Repeated Discourses and Discourse Traditions. Some Remarks on Charles F. Hocket's Contribution

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Motto: "The principle of tradition applies to the object as well as to the knowledge of the object, consequently it applies to the history of linguistics. [...] For the progress of science, it is profitable to see what is the true intuition, what is the grain of truth in a theory, explanation or interpretation, despite the historical moment and the shortcomings resulting from historical circumstances." (Eugenio Coseriu)[1].

Resumen: *En este artículo me propongo prestar atención y analizar algunas de las observaciones que un importante lingüista americano, Charles F. Hockett, ha hecho* avant la lettre *en relación con las tradiciones discursivas típicas para la literatura. Intentando ver la esencia de la literatura artística, Hockett se equivoca en su planteamiento – según demuestra E. Coseriu – y ofrece una definición inadecuada de la literatura en general. Sin embargo, al hablar de la repetición de los textos literarios, Hockett menciona algunas características de la literatura popular (no-occidental) y pone algunos ejemplos (sobre todo del folclore de los amerindios) que no constituyen otra cosa que unas verdaderas "tradiciones discursivas" literarias. Al mismo tiempo, haciendo referencia al marco de la lingüística integral, intentaré demostrar en qué medida tiene razón Eugenio Coseriu cuando critica el punto de vista de Hockett. En ese sentido, voy a comparar las concepciones de los dos grandes lingüistas respecto a los universales del lenguaje (con atención especial a la noción de "tradición" en el lenguaje).*

Palabras clave: *Ch. F. Hockett*, *E. Coseriu*, *universales del lenguaje*, *tradiciones discursivas*, *discurso repetido*.

[1] Eugenio Coseriu, "*The Principles of Linguistics as a Cultural Science*", in „Transylvanian Review", IX, nr. 1, 2000, p. 112.

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1. The motivation of choosing this topic

Given my linguistic interests and orientation, I suppose I cannot find at this point a better topic for an article devoted to Professor Johannes Kabatek – a reputed Coserian disciple – than one regarding the problem of *tradition* in language, as well as in linguistics. My article would be even more suitable if I referred mainly to the problem of *discourse traditions*, discussed within the Coserian frame of reference. *Discourse traditions* and the Coserian *integral linguistics* would thus represent a very good choice in this context, were we to consider Johannes Kabatek's following statement: "Mi trabajos sobre TD [= *tradiciones discursivas*] son, pues, mi más firme tributo a la tradición coseriana."[2].

1.1. However, since I have learnt from Eugenio Coseriu how important it is to apply *the principle of tradition* in research, especially when it is doubled by *the principle of anti-dogmatism* (which requires regaining the "grain of truth" from the wrong or inadequate theories of the other good-willed thinkers), I will try to restore and discuss here some excellent intuitions of Charles F. Hockett, a great American linguist. These intuitions are related precisely to the problem of discourse traditions. As we will later see, Hockett finally deals with the problem of discourse traditions due to the fact that he wrongly treats another problem (an error also indicated and commented on by Coseriu). Nevertheless – as Eugenio Coseriu used to repeat in Spanish (quoting, actually, Benedetto Croce) –, "*ningún error es sólo error*".

1.2. Moreover, my choice of Hockett is not accidental, since Johannes Kabatek also appreciates the former for having included the concept of «tradition» in the series of universals of language.

2. Universals of language: Hockett's *tradition* vs. Coseriu's *alterity*

It might seem strange that Eugenio Coseriu, even if he speaks so frequently about *traditions*, considering them as having an extraordinary importance both for language[3] in itself and for the science of language, did not insert *tradition* in the list of universals of language, be they primary universals (*creativity*, *alterity* and *semanticity*) or secondary universals (*historicity* and *materiality*). The fact that language – a form of culture and, at the same time, the basis of culture itself – is characterized by tradition (or, better said, by "traditionality") clearly results from the definition that Coseriu gave to culture.

2.1. Taking as a starting point Hegel's conception (based on an Aristotelian idea), Coseriu defines *culture* as "the historical objectification of spirit into forms which last, into forms which become *traditions*, historical forms which describe the world specific to humans, the human's specific universe"[4]. And the *spirit* historically objectified in the form of culture is *enérgeia* (Aristotle's concept), that is *the creative*

[2] Johannes Kabatek, "*Presentación del libro «Tradiții discursive. Studii»*", in „Anadiss", No. 22, 2016, p. 209.

[3] See, for instance, Eugenio Coseriu, *Sincronía, diacronía e historia. El problema del cambio lingüístico*, Universidad de la Republica, Montevideo, 1958, p. 35.

[4] Eugen Coşeriu, *Prelegeri și conferințe (1992-1993)*, as a supplement of "Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară", T. XXXIII, 1992-1993, Seria A, Lingvistică, 1994, Iași, p. 173.

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activity or *the creativity itself*: "that specific activity which is logically previous to any dynamism, to any acquired or experimented technique" [my translation; Cr.M.][5]. In addition, Coseriu also states (following Giambattista Vico) that the forms of activity which constitute culture are language, art, religion, myth, science and philosophy. At the same time, one should not ignore the fact that the respective creative activity is a *free activity* (in the philosophical sense of the word *free*), namely an activity whose object is infinite, i.e. it never ends.

2.2. Undoubtedly, the existence of traditions represents a distinctive feature for *homo communicans*, as John Dewey (himself strongly influenced, in his youth, by Hegel) pointed out: "Man is a teller of tales, a spreader of reports. He tells his story in every medium; by the spoken work, by pantomime and drama, in carvings in wood and stone, in rite and cult, in memorial and monument. His beliefs are social beliefs; they are of import because of this fact. Moreover, beliefs are serially as well as contemporaneously told and shared. They become *traditions*, and there are no traces of any form of mankind so primitive as not to reveal him possessed of *traditions*. Of other animals we find bones; associated with the remains of the human body are always objects that are symbols of common beliefs."[6].

2.3. Charles F. Hockett – as Johannes Kabatek frequently mentions[7] – has the merit of having introduced the concept of «tradition» among the universals of language. I am referring (just as Kabatek did it) to a famous study from 1963, *The Problem of Universals in Language*, in which Hockett states the following: "The conventions of a language are passed down by teaching and learning, not through the germ plasm. Genes supply potentiality and a generalized drive since non-human animals cannot learn a (human) language and humans can hardly be prevented from acquiring one. Bee-dancing is probably genetic. [...] *Every human language has tradition* [...]. If we design and build a collection of machines that communicate among themselves with a language, this property will be lacking"[8].

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[5] *Ibidem*.

[6] John Dewey, *Unmodern Philosophy and Modern Philosophy*, Edited and with an Introduction by Phillip Deen, Foreword by Larry A. Hickman, Southern Illinois University Press, 2012, p. 3. This book (considered lost for six decades, but whose manuscript has been recently rediscovered and published) represents Dewey's philosophical will.

[7] See, for instance, the following statement: "A linguística assinalou isto repetidas vezes, quando, por exemplo, Ch. F. Hockett acentua a tradição no sentido de algo que diferencia o falante humano de uma máquina que fala, ou quando Eugenio Coseriu fala da historicidade da linguagem como uma das suas particularidades universais." (Johannes Kabatek, "*Tradição discursiva e gênero*", in T. Lobo, Z. Carneiro *et alii* (orgs.) *Rosae: linguística histórica, história das línguas e outras histórias* [online], EDUFBA, Salvador, 2012, p. 580; also cf. J. Kabatek, *Tradiţii discursive. Studii*, Editori: Cristina Bleorţu, Adrian Turculeţ *et alii*, Editura Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 2015, p. 181). See also J. Kabatek, "*Worldplay and discourse traditions*", in Angelika Zirner & Esme Winter-Froemel (eds.), *Worldplay and Metalinguistic / Metadiscursive Reflection: Authors, Contexts, Techniques, And Meta-Reflection*, De Gruyter, Berlin & New York, 2015, p. 214; J. Kabatek, P. Obrist, V. Vincis, "*Clause linkage techniques as a symptom of* discourse traditions*: Methodological issues and evidence from Romance languages*", in Heidrun Dorgeloh, Anja Wanner (eds.), *Syntactic Variation and Genre*, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin – New York, 2010, p. 250.

[8] Charles F. Hockett, "The Problem of Universals in Language", in Joseph H. Greenberg (Ed.), *Universals of Language*, The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge – Massachusetts, 1963, pp. 9 and 15.

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However, mention must be made that Hockett supported similar ideas also in his 1958 book, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, especially in its last chapter, *Man's Place in Nature*, where he refers to the elements which differentiate human communication from that of animals. Of all these, "*cultural transmission*"[9] is considered to be the most important feature.

2.4. Eugenio Coseriu couldn't have missed Hockett's study about universals of language, since the former himself treated exemplarily such a topic in his paper *Les universaux linguistiques (et les autres)*. In fact, Coseriu – despite some differences of opinion[10] – highly appreciated the American linguist. In a brief presentation of the North-American structuralist linguistics, Coseriu characterizes Charles F. Hockett as a "teórico flexible y agudo en varios campos, de la fonología a los universales del lenguaje"[11].

2.4.1. As known, Coseriu distinguishes the following, with reference to linguistic universals: *possible universals* ("universaux possibles"), *essential universals* ("universaux essentiels") and *empirical universals* ("universaux empiriques")[12]. He signals (in a footnote) that some of the universals identified by Hockett in his 1963 study can be considered essential universals: "Plusieurs parmi les universaux enregistrés par Ch.F. Hockett en dehors de son «defining set» [...] sont aussi des universaux essentiels dans notre sens (ainsi: 3.1, 3.5, 3.6, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9, 4.10)"[13]. Since in the paragraph marked 3.5 from Hockett's study the word *tradition* is found („3.5. *Every human language has tradition*")[14], there is no doubt that E. Coseriu accepted *tradition* among the essential universals.

2.4.2. At the same time, we should remark that Coseriu distinguishes between "linguistic universals" (i.e. "universals of linguistics") and "universals of language". The former, much more numerous, represent the subject-matter of the theory of language (constituting the concepts general linguistics also operates with), while the latter (only five, according to Coseriu) are studied by the philosophy of language. Finally, we ought to reproduce here what Coseriu understands by "essential universality": "*Universalité essentielle* ou universalité en tant que *nécessité*

[9] Charles F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1958, pp. 579-580.

[10] For instance, E. Coseriu also criticizes some of the ideas Ch.F. Hockett formulated regarding the notion of "linguistic competence" in his 1967 book, *The State of Art* (see Eugenio, *Competencia lingüística. Elementos de la teoría del hablar*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 1992, p. 248). Of course, there are also situations when Coseriu quotes Hockett in order to support his theory (but it is not the case to indicate them here).

[11] Eugenio Coseriu, *Lecciones de lingüística general*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 1981, p. 152.

[12] Eugenio Coseriu, "*Les universaux linguistiques (et les autres)*", in Luigi Heilmann (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Congress of Linguists*, I, Società Editrice il Mulino, Bologna, 1974, p. 49. For the English version of this study, see Eugenio Coseriu, "*Linguistic (and Other) Universals*", in A. Makkai, V. Becker Makkai, L. Heilmann (eds.), *Linguistics at the Crossroads*, Padua and Lake Bluff, Ill., pp. 317-346.

[13] E. Coseriu, "*Les universaux linguistiques (et les autres)*"..., p. 49.

[14] Ch. F. Hockett, "*The Problem of Universals in Language*"…, p. 15.

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rationnelle; dans ce sens est universelle toute propriété appartenant aux notions de langue et de langage ou pouvant être déduite de ces notions en tant que telles."[15].

2.4.3. As already seen, Coseriu rejects neither the concept, nor the term *tradition* (as used by Hockett). And still, he prefers another term, not only to follow a terminological tradition of the Italian scientific background which shaped him, but to better hightlight his own linguistic theory. Just as in the case of "creativity", which characterizes the entire culture and, consequently, language, as well, so is the case of "tradition", which is also specific to culture and language. Contradicting Benedetto Croce, who identified language with poetry (and linguistics with aesthetics), Coseriu also needed another concept to differentiate the common language from the absolute language of poetry. For this reason, he took over the notion of *alterity* 'otherness' (cf. lat. *alter*) from Antonino Pagliaro, a notion which designates the openness of the speaker to the interlocutor, the effort the former makes in order to be understood by the other[16]. (The two primary universals, alterity and creativity, are in a dialectical relation within language: *alterity* leads to homogeneity, while *creativity* leads to internal variation and change[17].) Thus, Coseriu considers that art and, implicitly, artistic literature lack alterity, which is a specific feature to language only. That is why Coseriu states that tradition is stronger in language than in art, where artists aim at permanently innovating, at being as original as possible.

2.5. Hockett is not hindered by such a rational difficulty, because he has a different perspective of literature. In his opinion, artistic literature (as conceived by Coseriu) promoted in the Western world is, in fact, a deviation from the primordial folk literature, as it can be found at the majority of societies. Now, if Western literature is a deviation, it cannot be taken into consideration as such when one establishes the essential nature of literature in itself. The literature described by Hockett does not exclude alterity; on the contrary, it presupposes a ritual which includes the others as well, apart from the story-teller. For this reason, Hockett uses with no reserve the term *tradition* to designate one of the essential universals of language.

3. Two different definitions of literature

Trying to determine the specific of literary discourse (in his conference *Información y literatura* from 1990), Coseriu first exposes certain points of view of some famous linguists, including Hockett with his conception: "Así, un lingüista norteamericano define como literatura «los discursos que se repiten en forma más o menos idéntica en una comunidad». Claro que con una pequeña excepción – como caso marginal –, que es nuestra cultura occidental, desde los griegos hasta la

[15] E. Coseriu, "*Les universaux*…", p. 48.

[16] See Cristinel Munteanu, "*John Dewey and Eugenio Coseriu on Creativity and Alterity in Language. Some Common Points*", in Sanda-Maria Ardeleanu, Ioana-Crina Coroi, Dorel Fînaru (coord.), *Limbaje şi Comunicare*, Volumul XIII, partea a II-a, Casa Editorială *Demiurg*, Iaşi, 2015, pp. 86-100.

[17] On the other hand, Coseriu states that *historicity* (one of the secondary universals of language) derives precisely from creativity and alterity.

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actualidad, en la que la literatura no consta de estos textos que se repiten simplemente en forma más o menos idéntica. Y también habría que admitir la excepción de la comunidad china y de la comunidad japonesa, donde tampoco se puede decir que los textos literarios son aquellos que se repiten tradicionalmente en forma más o menos idéntica. No me resulta conocido que alguien haya repetido jamás en el Japón, en los siglos que han pasado después de la redacción de este texto, la enorme novela *Genji Monogatari* de Murasaki Shikibu, que corresponde a la Edad Media europea. Por otra parte, de acuerdo con esta definición, *Buenos días* y *Buenas noches* constituirían literatura, porque son textos que se repiten más o menos sin modificaciones entre nuestras comunidades, y probablemente en muchas otras. El lingüista al que me refiero – un notable lingüista – es Charles Hockett, y lo que dice acerca de la literatura se encuentra en su libro *A Course in Modern Linguistics* (Nueva York, Macmillan, 1958)."[18].

3.1. But let us see what Hockett writes exactly in the respective course: "In every society known to history or anthropology, with one insignificant exception, there are some discourses, short or long, which the members of the society agree on evaluating positively and which they insist shall be repeated from time to time in essentially unchanged form. *These discourses constitute the literature of that society* [Ch.H.'s emphasis]. The one insignificant exception to this generalization is our own complex Western social order."[19].

However, Hockett himself admits that the definition given[20] is not perfect, since the features he records in the case of literature are not some real *conditiones sine quibus non*. Thus, "the literary status of a discourse turns out to be a matter of degree rather than kind. One story may be repeated very often, another rarely"[21]. Besides this: "Another question that immediately arises is: how changed can the form of a discourse be from one recounting to another, and still leave it «essentially» unchanged? There seems to be much variation in this; in general the degree of objective identity (that could be determined, for example, by carefully recording two successive recountings and listing the differences) seems to be irrelevant, and what is relevant is rather a feeling on the part of the members of the society that at a given time the discourse being told is one that has been told before."[22].

3.2. Eugenio Coseriu does not agree with the way in which Hockett defines literature because of two reasons which mutually interrelate: (1) for the essence of literature is a totally different one and (2) for, were this definition accepted, some facts, which obviously have nothing to do with literature, would be included in the sphere of literature.

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[18] Eugenio Coseriu, *Información y literatura*, în Eugenio Coseriu, Óscar Loureda Lamas, *Lenguaje y discurso*, Prólogo de Johannes Kabatek, Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S.A. (EUNSA), Pamplona, 2006, p. 86.

[19] Charles F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*, The Macmillan Company, New York, 1958, p. 554.

[20] Hockett adds in a note: "The definition of literature is essentially that of Martin Joos (unpublished)" (*ibidem*, p. 565).

[21] *Ibidem*.

[22] *Ibidem*, pp. 554-555.

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3.2.1. Rejecting the definition given by Ch. Hockett to literature, E. Coseriu remains faithful to the way in which Aristotle regarded literature, as *logos poietikos/phantastikos*. Consequently, according to Aristotle and Coseriu, what is specific to artistic literature is conferred neither by its *causa materialis*, nor by its *causa formalis*[23], but by its *causa finalis*. Unlike the other types of discourse (such as *logos pragmatikos* and *logos apophantikos*), the literary discourse aims at creating possible worlds.

3.2.2. If we accepted Hockett's definition, then (as Coseriu remarks) greetings formulae such as *Buenos días* and *Buenas noches* would also be examples belonging to literature. Nevertheless, they are not examples belonging to literature, but examples of *repeated discourse* ("discurso repetido"), as Coseriu calls them. *Repeated discourse* is defined by Coseriu (quite similar to the way in which Hockett defined literature) as follows: "el discurso repetido […] abarca todo aquello que, en el hablar de una comunidad, se repite en forma más o menos idéntica, como discurso ya hecho o combinación más o menos fija, como fragmento, por largo o breve que sea, de «ya dicho»"[24]. One can observe immediately that Eugenio Coseriu thus envisages phraseology in its broad sense: "[C]iertas formas del discurso repetido no pertenecen de ningún modo a la técnica idiomática, puesto que no equivalen a unidades combinables de ésta: son las formas que corresponden a textos completos (o a fragmentos de textos de sentido completo), como las citas y los proverbios. En tal caso no puede haber oposiciones dentro de la técnica idiomática, sino tan sólo entre un texto y otro texto; se trata, en realidad, de formas de la «literatura» (en sentido amplio, es decir, también moral, ideología, etc.), de *tradiciones literarias insertas en la tradición lingüística* [my emphasis; Cr.M.] y que deberían ser estudiadas por la lingüística del texto y por la filología."[25].

3.2.2.1. It is true that Eugenio Coseriu does not use (in *Información y literatura*) the term *discurso repetido* in his criticism addressed to Hockett, but this is, probably, due to the fact that the former is interested there in the essence of the literary discourse and not in that of the repeated discourse. Otherwise, Coseriu had already dealt with Hockett's phraseological conception, as opposed to his own conception about "discurso repetido"/"*wiederholte Rede*", in his book *Sprachkompetenz* (1988)[26], so it was pointless resuming such a discussion.

3.2.2.2. Nonetheless, in spite of the partial overlappings already signaled here, Hockett's "literature" and Coseriu's "repeated discourse" are not to be confounded, since the American linguist does not perceive literature as a sum of

[23] In fact, Hockett also notes this important detail: "Most poetry can be described as literature in the form of *verse*. […] The works of Walt Whitman clearly count as English poetry under this basic definition, though they conform to no simple verse pattern. Contrariwise, discourse can be produced in the strictest verse pattern without being poetry – because it fails to qualify as literature" (*ibidem*, pp. 558-559). However, it seems strange that Hockett does not mention here Aristotle, who, in his *Poetics* (IX, 1451 b), made a similar remark.

[24] Eugenio Coseriu, *Lecciones de lingüística general*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 1981, p. 298.

[25] *Ibidem*, pp. 300-301.

[26] I make reference here to the Spanish version: see Eugenio Coseriu, *Competencia lingüística. Elementos de la teoría del hablar*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 1992, pp. 280-281.

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texts or fragments of texts which are inserted in other concrete discourses/texts by means of a procedure similar to the "collage technique". According to Hockett, it is not the linguistic tradition that makes use of literary texts, but, rather, the other way round: "The existence of a stock of positively evaluated and *oft-repeated discourses* [my emphasis; Cr.M.] is a phenomenon made possible by language: it is patent that dogs and apes, having no language, also have no literature. One of the most important things about humane language is that it serves as the medium for literature. The literary tradition of a community, in turn, is a vital mechanism in the training of the young in culturally approved attitudes and patterns of behavior; it serves to transmit the moral fiber of the community from one generation to the next."[27].

3.2.2.3. Since the Romanian linguist used the Fr. term *discours répété* in his works of structural semantics (i.e. lexematics) published in the '60, one might think that the phrase "*oft-repeated discourses*" from the quote above would indicate the fact that Coseriu borrowed (by means of *ad litteram* translation) the term *discurso repetido* from Hockett himself. Actually, there is evidence to prove that E. Coseriu used this term before Hockett's publication of *A Course in Modern Linguistics* in 1958. Thanks to the critical Spanish edition of *Lingüística del texto*, in which there are also references to some unpublished Coserian manuscripts, one can find out that Coseriu had introduced "el discurso repetido" in his own theory before, in the '50s. In his unpublished work *El problema de la corrección idiomática* (finished in 1957), he mentions those "discursos ya hechos y transmitidos como tales, a lo que puede llamarse *discurso repetido*"[28].

3.3. Let us return to Hockett's conception about literature, after having seen that the notion of "repeated discourse" theorized by Coseriu is, however, too limited to cover the reality about which the American specialist discusses[29].

3.3.1. As already seen, Hockett chooses another way (different than Coseriu's). He admits that "the discourses in question are literary for the society in which they occur", characterizing themselves by *repeatability*. That is why, he tries to

[27] Ch. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*…, pp. 564-565.

[28] See Eugenio Coseriu, *Lingüística del texto. Introducción a la hermenéutica del sentido*, Edición, anotación y estudio previo de Óscar Loureda Lamas, Arco/Libros, Madrid, 2007, p. 143. This older quote from Coseriu's manuscript was reproduced in a footnote by the editor Óscar Loureda; also cf. Cristinel Munteanu, *Lingvistica integrală coşeriană. Teorie, aplicaţii şi interviuri*, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza" din Iaşi, Iaşi, 2012, p. 77.

[29] According to Coseriu, what does not belong, as *discurso repetido*, to a "saber idiomático «textual»" (see Eugenio Coseriu, *El hombre y su lenguaje*, Editorial Gredos, Madrid, 1991, p. 258) belongs, in fact, as linguistic tradition, mainly to the expressive competence: "Aparte del conocimiento de procedimientos configurativos del texto, también existe, naturalmente, el conocimiento de textos concretos o fragmentos de textos. Todos los hablantes pueden repetir tal o cual texto o retomarlo en el suyo propio. Pero lo que aquí nos interesaba a nosotros no era ese conocimiento de textos concretos, sino sólo los tipos más generales del contenido del saber expresivo medio, i.e. el conocimiento de fórmulas y procedimientos generales para configurar textos." (E. Coseriu, *Competencia lingüística*..., p. 284); also cf. Cristinel Munteanu, "*Despre importanța tradițiilor discursive*", in „Limba română", Chişinău, anul XXV, nr. 5-6, 2015, pp. 271-288.

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identify certain "common features of literary discourse"[30]. Although he is aware of the fact that such research "has to be carried out separately for each society", the American linguist states that "two general characteristics seem to be quite common, if not universal: *excellence of speech* and *special style*"[31].

3.3.2. What follows represents – in my opinion – a description of some *discourse traditions* (some of which can be considered *primary*, while others, *secondary*) specific to artistic literature (including the Western one, even though the American specialist mainly offers examples from the Amerindian literature).

3.4. But, first of all, I ought to present what *discourse traditions* are, that is why I think it proper to reproduce here *in extenso* what Johannes Kabatek says about them: "The notion of «discourse tradition» refers to these kinds of traditional repetitions, and the greeting formula is just a simple example that allows for the explanation of the more general phenomenon: according to Koch (1997)[32], the creation of utterances is always based on both the knowledge of a particular language (its grammar and lexicon), and the knowledge of discourse traditions; the latter including formulae like *Buenos días* and textual forms like letters, sonnets, newspaper articles or even forms of so-called «informal» everyday communication. Discourse traditions are – as can be seen from the example of the sonnet – not limited to a particular language, and they can be distinguished from universal pragmatic factors and from the grammar of a language, although they interact with both. This interaction is both a direct and an indirect one: on the one hand, discourse traditions are *loci* of preservation and innovation of linguistic features (e.g. preservation of archaic forms in legal formulae or in religious texts; innovation in new textual environments, see Koch 2008[33]); on the other, given their inter-linguistic mobility, the adoption of discourse traditions is a source of interference with other languages (such as the Italian influence in Spain when the sonnet as a form was adopted from Italy)."[34].

4. Literary discourse traditions

4.1. By *excellence of speech*, Hockett understands the competence of "some individuals" of being "more effective users of the machinery afforded by the society's language than are others"[35]. This remark holds true for both speakers (as oral story-tellers), and for writers. In order to illustrate such a quality, Hockett

30 Ch. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*..., p. 555.
31 *Ibidem*.
32 J. Kabatek refers to Peter Koch, "*Diskurstraditionen: Zu ihrem sprachtheoretischen Status und ihrer Dynamik*", in Barbara Frank, Thomas Haye & Doris Tophinke (eds.), *Gattungen mittelalterlicher Schriftlichkeit*, Narr Verlag, Tübingen, 1997, pp. 43-79.
33 J. Kabatek refers to Peter Koch, "*Tradiciones discursivas y cambio lingüístico: El ejemplo del tratamiento* vuestra merced *en español*", in Johannes Kabatek (ed.), *Sintaxis histórica del español y cambio lingüístico: Nuevas perspectivas desde las Tradiciones Discursivas*, Vervuert-Iberoamericana, Frankfurt a. M. & Madrid, 2008, pp. 53-88.
34 J. Kabatek, "*Wordplay and Discourse Traditions*"…, p. 215.
35 Ch. F. Hockett, *A Course in Modern Linguistics*..., p. 555.

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mentions Menomini Indians, in whose case he observes the following thing: "The good speaker keeps his pronominal references and his concord, government, and cross-reference clear; the poor speaker gets lost in the emerging grammatical complexities of what he is trying to say."[36].

What might seem an exception from this rule proves, in fact, to be a discourse tradition *sui generis*: "For example, the Plains Cree have a favored manner of delivery for certain very familiar stories, in the form of succession of short disconnected sentences which merely allude to the chief episodes. The hearers, knowing the details, are supposed to fill them in for themselves."[37]. Therefore, in this case, there is no "poor speech", since the narrator evinces a certain skill.

4.2. More discourse traditions are recorded by Hockett as examples of *special style*. After having noted that "stylistic variations within a single language are universal" and that certain special styles "are felt to be peculiarly appropriate to certain circumstances"[38], the American linguist offers one more exotic example: "An Oneida chief, making a speech, begins with the style of pronunciation of everyday conversation, but gradually lapses into a special quavery sing-song."[39]. As a matter of fact, in order to be more convincing, Hockett immediately resorts to examples well-known in the Western culture: "We all know the special style used by a minister at the pulpit, reciting the words of a hymn which is about to be sung, or intoning his share during responsive reading of a psalm. None of us would venture to use this style of speech in ordering groceries or in asking a girl for a date."[40].

It thus seems obvious that in all cultures and societies, the folk story-tellers use certain strategies or techniques (i.e. discourse traditions) to mark literary discourse, so that they can differentiate it from other types of discourse. Hockett continues the series of examples: "In Fox, one recounts what happened to one in town yesterday using verb forms in the modes of the so-called independent order; but one tells a literary story using verb forms in the modes of the conjunct order. Conjunct order verbs in everyday speech mark dependent clauses; independent order verbs in literary narrative, on the other hand, mark direct quotations of things said by characters or else parenthetical explanations addressed to the hearer."[41].

Discourse traditions can be also recorded when one wants to distinguish the narrator's speech from the characters' speech[42]. Thus, Hockett observes the

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[36] *Ibidem*.

[37] *Ibidem*, pp. 555-556.

[38] Certainly, Hockett does not mention here – as Coseriu always does – that such a remark was made long before by Aristotle, who, in his *Rhetoric*, would use the term *tò prépon* to designate the norm of adequacy.

[39] *Ibidem*, p. 556.

[40] *Ibidem*.

[41] *Ibidem*.

[42] For the differences between the narrative level and the dialogued one (the latter being much more expressive) as they occur in the works of some Romanian writers, see Cristinel Munteanu, *Frazeologie românească. Formare și funcționare*, Institutul European, Iași, 2013, pp. 155-165 (in which G.I. Tohăneanu's contributions are taken as a starting point).

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existence of "*a customary use of a special manner of speech*" – a formula which can very well serve as a definition of *discourse tradition* – "whenever the words of some recurrent character or type of character are quoted"[43] (*ibid.*). It is true that the Anglo-Americans do the same when they "quote the prototypical Irishman, Scotsman or Brooklynite" both in "serious writing" and in "vaudeville jokes". However, Hockett also prefers Amerindian examples: "In Nootka mythological narratives the characters Deer and Mink regularly distort the phonemic structure of words in one fashion (turning all occurrences of /s c c'/ and /š č č'/ into laterals /ɬ ƛ ƛ'/), Raven in another, and Kwatyat in a third. A story-teller who forgets to make the proper changes may lose prestige."[44].

5. By way of conclusion

Further examples can be extracted from the chapter dedicated by Hockett to the definition and description of literature. For instance, the same linguist deals in a separate section with "the impact of writing on literature", mentioning that in certain Western literate communities some "devices which are independent of language and go beyond it" have been developed, namely certain "(typo)graphical" traditions of writing different types of literary discourses: "In the West there is an established special typographical convention for verse, by which certain rhythmic units are written in successive lines – and, because of this, are called «lines»"[45]. And Hockett records some conventions of this kind. However, I believe that the cases presented above are sufficient to demonstrate that Charles F. Hockett is one of the linguists who observed the frequency and importance of these (literary) discourse traditions and studied them *avant la lettre*.

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[43] Ch. F. Hockett, *op. cit.*, p. 556.
[44] *Ibidem*, p. 557.
[45] *Ibidem*, p. 559.

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