions, R. Jakobson considers that «[...] communication is not achieved only through the effort to establish and maintain contact with the audience. By its very existence, the speech is lived as an agent for establishing social or emotional ties, its purpose being to maintain communication and dialogue extension[12].

Diglossia popular speech – literary language that brings into discussion the usage of the oral channel to convey the literary language and written culture, producing the «derived/ secondary orality,» as Walter Ong called it[13].

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[7] *Ibid*, p. 365.
[8] Luminiţa Hoarţă Cărăuşu, 2008, *Teorii şi practici ale comunicării*, Editura Cermi, Iaşi, pp. 23-24.
[9] Daniela Rovenţa Frumuşani, 2012, *Analiza discursului*, Editura Tritonic, Bucureşti, p. 28.
[10] Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu, *Paralelismul sintactic în lirica populară*, în «Studii de stilistică şi poetică», Bucureşti, 1966.
[11] Sandro Briosi, *La narratologie et la question de l'auteur*, in magazine Poétique no. 68/1986, p. 98-99.
[12] Roman Jakobson, 1963, *Essais de linguistique générale vol. I*, Minuit, Paris.
[13] Walter Ong, 1988, *Orality and literacy. The techologizing of the world*, Routledge, London.

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Within this context, intonation is set up as a «function of dialogue», meaning that its occurrence necessarily requires the presence of an interlocutor.

Statements, whether structured in an upward or downward, interrogative or exclamatory pattern, are necessarily marked by intonation, which, through its «sequential», «originator» or having a demarcation structuring role, has a remarkable contribution to defining the comprehension of meaning.

For example, common phrases, such as ***Mara*** *vine? / Does* ***Mara*** *come?* – the stress is non-finally placed and the last word is nonoxytonic, while the shape of the closing profile is of upward-downward type.

In phrases such as *Mara* ***vine****? / Does Mara* ***come?*** – the stress is on the last word of the phrase, which is also nonoxytonic and the intonation is simple, of upward-downward type.

Within the phrases where the last word is oxytonic such as ***Mama*** ↗*ia*? / Does ***Mother*** take? [...] and *Mama* ↘***ia***? / *Does Mother* ***take****?* [...] the closing profile is downward-upward.

Luminiţa Hoarţă-Cărăuşu considers that the speech during a Romanian teaching-learning lesson (not just as a foreign language) must be based on the *conversational model.*

We can consider this model as a basic one within the Romanian lesson for primary school students, since both for these and the foreign students, words exchange works just like in a verbal spontaneous interaction, based on conversational rules on access to word, based on the rule of word allocation, according to which the current speaker assigns the next speaker.

The sequences / adjacent question and answer pairs of the conversational structure type is based on the fact that any question includes both cognitive and interactional dimension: teacher's questions are intended to clarify the contents of those expressed in a certain text passage of the explained lesson.

In an effort to clarify the denoting significance of the terms embedded within the discourse, the current speaker, i.e. the teacher (T), asks the student (S) a question about a potential unknown term. In this case, the question aims a response that will include the replacing of the unknown term.

a) either with the suitable *synonym*[14]

C*: înfricoşat.*
Î*:* înfricoşat. +++ de urletul lupilor. *ce înseamnă înfricoşat?*
C*: teamă.*
A*:* a fi**.** + *cum* ↑ +++ *ce-nseamnă teamă? ++ ce-nseamnă temător?* ↑ +
C*: speriat."*

[14] Maria Carpov, 1999, in *Prin text, dincolo de text*, Editura Universităţii «Alexandru Ioan Cuza», Iaşi, p.118, quoting Abbé Gabriel Girard, who stresses the weighted role of synonyms: «Synonyms are never perfect commutative because [...], besides the «main idea», they have nothing in common; each is, in fact, the support of a certain accessory idea, this being the very reason for their existence: the perfect synonyms are neither necessary nor beautiful, nor possible».

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„***Î***: dacă nu este nervos ↑ este ↑ + *cum putem spune?* dacă nu este nervos ↑ nu este agitat ↑ este ↑ ++

C: *liniştit.*

Î: mai mult. ↑ + + dacă cineva nu este nervos. este ↑ + *cum mai putem spune?*

S: *calm.* ↑ *potolit.”*[15]

The role of intonation is essential in any process of oral communication, but more so in the early years of schooling, when, in addition to practice phonemic, discriminative listening, a great emphasis is placed on the (non) correspondence sound – letters, sound / syllable / spoken word with a certain intonation, which corresponds to the level of writing, a whole panoply of punctuation.

Intonation helps make the distinction between interrogative, exclamatory and relative words as well as to differently structures transcription if the same segmental sequence is direct or indirect speech.

It is not the same in terms of intonation to convey that:

Mihai spune cât e de frig afară. (neutral-declarative-enunciating).

Mihai spune cât e de frig afară? (interrogative, present, 3rd person).

Mihai spune cât e de frig afară! (exclamatory with a focus on the subordinated clause).

– Mihai, spune cât e de frig afară! (direct oral, exclamatory, vocative-imperative reference, information request by a presumed subject)

– Mihai, spune, cât e de frig afară? (question-request)

Mihai spune:

– Cât e de frig afară? (question directly asked by Mihai and introduced by the narrator’s words followed by:)

Câ
t
e
hai de
Mi spu frig
ne: afară?

Mihai spune:

– Cât e de frig afară!

[15] The selective transcripts were based on a corpus in progress, on the Romanian spoken texts used in the first grade, wich is modeled by Luminiţa Hoarţă Cărăuşu's functional pattern, in *Corpus de limbă română actuală*, Editura Cermi, Iaşi, 2005, p. 45-48.

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Mihai spu Cât
ne: e
de a
frig fa
ră!

At a conversational level, the intonation can answer the cases of ambiguity within the phrase, characterized by the existence of the subjunctive verb in the subordinate clause and the negative form of the verb in the main clause:

Example:

Să-mi fi spus el, n-aş fi crezut.
can have two syntactical interpretations:

- *Dacă mi-ar fi spus el, **n-aş fi crezut**.*
- *Chiar dacă mi-**ar fi spus el**, n-aş fi crezut.*

The ambiguity is solved by different emphasizing of some of the components; to compare:

n-aş
el,
Să-mi fi spus fi cre
zut.
l
e
Să-mi fi spus n-aş fi cre
zut.

At the level of the sentence, the syntactic ambiguity is usually caused by the casual homonymy.

For example, using the nominative depending on the vocative is removed by using the vocative and by a break separating the vocative; to compare:

na
Da scri D ri
e. a sc
n e!
a,

Also, the homonymy between the casual genitive and dative forms can also be clarified using a particular intonation:

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Am dat FB
citi
tului lui V
ic
tor.

ti
Am dat FB ci tului, lui Vic
tor!

Likewise, at the sentence level, we witness a different segmentation of the same sequence as it follows:

sfâr **tat** **ex**
În **un rezul** la con **cep**
şit, curs **ţio**
nal!

tat **excep**
În sfâr un rezul la con **ţio**
curs, **nal!**
şit,

In the first case, the word *excepţional* is an isolated attributive adjective, which determines the noun *rezultat,* while in the second, the intonation helps understanding that not the result is exceptional, but the impersonal reality as, ultimately, something was achieve, that's *excepţional.*

The downward tone of the word *concurs,* together with its break shows that *excepţional* is, in the second case, an adverb of manner having an incident role without syntactic function which expresses the speaker's attitude.

Placing a different stress within the phrase is also required in case of the sentences having a nominal predicate to be particularly distinguished from the subject, both in the nominative:

le
A e co ga?
na

a?
Ana e **co g**
le

In what follows, we see how intonation becomes a semantic disambiguation factor for elliptical statements, as although many of them are

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homonyms, they are not homophone – they have identical segmental side, but having different intonation:

The complete structure a + b:

Dacă nu înţelegi, de ce nu spui?

ce
de
Dacă nu înţelegi,
nu
spui?

The inverted structure b + a:

De ce nu spui dacă nu înţelegi?

ce
De
nu
spui dacă nu înţelegi?

The elliptical structure a', arising from the structure (a):

Dacă nu înţelegi?

Da
că nu înţe
legi?

We find that the elliptical statement a' has an intonation different from the one it had in the complete formula, but similar to sequence b, the omitted one. The elliptical statement did not keep the "original" intonation, but it has taken through melodic shift, the intonation of the sequence was omitted (b).

With the acquisition of sequence intonation that was omitted, the elliptical statement retrieves its significance, which, adding to its originating semantic content leads to creating a new elliptic and self-contained linguistic structure (the segmental structure identical to sequence (a) and the melodic one, specific to the omitted sequence (b).

4. Conclusion

The intonation can radically change the meaning of a phonic sequence or it may add a new meaning, acting as the semantic enrichment of the language.

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We consider Karcevskij's (1964) statement as being legitimate that intonation is what «makes the phrase»[16] and which operates the virtual semantic values.

Discoursive prosody, brought to the fore by the so-called linguistic corpus proves its importance in linguistics text that should be seen primarily as a hermeneutics of meaning.

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[16] Laurenţia Dascălu-Jinga, 2001, *Melodia vorbirii în limba română*, Editura Univers Enciclopedic, Bucureşti, p. 27.

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