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Patterns of intercultural communication: a case study of Cața rural district

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This paper studies the patterns of communication among the ethnic groups living in the Transylvanian rural district of Cața, aiming at identifying the people's willingness to communicate and the non-conflictual nature of the dialogue in this rural area. The framework employed in the analysis is Dell Hymes's (1974) interactional S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema. The study is based on data collected by the first author during two periods (August – September, 2012 and January, 2013), using two instruments: the direct, participant observation and the interview. The participants are representatives of four ethnic groups, namely Romanians, Hungarians, Germans and Roma people. The findings of the analysis show that the inter-ethnic communication in Cața is non-conflictual and non-exclusive due to the people's openness to adapt to the others and that the limitations of the intercultural dialogue are rather suggested by the administrative authorities and the national ethnic organizations.

Key-words: *intercultural communication, ethnography of communication, S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G*

1. Introduction: intercultural communication and the ethnography of communication

As "intercultural communication is a matter of highest importance if humankind and society are to survive" (Samovar & Porter 2003, viii), its study is a multidisciplinary endeavor. Researchers have approached this field from the vantage point of linguistic anthropology (Gumperz 1978, 1982), of ethnography of communication (Gumperz and Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1974), or of psychology (Gudykunst, 1988; Kim, 2001; Tajfel, 1979), in an attempt to offer a clear and encompassing perspective on this complex issue. Due to our aim to study orchestrated communication, the approach that seemed more appropriate to our need was the ethnography of communication, as it enabled us to focus on interactional models viewed as 'clusters' of convictions, values and methods in the intercultural relations within the Romanian rural area. The 'orchestra' metaphor, according to which the

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foreign elements are inserted naturally in the process of communication among the members of some Romanian rural area, makes one think of 'tuning' in time and of communicational harmony:

> "Members of a culture participate in communication just the way in which musicians play in the orchestra; but the communication orchestra does not have a conductor and the musicians do not have scores. Their concerts are more or less harmonious because as they play, they conduct each other. The aria they interpret constitutes for them an assembly of structural interrelations" (Winkin 2001, 153).

The orchestra model of communication can best explain the organic functionality of the Romanian rural community, where agreement, co-participation, and communion occur naturally, the communication process being an integrated social phenomenon, which can be appropriately described in terms of the ethnography of communication. This approach, derived from anthropology, focuses "on how language functions in actual ethnographically documented speech events, rather than on relations between community wide cultural norms and linguistic structures abstracted from talk. Begun in the 1960s, the ethnography of communication provided the insight that culture was essentially a communicative phenomenon, constituted through talk" (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz 2007, 15). The contribution of anthropology to intercultural communication is the insight that language differences that affect interpretation in everyday life are not just matters of grammar and semantics. Speaking and understanding depend greatly on the social context in which verbal exchanges take place (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 2007; Saville-Troike, 2003).

For anthropologists, the ethnography of communication presupposes the extension of the cultural systems to the linguistic field, proving very useful in studying language/speech in relationship with the social organization, people's social roles, their values and beliefs, as well as in relationship with patterns of behavior transmitted from generation onto generation in the process of socialization or enculturation. The ethnography of communication presupposes an encompassing study of the communicative and cultural behavior in a social and linguistic context. From the vantage point of this approach, the process of communication within the multiethnic village in Romania cannot be studied independent of the network of interethnic interactions and of cultural patterns. The study of interethnic communication imposes an internal perspective, a description of the internal structure of the community as a whole (not as a sum of the ethnic groups that it is formed of).

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2. Research methodology

2.1. Data collection

In order to identify the roles that the cultural communicative behavior may play within the rural area, as well as the interaction between culture and communication, we needed to collect consistent data and to use an analytical framework suitable for their interpretation. The largest body of data was collected *in situ*, from the local people, during two periods (August – September, 2012 and January, 2013. Apart from that, we have also made recourse to the statistical data available.

2.2. Analytical framework

The analytical framework employed in describing the intercultural communication patterns within the rural area of Cața is represented by Hymes's (1974) S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema, which proved very useful in the study of communication as interaction, focusing on a larger set of elements pertaining to the communication process. These elements, united under the acronym S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G, are: *setting and scene – participants – ends – act sequence – key – instrumentalities – norms – genre.* Each of them enables a complex analysis, which, in the long run, creates an extended analytical framework. As our analysis of the intercultural communication patterns will proceed along these eight elements, we shall briefly present them in what follows.

a. *Setting and scene* comprises two parts, a physical and a psychic one. Thus, in the case of the *setting* we need to consider physical elements such as the time, the place, the movement of the participants in the act of communication, the noise, etc. The *scene*, on the other hand, relates to the cultural dimension of atmosphere, but it also includes characteristics such as the degree of formality of the dialogue. As Hymes himself put it, "the key to understanding language in context consists in not starting with the language, but with the context" (1972, xix). In our paper, the *setting* corresponds to the natural landscape present in Romanian studies, while the *scene,* understood as a structure that derives certain social phenomena from other social phenomena, includes, to a certain extent, the historical background, too.

b. The *participants* in the act of communication are not only those persons who exchange messages, but all the people present, who take part actively or passively in the communication process. Within interpersonal communication, the message does not pendulate between the sender and the receiver. The co-participants, part of the communication setting, play various social roles and interfere verbally and non-verbally in the message exchange. All participants act with themselves of with the others according to the meaning, by appealing to a social conduct imposed by certain norms and also according to a creative conduct, respectively, by negotiating meaning and interpreting symbols.

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c. The *ends* cover the immediate and the long-term communication objectives, taking sometimes the form of either *purposes-outcomes*, which are explicit, established and agreed with by the communication partners, or of *purposes-goals*, which are situated at a deeper level of intentionality.

d. The *act sequence* refers to the 'form and content of utterances', as well as to "what is uttered and what is meant by the way in which something is uttered" (Kramsch 2004, 37); in other words, it covers the message content in terms of intention of the sender and interpretation of the receiver, as well as the form taken by the message. Within the adopted framework, the message content is perceived as being in a dynamic interaction, constructing its own physical depth, and contributing to the changing of the norm according to which we interpret the world.

e. The *key* covers the tone or manner in which the communication act is performed (serious, ironical, jokingly, etc.) and refers both to the verbal and the non-verbal (paralanguage) forms. Our focus was more on the oral exchanges between participants, on their interaction, reversibility of roles, freedom in selecting the means to transmit the information, on causing various effects on the interlocutor by having the possibility to reformulate the message. Moreover, the non-verbal aspects of communication are also of importance, especially when they contribute to the verbal exchanges. The non-verbal elements can be prosodic (intonation, word-stress) or paralinguistic (tone, volume, accent, slips of the tongue, speech speed, etc.) (Argyle 1975/1988, 139-152). Variations in tonality or rhythm provide additional information regarding the key, being easily identified and contributing to the creation/maintaining of a certain communication atmosphere and to the prevalence of humor, irony or gravity of conversation.

f. The *instrumentalities* cover two important categories of communication elements: channels and means of communication, on the one hand, and codes, on the other hand. The channels are defined as the fixed elements by means of which the signals are transmitted between the sender and the receiver, while the means refer to the physical supports that convert the messages into signals in order to be transmitted via the channels. The codes, understood as a system of signs and systems of norms/conventions of combining them, are specific to each culture or social group.

g. The interactional mechanisms and the mechanisms of message interpretation in conversation are subsumed to Hymes's *norms* of communication, such as greeting, leave taking, or apologizing, to mention just a few. The study of these norms is imperative in intercultural communication. Due to the differences between the representative of one culture (the performer) and the member of another culture who interacts with him/her, it is necessary to identify, explain, and account for the existing interactional patterns. These interactional norms cover the need not to interrupt a conversation, to listen, to have tolerance for the communication act, to respect the rights of the other, to actively participate in the conversation by clarifying ambiguities and by bringing arguments in support of various points of

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view, decisions, and solutions. They are a form of unwritten social behavior which is essential for social morality.

h. Last but not least we have *genre*, a term borrowed from the literary field, which refers to the type of speech act employed, such as conversation, discussion, explanation, demonstration, role play, etc. The use of a particular type of genre depends to a large extent on factors such as: the discursive ends, the status of the discussants, the time and place of the discussion, the material support or the textual organization (Maingueneau, 2008). According to Hymes (1974), the term *genre* refers the means of identifying the typical formal characteristics of the various conversational events, such as the occasional dialogue, the joke, the narrative, the formal presentation, etc.

2.3. Type of research and research instruments

As our aim is to identify the patterns of intercultural communication in a multi-ethnic rural area, which presupposes the study of the various forms of culture and of the interaction among people belonging to different cultures (thus nothing could be quantified or expressed in percentages), the type of research we carried out is the qualitative one, as this is recommended in the study of indirect phenomena. Dealing with a process that unfolds in time, which does not have a clearly delimited beginning or end, we considered that the most appropriate method of data collection was the *participant observation*, doubled by *interviews*. Participant observation as a data collection method was introduced by Malinowski (1922) at the beginning of the 20th century in his anthropological studies of the Trobriand Islands. Later on, it was taken up by other specialists conducting fieldwork in situ, such as Margaret Mead (1977) and Gregory Bateson (1979) in anthropology, or Burgess (1983) and Park (1952) in sociology. According to DeWalt & DeWalt (2002) (quoted in Kawulich, 2005),

> "participant observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing and participating in those activities. It provides the context for the development of sampling guidelines and interview guides". (Kawulich, 2005)

McKechnie notes that

> "observation is one of the oldest and most fundamental research method approaches. It involves collecting impressions of the world using all of one's senses, especially looking and listening, in a systematic and purposeful way to learn about a phenomenon of interest. Although frequently employed on its own, observational research is often used with other methods such as interviewing and document analysis." (McKechnie 2008, 574)

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The participant observation implies some 'negotiation' between the researcher and the subjects (Mucchielli 2002, 272), a negotiation of the meanings and truths, which brings about the need of a *dialogue*, assimilated to the *interview*[3]. From the large range of interview types (*non-directive*, Darlington & Scott, 2002, unstructured, depth, personal/individual, Chelcea 2004, face-to-face, documentary), we have opted for the *intensive* style, which is applied to a small number of people (informants) in order to get deeper insight into the research topic. Thus, in the rural district of Cața, we interviewed a total of 18 persons, choosing for each ethnic group a main informant (who, in general, was an employee in the local administrative body) and between 3 and 5 secondary informants. The informants needed to have memories of the events in their villages and to be able to recount the evolution of the interethnic communication relationships. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed, without using any particular transcription methodology. Initially, the interviews were carried out face-to-face, occasionally the information being completed over the phone. The major informants in Cața were: M.V. – Romanian, A. M. – German, D. A. –Roma person, and G. I. –Hungarian.

Despite the short time span available for data collection, the participant observation (the major research method) implied participating in the community activities, developing mutual relationships with the community members, drafting and re-drafting the research questions, constantly testing the validity of the data, of their interpretation and of our expectations (assumptions). What we aimed to find was information about the social structure, cultural values, roles and relations, and about the manner in which the communication events occur in the community. In order to avoid any danger of omitting important information, the data collected by observation were put in order and interpreted upon arrival of the first author in Braşov.

The instruments employed for collecting the data derive from Hymes's (1974) S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema. Thus, for the participant observation we have employed a S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G observation sheet (see appendix 1), whereas for the interviews an adapted S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G interview guidebook was used (see appendix 2). This instrument contains 8 discussion topics: the general setting of communication, participants, outcomes, acts, instruments, communication key, norms and types of communication, totaling 16 sub-topics and 40 questions, out of which 6 are conditioned by a previous answer. Apart from the data collected by employing the above-mentioned methods, we have also consulted available statistic and non-statistic documents in order to get a clear picture of the communication exchanges among the people in the envisaged rural community. We have tried as much as

[3] The difference between the ethnographer–informant *dialogue* and *interview* consists in the lack of questions (especially in the case of the structured or semi-structured interview), in the possibility of approaching multiple and varied topics in the first case, and in directing the dialogue by recourse to active listening and not to the questions in the interview guide.

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possible to adopt an open, nonjudgmental attitude towards our informants as well as to the data we have gathered, and we were aware of the possibility of making mistakes in interpreting the data.

2.4. Research questions

Considering the need to find the relevance of studying intercultural communication within the rural area envisaged, our study was guided by the following research questions:

(1) Are there communicational tendencies in the Romanian cultural patterns? To what extent? Do they presuppose cultural openness? Which are the intercultural communication patterns in the rural district of Cața?

(2) How does cultural change occur as a result of the existence of ethnic groups different from the Romanian one? Which ethnicities engage in cultural contacts within the rural area?

(3) What limits/hinders intercultural communication within the rural community?

These questions should not be regarded as some rigid guidelines for our investigation, but they should rather ensure 'an openness to categories and modes of thought and behavior which may not have been anticipated by the investigator' (Saville-Troike 2003, 3).

With these in mind, we shall now return to an extensive analysis of the patterns of intercultural communication in the rural district of Cața, preformed according to Hymes's (1974) S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema.

3. Patterns of intercultural communication in Cața

3.1. Cața local community – general presentation

Before embarking on the analysis of the patterns of communication among the members of various ethnicities in the village of Cața, a brief presentation of its natural and historical background would be in order here. The locality is situated in the northern part of Braşov county, in the Homorod Valley and it comprises five smaller villages: Cața, Beia, Drăuşeni, Ioneşti, and Paloş. From a historical administrative perspective, two of the villages of the current Cața locality, namely Cața and Drăuşeni, belonged to the Rupea (also known as Cohalm) Seat, which represented an administrative unit of the Saxon population in the south-eastern part of Transilvania. Here, the predominant ethnic group was of German origin, formed of descendants of the German colonizers who had settled in this area in the 12th century. As Iorga (1919) (quoted in Jinga 1995, 17) noted, "the Saxons are a German ethnic group which was colonized in Transilvania in the 12th and 13th

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centuries by Hungarian kings who ruled in those times". But the name of the territorial-administrative unit, i.e. *Stühle*, unique in comparison to other forms of German administrative organization and also borrowed by the Szekler population in the neighborhood, has a Romanian origin (being related to the *county*, a native territorial-administrative unit, or to the *administration/ seat fortresses*, encountered in Moldova or Muntenia). Consequently, the Rupea Seat presupposes the existence of a Romanian substrate to which a German layer was added, contributing to the configuration of a unique territorial-administrative unit. Due to its geographical position, the locality was invaded from the East and the West, the most representative events that affected its inhabitants being the invasion of the Austrian troops under the leadership of general Castaldo (1551), the siege by the Turkish army of Ali-Pasha (1661), the attacks of the Kuruc people and the arson of a great part of the village (1706), etc. (Borcoman 2010). The exposure to invasions, sieges, colonization, as well as the uncertain judiciary situation have contributed to the modelling of a cultural environment characterized by the mixture of ethnicities, religions and beliefs, habits and customs, which constitute the object of our research. The village of Drăuşeni, also set up by the Saxons, is situated 6 kilometers away from Cața. The village was first mentioned in the historical documents of 1385, but it had appeared in the 12th century in a buffer area, mentioned by King Andrew II of Hungary in 1224. The village is assumed to be much older, proof for it being the fortified Evangelic Church. For several centuries, Drăuşeni was involved in an important conflict with the neighboring village, Ioneşti, which belonged to Odorhei Seat, mainly populated by Szeklers. Due to the numerous Szekler incursions, beginning with the 18th century a strong process of magyarisation was present, which caused an alarming decrease in the number of German families.

The village of Paloş, also part of current Cața locality, was inhabited by Romanian bondsmen. As Borcoman stated, "there is no written evidence attesting the existence of Saxon or Szekler population in the area" (2010: 108).

An important factor in the ethnic mixture of present-day Cața locality is represented by the so-called 'neighborhoods' - paramilitary organizations, which were meant to protect the locality. The existence of these neighborhoods has contributed to the application of certain civic norms and to the encouragement of dialogue, having also an administrative (not only a military) role. The existence of these neighborhoods within the Rupea Seat has contributed to the establishment of a network of social relations overlapping those of community dialogue, leading to the emergence of communication beyond the ethnic boundaries.

Another key element, which separated rather than linked different ethnic people, was education. Schooling had a long tradition in the area, starting with the 15th century (Borcoman 2010, 52). Thus, the school in Drăuşeni was attested in 1424, whereas the German primary school in Cața was attested in 1550. In the spirit of the times, schooling provided an intellectual opening for the German and Hungarian populations, but not for the Romanian one.

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Starting with the 19th century, a new ethnic group appears in Cața, namely the Roma people. While in 1850 they represented only 2.2% of the total population, nowadays they represent 23.38%. In the 19th century, there was a political trend of assimilating the Roma people, according to which they were forced to abandon their nomadic life and to send their children to school. After WWII, when the German population in Transilvania started migrating to Germany, the communist authorities decided to populate these villages with Roma people, which stirred the rage and the xenophobic attitude of the Romanian inhabitants:

> (…) the massive take-over of the deported German population's houses by the gypsies starts especially in Transilvania. The phenomenon resulted in the reinforcement of the resentment and prejudices of the Romanians, who felt offended and wronged in relation to the gypsy community, which they considered unworthy of such measures. (Pons 1999, 26).

Two kinds of attitude emerged in connection with this ethnic group in the localities in the northern part of Brasov county: on the one hand, there is pressure on behalf of the authorities to assimilate these people, to force them to give up their culture, language, and traditions. On the other hand, the local communities reject the Roma people, associating them with a socially disadvantaged class or with a criminal group.

At present, the rural locality of Cața contains a number of different ethnic groups that live together but among which the authorities have imposed certain communication barriers and have increased the social distance. Moreover, in Cața we find affluent people living close to very poor ones. This financial difference, coupled with the ethnic and the religious ones, make Cața a worthy place of investigation in terms of communication patterns.

3.2. Patterns of intercultural communication in Cața

In order to make use of the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema in interpreting the communication relations in Cața, we have employed both the data collected by means of participant observation and the results of the interviews. Our objective was to offer a clear image of the profound issues related to the process of communication between the representatives of various ethnic groups. To this aim, we have carried out an in-depth, more complex interview, which helped us clarify other aspects brought forward by the community members. Our informants were the following: M.V., Romanian from Paloş, A.M, German from Cața, D.A. from Cața, member of the Roma people, and G. I. from Drăuşeni, a representative of the Hungarian population. These persons used to have or have at present important positions in the community and enjoy trust and respect on behalf of the citizens. They indicated other people belonging to their own ethnic group to be interviewed, so that we had

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an additional 14 interviews to consider, plus the data collected by means of observation. We shall now turn to the analysis of the patterns of intercultural communication in the locality of Cața, performed along the 8 dimensions of the S-P-E-A-K-I-N-G schema.

a) The ***setting*** of communication in the rural locality of Cața is determined by the rapports of a multiethnic community where some ethnic groups are dominant. Thus, in Cața the Roma people have become more numerous than the German inhabitants, while in Drăguşeni, the Germans have been outnumbered by the Hungarian population.

For a better understanding of the intercultural communication in this rural area, we shall approach the relationships between the existing ethnic groups:

-Romanians & Hungarians: the Romanians consider that the communication with the Hungarian people occurs naturally, on the basis of mutual respect, though there is still a certain distance between the two communities; for the Hungarians, on the other hand, the process of communication with the Romanians is more formal. The physical setting of communication is either a public institution or a more private one (such as a store or a pub). The members of the two ethnic groups have stated that there are friendly relationships between them, but these are rather at a private level. This means that a Hungarian from Cața can be friends with a Romanian not due to their social status of representatives of their own ethnic community, but because of their own personal features, irrespective of their origin, language or religion.

-Romanians & Roma people: as the members of these ethnic groups live within the same village, the interethnic barriers are apparently invisible for the observer. This is also due to the fact that many of the Roma people perform daily chores for money or for various goods for neighbors belonging to other ethnic groups. The physical setting of communication is the village itself, 'up to the gate', beyond which for the Roma people this means interacting with the Romanian people in order to perform various activities for them, while for the Romanians this would imply the need to enter the 'gypsy territory' in order to hire somebody for a daily chore.

-Roma people & Hungarians: according to the statements of the interviewees, the relations between the members of these two groups are less frequent than the ones between Romanians and Hungarians or between Romanians and Roma people. The process of communication occurs in the same setting as described above, the only difference being the fact that this setting is more restricted, as the Hungarians impose a higher note of formality, especially because many of the Roma people speak Romanian (though some of them have Hungarian names). In Drăguşeni, the Roma community occupies a marginal space, which contributes to an increase in the communication distance.

-Germans & other ethnic group members. The rapport between the Germans and all the other ethnicities is quite formal. The interviewees belonging to

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the Romanian, Roma, and Hungarian ethnic groups stated that as the German population had disappeared from the village, the German people that are still living there are not representative for the topic under discussion. If we consider the old relations with the German population, it emerges that the dialogue was based on mutual understanding and respect, but in agreement with the German thinking patterns and emotional attitudes. In general, one can speak of a communication setting that favored the German-Hungarian intercultural dialogue, proof for this being the fact that out of the 5 German families that still live in Cața, only one is genuinely German, whereas the other four are mixed (German-Hungarian). The fact that under certain circumstances the Germans were forced to live under the same roof with Roma people has caused great discomfort for the former, which contributed to the increase of the communication distance between these two ethnic groups and to a lack of trust of the Germans in the members of the Roma ethnicity.

b) The ***participants*** in the act of communication occurring in the rural area of Cața are members of the ethnic groups that live together here: Romanians, Hungarians, Germans, and Roma people. The participant observation has brought to light normal communication behavior, typical of the Romanian village, such as the greeting or leave-taking. One can hear Romanian salutation formulas like: *Bună ziua (dimineata, seara)!* 'Good day[4]/morning/evening!' *Doamne ajută*! 'May God help you' (greeting used when seeing/encountering a man who is working), *Servus*! (used when taking leave from somebody, a formula that has lost in time the connotation of inferiority and humbleness of the Roman times), or its Hungarian version, employed both when meeting and parting with someone, *Szia!*. These salutation formulas reflect the relations between the people who interact. For the observer of the communication patterns, the greeting formulas are the 'gate' to the universe of the interethnic relationships. In Cața, intercultural communication is not confined to greetings, but there is a continuous flow of exchange of information both at the level of intraethnic, and at the level of interethnic communication. The act of communication is frequently initiated by people with an inferior status with respect to age and social position. Even if communication outside the family occurs with persons in the immediate neighborhood, this will not exclude relationships with people at a much greater distance (with respect to location of the house, social status or ethnicity). Communication within the rural area is direct rather than mediated by intermediary persons. These play an important role in communicating unpleasant information, in gossiping, in enhancing the informality of the dialogue by highlighting flaws and shortcomings. The interviews conducted brought to light a reduced propensity of the Hungarian population for direct communication.

Another interesting finding of the study is the fact that a third party in the act of communication is not ignored, but rather appreciated, as this may contribute to

[4] 'Good day' in Romanian does not have the negative connotations encountered in English.

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the clarification of the message, knows something of what is talked about, and contributes with bits of advice or suggestions.

c) With respect to the ***ends*** of intercultural communication, one can easily notice *purposes-outcomes*, explicit requests that are formulated directly. Within the interethnic communication, these ends are to be found at the level of interpersonal exchanges: person X, treated by his dialogue partner as person X and not as the representative of a certain ethnicity, requests something within the common sense of the cultural conventions in the community. This request can be satisfied or not. The *purposes-outcomes* imply, in general, explicit verbalization. But at the interpersonal level there is also a degree of implicitness, triggered by *purposes-goals*, whose aim is to maintain communication and, implicitly, the relationships between people, irrespective of their membership to a certain ethnicity. In Cața, we noticed the existence of a certain degree of politeness, which is a key to cultivating mutual respect. The Romanian form of expressing politeness (understood as decorum/decency, not as a social norm of entering a dialogue) is the one manifested on the paths of the villages of Cața locality. Politeness, understood in terms of concern for the other, is manifested in the way in which the members of the Roma ethnicity approach the strangers: with deference, in order to ensure communication balance and to engage the other in the dialogue. The strangers, in their turn, communicate with the members of the Roma ethnic group without any trace of rigidity. A more formal kind of politeness, as well as a certain repositioning in agreement with the imposed cultural distance is encountered in the way in which the representatives of the German and Hungarian ethnic groups address people of other ethnicity than theirs.

An important aspect related to these ethnic groups is their tendency to preserve their cultural heritage, their customs, and their language, which is often perceived as an anti-Romanian attitude. Unlike in many Transylvanian villages, where the Hungarians refuse to speak other languages than their mother tongue, the Hungarian people in Cața preserve their heritage by keeping a certain distance, rather than by refusing to speak Romanian. They respond politely in Romanian, engage in dialogue, are open and friendly, invite you into their homes, shake hands with others, listen to the conversation up to the end, but they do not hesitate to say what and how they think (often apologizing by saying *Nu vă supărați pe mine, dar…* 'Don't get angry with me, but …' – T.P., Hungarian person).

In the interviews carried out for our investigation, we encountered statements regarding the *purposes-goals* of the other ethnic groups, rather than of one's own: A.M., a German female, said 'The gypsy lies to you the moment s/he opens the mouth.' The Romanians are perceived by members of other ethnic groups as slippery, not inspiring confidence. Interestingly, even the Romanian themselves admit that in relationship with other persons they tend not to keep their word. This feature of the Romanians and their hidden intentions in communicating with members of other ethnic groups has also been detected by the Roma people: the

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Germans and the Hungarians are more serious and more punctual, but the Romanians are more generous.

d) As a result of a century long cohabitation of the ethnic groups in Cața, the villagers do not seem to have problems in understanding each other in the ***act sequences***. They understand both the linguistic and the pragmatic sense of the messages. This could be due to the fact that their communication focused on common values for the sake of mutual understanding. These people have long overcome the stage in which the differences were obvious, sharing now a particular cultural form, which presupposes a certain degree of openness that does not harm the ethnic identity.

In Cața, the major form of communication is face-to-face. Once the mobile telephone network has extended in this area, this means of communication gained ground. The written communication is totally absent, exceptional (particular) cases being the e-mail exchanges enabled by the internet. Also in particular cases, the state institutions or villagers who have left their place for various reasons send written letters to the families. Thus, in Cața, communication occurs mainly orally, just like in older times.

e) As far as the ***key*** is concerned, as the communication in Cața occurs mainly orally, in the intercultural relations we also considered the nonverbal behavior of our subjects, in order to have a clear image of the entire communication behavior. The nonverbal behavior, which accompanies the verbal one, speaks volumes about the ethnic origin of the subjects. The first aspect that drew our attention is related to proxemics (the use of space). The communication distance is much smaller in the intraethnic relations of the Romanians and of the Roma people. But this distance increases in the case of a dialogue between a Romanian and a member of the Roma ethnicity. The distance kept by the Hungarians and the Germans when they communicate with members of other ethnic groups is much bigger than when they communicate with members of their own community.

Another aspect of proxemic nature is the distance from the village centre. Thus, the Roma people are different from the other ethnic groups in that they usually live at the margin of the villages, this kind of 'self-exile' being the result of the unequal treatment of the Roma people in comparison with other ethnicities. The gypsy home in Cața, atypical of the Roma tradition, is a fixed, sociopetal space. This isolation of the Roma people at the margins of the village is to be understood if we consider the fact that in the 50s of the previous century, they were forced to move into the houses abandoned by the Germans who left Romania.

On the other hand, the fact that both the Romanians, and the Hungarians and the few Germans in Cața live in houses built along the German architectural tradition contributes to a general German architectural expression. Nevertheless, the Saxon architectural style bears typical Romanian elements. The presence of Romanian people in a closed space (sociofugal), of buildings characterized by a tall gate and tall fences, the fusion of the gate with the house itself are not typical of the

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Romanian way of living. For the Romanians, the house should have a certain opening, should radiate from the hearth towards the exterior. The firmness of the geometrical lines of the village, the location of the power institutions in the village center have changed the communication patterns, leading to a proxemics distancing of the Romanian population.

Another aspect of nonverbal communication we noticed in the rural area of Cața concerns the monochronic organization, typical of Germans and Hungarians, as opposed to the synchronic (polychromic) one, characteristic of the Romanians and of the Roma people. Also worth mentioning are the sobriety and politeness of the Germans and Hungarians in comparison with the eccentricity of the other two ethnic groups, the selectivity in establishing friendships and in keeping them (Germans and Hungarians) versus the levity (the other two ethnic groups), or even the propensity for betrayal of the Romanians, as it emerged from the interviews.

f) With respect to the ***instrumentalities***, in our research we have found that the members of the ethnic groups in Cața usually speak Romanian (i.e. the Dacian-Roman dialect, with its Transilvanian variety) in intercultural encounters. The interviews have revealed that each of the inhabitants knows Romanian and speaks it, at least a little. The fact that 67% of the inhabitants of Cața consider Romanian their mother tongue is proof of the embracing of this language in time. The Roma people have abandoned their roots, tradition, and language and have adopted Romanian as their conversational language. Some of them speak Hungarian, as a result of the magyarization of the gypsies in the first half of the 19th century, just the way in which many Germans and Romanians also speak Hungarian. The German population speaks the *Sächsisch* dialect of German, which is slightly different from the dialect spoken in the northern part of Transilvania but which preserves medieval features forms that have disappeared from the German language spoken in Germany at present. This German dialect in Cața is characterized by words that have disappeared from current Standard German (the outcome of isolation of the language) and by lexical items borrowed from Romanian and Hungarian (the result of cohabitation). The German people of Cața are fluent in German and Romanian; some of them also speak Hungarian due to the fact that they stem from mixed families. The German language is employed sporadically, at intraethnic meetings and is kept fresh by reading (books and periodicals) and by watching German TV programs.

The Hungarians in this rural area speak the Szekler dialect of Hungarian which does not differ considerably from the standard form in terms of grammar, but which is phonetically characterized by the use of close vowels (ë instead of e, œ instead of ö) and by the use of archaisms and regionalisms at the level of vocabulary. Hungarian is predominant in intraethnic communication, whereas Romanian is employed in communicating with people of Romanian or Roma origin. The way in which Romanian is spoken by the Hungarian population is indicative of the fact that it is not acquired as a second language (after Hungarian), but in non-

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educational contexts, which makes some of the Hungarian persons use it with a certain degree of clumsiness, in the absence of solid grammar and pragmatic knowledge.

Multilingualism is feature of the inhabitants of Cața, one of the informants bringing proof in this respect:

> My boys went to the Hungarian school up to the end of the fourth grade [to Hungarian classes organized in the school in Drăuşeni]. They learned at the Hungarians, but they also had Romanian classes. But children, no matter whether they are Romanian, Saxons, Hungarians, all of them also spoke another language. They spoke German and Romanian, and Hungarian (R.V., Hungarian informant).

The use of Hungarian and German with their dialectal forms (the result of isolation/distancing from their standard forms) constitutes proof for the assimilation resistance against the dominant monolingual population. The Romanian people in Cața have not imposed their domination, but have chosen persuasive means. The Roma people have given in, being almost completely assimilated by the Romanian population. The Romanians have always shown tolerance to the use of other languages in their community. But the German and Hungarian cultural heritage, doubled by the sense of ownership and of membership (more prominent in the case of the Hungarians), has led to different types of rapports with the others. In Cața, the German population has separated and given in to the political pressure, withdrawing to Germany, while the Hungarians have resisted this pressure, adopting a certain distance towards the Romanians and using their own language as a means of protecting their cultural heritage.

g) ***Norms of communication***. In the multiethnic rural community of Cața, the Romanians have encouraged interdependence, by respecting alterity and by being open to mutual understanding. Given this openness to understanding, it is but normal to come across certain patterns of interaction. Our observation has brought to light symmetry in the intercultural communication between partners. The symmetrical interethnic relations presuppose behavior of the same kind (either positive, or negative). We have also encountered asymmetrical relations between the members of the Roma ethnic group and those of the Romanian, German, and Hungarian groups.

In most of the cases of interaction, what emerged was the projection of the identity self rather that of the cultural (ethnic) self. From this perspective, the modes of encoding and decoding do not differ among the members of different ethnicities, which lead to a uniform interpretation of the messages that enables the understanding of the other, with his/her system of beliefs, convictions and opinions.

The norms of interaction and interpretation, aimed at tolerance in the act of communication, at respecting the other's right to speak and to listen, presuppose

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certain particular features in the multicultural locality of Cața. The Germans and Hungarians make recourse to code-switching depending on their activities, while the Romanians change their code depending on their addressee, irrespective of his/her ethnicity. The Romanians, in general, proved more open to communication with members of other ethnic groups, this openness being the catalyzing factor in this rural speech community. In the absence of this Romanian catalyzer, Cața might have remained just a non-conflictual multiethnic community. But as it is, it has turned into a non-conflictual interethnic community. The Romanians have contributed to a climate of dialogue and mutual understanding, assimilating the values of the other ethnic groups in this Transilvanian rural area. This came to be appreciated by foreigners such as McMahon who stated that Romania "could be considered a good example of ethnic understanding and progress" (2007, 138).

h) As far as the last dimension in the schema is concerned, namely *genre*, our analysis has shown that the most frequent types of discourse employed by our subjects were the narratives and the instructions. There are no considerable differences in genre in the case of intra- and interethnic communication, except for particular circumstances. Thus, in the Reformed church the genre was more instructive-argumentative, while in the Orthodox one the narrative-instructive type was predominant.

4. Conclusions

Our research has brought into the light a system of intercultural communication patterns in a rural area where the intercultural experience is part of its history. The analysis has revealed a certain communication propensity of the Romanian people and their openness under apparent confinement. We can speak of a form of confinement with respect to the exterior of the rural community, to the society that encourages the changing of the old forms of rural organization, rather than of a confinement with respect to the other village people, members of different ethnic groups. The analysis of the patterns of intercultural communication has shown that the Romanians are open to communicating with members of all ethnic groups in this area, they try to avoid conflict, and are patient in assimilating the other.

The models of good practices identified in Cața come against the form of communication imposed by local and national authorities, as well as by various ethnic organizations, whose divergent interests have exerted artificial pressure on the ethnic community, suggesting confinements with the aim of preservation of the cultural heritage.

The results of our research may contribute to a better understanding of the ethnic groups, to their good cohabitation and to the improvement of the interethnic dialogue in Romania.

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