MERSI, APROPO, PARDON IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN: FROM ETYMOLOGY TO LEXICAL PRAGMATICS

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Abstract. This approach discusses the concept of "pragmatic borrowing", proposing a methodological shift of focus regarding linguistic borrowings, which are not seen exclusively in a static, independent manner, but inextricably related to the communicative context and underpinned by a certain cultural, social, cognitive, etc. background. Our research will focus on a small range of French borrowings which, maintaining their core meaning to a higher or lower extent, also express various affective, attitudinal and pragmatic values in contemporary language, strongly linked to the communicative context and sometimes extremely subtle and difficult to perceive. This happens with words such as *mersi* 'thanks', *apropo* 'by the way' or *pardon* 'excuse me' which, in contemporary Romanian, function as genuine pragmatic markers.

Keywords: Romanian, French, borrowings, Francesisms, pragmatic markers.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Objectives

Derived from lexical pragmatics, a rather novel field of research (see Martin 2008), "which studies the processes by which the literal (or linguistically specified) meaning of words is changed in use" (Wilson 2006: 33), this approach aims at analysing the meaning and functioning "in context and in use, including motivational factors, perception and *post hoc* effects of the use" (Andersen *et al.* 2017: 103) of some words borrowed from French into Romanian in the 18th century, especially through oral transmission. We are specifically referring to a small range of French-language borrowings which, maintaining their core meaning to a higher or lower extent, also express various affective, attitudinal and pragmatic values in contemporary language, strongly linked to the communicative context and sometimes extremely subtle and difficult to perceive.

Therefore, the objective of this article is to provide some reflections on the novel methodological perspective opened by recent socio-pragmatics approaches, focusing on the concept of "pragmatic borrowing". This represents a shift of focus regarding the status and functioning of borrowings "from the borrowed lexemes *per se*, to how the use of borrowed items is constrained by cultural, social or cognitive factors" (Andersen *et al.* 2017: 71).

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1.2. Research corpus

The corpus of our approach contains a small range of French origin borrowings, including three lexical items, *i.e.* (Rom.) *mersi* 'thanks', *apropo* 'by the way' and *pardon* 'excuse me' which, in contemporary Romanian, function as genuine pragmatic markers.

More specifically, the word *mersi*, originally an interjection proceeding from Fr. *merci*, acts in discursive situations either as a *marker of confirmation and agreement*, expressing the speaker's approval of the viewpoint of his/her interlocutor (and sometimes even a certain nuance of resignation), or, completely changing its polarity, disapproval and an affective nuance included in the semantic area of disappointment or even desolation.

Furthermore, the word *apropo* (with the variant *a propos*), an adverb borrowed from Fr. *à propos* in the 18th century, has recently acquired several metadiscursive functions operating as a *marker of digression* or a *topic shift marker* (see Ionescu and Popescu 2018), expressing the sudden transition from a topic to another, the introduction of a new topic, the temporary abandonment of a recently approached topic, etc. Moreover, these uses are accompanied by the interactional function of *topic orientation marker*, as *apropo* sometimes shows that the speaker calls the interlocutor's attention and tries to involve him/her in the act of speech.

Finally, Rom. *pardon* is another relevant example of how the meaning of lexical items is constructed in the communicative context. This interjection, originating from the homonymous French word, nowadays operates not only as a politeness formula the speaker uses when s/he wants to excuse himself/herself or to ask for permission, but also as a genuine *marker of non-paraphrastic reformulation*, as a *marker of disapproval and protest*, as a *topic orientation marker, a marker of request for information or of quality control regarding the reception of the message.*

2. A BRIEF STATE OF THE ART

2.1. The historical and cultural context: the French influence on Romanian language

At the end of the 18th century and especially starting 1820–1830, the Romanian society began a comprehensive and necessary process of modernisation that also covered the entire 19th century. In the quest for their own identity, Romanians become more conscious of their Latin origin and begin to adopt (spiritual, social, cultural) Western models, particularly French.

On a linguistic level, the (distant) contact between Romanian and French has resulted in the enrichment and modernisation, as well as the redefinition of the Neo-Latin "physiognomy" of Romanian, in the area of South-East European Romanity. This process of *re-romanisation* (Puşcariu 1931) led Romanian language to a comprehensive process of lexical renewal, which also started in the 18th century and has continued, more or less evidently, to our days. The insertion of French origin neologisms into the Romanian vocabulary occurred in the most varied areas of human activity. A favourable argument to this purpose is the extremely high number of French origin words that are still found nowadays in the Romanian vocabulary, that is about 39% (see Dincă and Popescu 2016: 152).

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2.2. The linguistic context: the classical paradigm of studies on linguistic borrowings

In traditional linguistics, *borrowings* (including French borrowings to Romanian) have been studied, most often, in terms of their etymology and the statistics of items that a target language has borrowed from another source language, as well as in terms of the particular semantic features of each word or the degree of phonetical or morphological adaptation of such lexical units in the recipient language.

Among borrowings from French to Romanian, a certain class of words stands out, known in the literature as *Francesisms*. They belong to the category of *peregrinisms* (Kocourek 1982: 133), that is, they are generally voyaging/migrating words, of an ephemeral or arbitrary nature, with a rather low spread, but which were highly popular at a certain time. They are classified as *luxury borrowings*, *i.e.* they are elements of jargon that have entered the recipient language under the influence of fashion and linguistic or sociocultural snobbism (Dincă and Popescu 2015: 31).

Initially, such words (generally, quite transparent) were borrowed to Romanian for a denominative reason, usually without any graphical or morphological adaptation, just because the speakers wanted to maintain "the local colour of the original language" (Dincă and Popescu 2015: 31).

The Romanian vocabulary includes three categories of Francesisms (Dimitrescu 1994: 228, Dincă and Popescu 2015: 33), *i.e.*: (i) Francesisms that have undergone a certain process of orthographical, phonetical and morphosyntactic integration in the linguistic system of Romanian and which have stylistic connotations ((Rom.) *butic* < (Fr.) *boutique,* (Rom.) *café-concert* < (Fr.) *café-concert,* (Rom.) *café-frappé* < (Fr.) *café-frappé,* (Rom.) *policier* < (Fr.) *policier,* (Rom.) *ambuteiaj* < (Fr.) *embouteillage*); (ii) Francesisms which are no longer used in contemporary language, *i.e.* academic words or even archaisms ((Rom.) *briant* < (Fr.) *brillant*; (Rom.) *cancanier* < (Fr.) *cancanier*; (Rom.) *perdant* < (Fr.) *perdant*, etc.) and (iii) Francesisms that were borrowed to Romanian through oral transmission, playing a very important semantic and pragmatic role on the discursive level of verbal interaction in contemporary Romanian, such as: (Rom.) *monşer* (< (Fr.) *mon cher*), (Rom.) *parol* (< (Fr.) *parole*), (Rom.) *papa* (< (Fr.) *papa*), (Rom.) *plezir* (< (Fr.) *plaisir*), (Rom.) *bonjur* (< (Fr.) *bonjour*), (Rom.) *mersi* (< (Fr.) *merci*), (Rom.) *apropo* (< (Fr.) *à propos*), (Rom.) *pardon* (< (Fr.) *pardon*), etc. It is precisely this short range of Francesisms that have undergone a process of semantic enrichment and have come to express various affective, attitudinal and pragmatic values, sometimes extremely subtle and difficult to grasp.

3. THE SEMANTIC RECONFIGURATION OF FRANCESISMS AND THE NEW METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1. Pragmatic lexicology and its avatars

Pragmatic lexicology is a completely new field of study (see Martin 2008), deriving from cognitive pragmatics (see for example Sperber and Wilson 1998), that aims at explaining the quantitative incongruity between the concepts (whose number is very high) and the encoded lexical items in each linguistic system (also see Costăchescu 2019: 63–79).

The major postulates of pragmatic lexicology are supported by the *theory of ad-hoc concepts*, which argues that, in certain discursive contexts, certain words/phrases are used

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differently from their primary encoding in the code they belong to, and this "occasional" meaning is closely linked to a certain context and a certain affective state of the speaker. Anyway, it derives from the primary concept by means of semantic extension or restriction (v. Costăchescu 2019: 63–79).

The same direction is also followed by *the theory of pragmatic borrowings* (see Mišić Ilić 2017: 103–115, Terkourafi 2011: 218–235), a novel methodological perspective that aims at studying borrowings "in context and in use, including motivational factors, perception and *post hoc* effects of the use" (Mišić Ilić 2017: 103). Such an approach will show that "once borrowed into recipient language, these terms lose much of their speech-act potential, functioning primarily to signpost locally relevant dimensions of variation, such as discourse-, gender-, class- or ethnicity-based variation" (Terkourafi 2011: 218).

3.2. Pragmatic markers

Another methodological perspective relevant for our approach is the *discursive and pragmatic analysis of pragmatic markers* (PMs). Usually, this concept covers a wide range of items or phrases ((Fr.) *mais, alors, donc*, *ben*, *voilà*, *en fait*, *voyons* (Engl.) *so, now, well, like, Ok, isn't it?*, etc.), with at least two common features: (a) they are non-referential invariable units; (b) they provide "directions" on how the discourse was drawn up and/or it should be interpreted (Bazzanella 1995: 225, Ghezzi and Molinelli 2014).

On balance, the most important distinctive morphological and syntactic traits of PMs accurately synthesized by Dostie and Pusch (2007: 3–4), are (i) their belonging to some minor classes (interjections, adverbs, conjunctions), that are morphologically invariable; (ii) the lack of significance to the propositional content of sentences; (iii) the independence at the prosodic level, being generally external to the sentence structure; (iv) the possibility to use them optionally in a sentence (*i.e.* their absence does not result in agrammaticality) and also in different positions; (v) their role beyond the sentence supporting the macro-syntax of the discourse.

4. THREE CASE STUDIES

4.1. The Romanian word *merci* is a Francesism from the French interjection *merci,* used (1) to show somebody that one gives thanks, that one appreciates the attitude, the behaviour they have towards them, that one accepts an offer that has been made, that one appreciates the offer, and (2) to ironically show somebody that one does not appreciate the attitude, the behaviour they have towards them. These two meanings are taken over in the Romanian language as well, where this lexical item remains highly frequent nowadays in terms of use, as a *marker of thanks*[2]*, of gratitude*, functioning on an equal basis (sometimes even with a higher prevalence) with the Romanian word *mulțumesc* (a condensed form of the anniversary wish *La mulți ani!* [(Lat.) "Ad multos annos!"] > *a mulțămi / a mulțumi*).

[2] "Le remerciement doit […] être envisagé comme une formule réactive, comme l'expression d'une gratitude verbale pour une action ou le résultat d'une action demandée: 'They occur in second position functioning as a means to convey a certain interpretation of the respective first-position element. […] Every sincere verbalization of gratitude is directed to some action (or actions) of a "benefactor" or to a result of this action' (Coulmas 1981: 73–74)". (Dumas 2003).

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There are numerous discursive situations when this word no longer refers to the action of giving thanks, but it operates as a marker of confirmation and approval, expressing, by emphasis, the speaker's agreement to the interlocutor's point of view (see 1, 2 and 3):

(1) – Bravos cognac! aşa zic şi eu... **Mersi**!... Trebuie să fie scump... (Archeus.ro)
'A great brandy! That's what I'm saying… **Of course!** It must be expensive… '

(2) A. – Doar nu eram eu prima prioritate din sector, ca să-mi dea Consiliul o locuință în blocurile ANL, când sunt atâtea cazuri sociale mai grave decât mine.
B. – Ce, tu nu eşti un caz social?
A. – Ba da, **mersi**, spuse ea sărutându-l pe obraz în timp ce-şi dezbrăca pardesiul.
B. – Atunci? (CoRoLa)
'A. – I was not the first priority in the district for the Council to provide me with a flat in the ANL buildings, when there are so many social cases more serious than me.
B. – What, aren't you a social case?
A. – Yes, **thanks**, she said kissing his cheek as she took off her coat.
B. – And then?'

(3) M. – Care va să zică, nu vrei să-mi spui?
L. – Nu.
M. – **Mersi**. (Archeus.ro)
'M. – So you don't want to tell me?
L. – No.
M. – **Thanks**.'

(4) Desigur, condiția e să rămân cu mintea de-acum. Dacă mă trezesc tot cu mintea de pe vremea aia, atunci... **mersi**, mai bine nu mă mai deranjez să cobor. Stau în maşina timpului şi aştept să treacă urgia. (CoRoLa)
'Of course, I would like to keep my current mind. If I wake up with the mind I had back then, well… **thanks**, I'd better not bother going down. I'll just stay in the time machine and wait for the disaster to be over.'

In (3), the analysed word is equivalent to the meaning of the agreement marker "OK" in contemporary Romanian. Moreover, the confirmation nuances expressed by *merci* specifically differ from one communication situation to another, since this argumentative movement can be related to various affective nuances (for instance, in (4), *merci* is equivalent to the assertion (Roum.) *asta e!* 'that's it!', expressing the speaker's total approval and some degree of resignation).

A very interesting feature of the discursive marker *merci* is that it can change its positive connotation and express a negative meaning that shows either a disagreement, when it is most frequently accompanied by the negation adverb *nu* 'no', as in (5), or simply an affective nuance from the semantic area of disappointment/desolation (in such contexts, *merci* becomes a synonym of (Rom.) *halal!; mai bine lipsă*! 'no way!' / 'come on!'):

(5) să te umilească cu banii lor, maşinile lor, grătarele lor care-ți bagă tot fumul în casă, nunțile, botezurile, din cauza cărora stai baricadat ca să nu surzeşti de la

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vreun Guță sau Salam. Nu, **mersi**, n-am cum să diger vreodată ce spui, n-am cum să fiu de-acord cu tine. Mă bucur că n-am făcut un copil pe care să-l chinuie o Românie tiganizata. Să trăieşti la fel de bine ca idolii tăi. (CoRoLa)
'to humiliate you with their money, their cars, their barbecues that fill your home with smoke, their weddings, their baptisms that keep you secluded in your house so that you don't lose your hearing because of Guță or Salam. No, **thanks**, I'll never be able to digest what you're saying, I cannot agree with you. I'm glad I didn't have a baby that would be tortured by a gypsified Romania. May you live as well as your idols.'

In such cases, *merci* may appear by itself or accompanied by other pro-sentences expressing agreement or disagreement, such as *ba da*, *da* 'yes', *nu* 'no', or by more transparent phrases (see (1), *aşa zic şi eu* 'that's what I'm saying'). Besides, it is quite mobile and it may be found at the beginning, end or middle of the sentence.

4.2. The Romanian word *apropo* (*apropo de*) (and its non-agglutinated variants *a propos* (*a propos de*) is an adverb borrowed in the 18th century (with the first attestation in 1799 – apud RDW, s.v. *apropo*) from the French word *à propos (de)*. The Romanian word has taken over only the meanings of its etymon as a propositional phrase ((i) "regarding / referring to" and (ii) "by the way"), and not its significances as an adverb/adjective phrase ((i) "in an opportune manner, in a suitable way", or (ii) "in an inopportune manner, with no reason") or as a noun phrase ((i) "characteristic of what has been named, opportunity", "opportune reaction" or even "opportune speech" and (ii) "a short theatre") (see TLFi, s.v. *à propos*).

Just like its etymon, the Romanian word *apropo* has the original capacity to refer to previous informational segments of the communicative context (an anaphoric capacity). Given this original value, it can express also the idea of correlation between two elements of a sentence and, recently, it has acquired the discursive value of marker of digression (see 6) and, more precisely, the value of topic-shift marker (Ionescu and Popescu 2018), expressing a wide range of pragmatic meanings, such as the sudden transition from a topic to another, the introduction of a new topic, the temporary abandonment of a recently approached topic, which reminds the speaker of something else, related to the previous topic or not. In this type of use, *apropo* is equivalent to (Rom.) *aşadar, păi*, *ah!, deci* 'so', 'well', 'ah!':

(6) Acest post despre pasiune a fost scris la provocarea Noului Renault Clio, "noua formă a pasiunii" (care, **apropo**, arată foarte mişto, mult mai mişto decât vechiul meu Renault Clio, de care mă leagă atâtea şi atâtea aventuri rutiere...). (CoRoLa)
'This post about passion was written in response to the challenge of the New Renault Clio, "the new form of passion" (which, **by the way**, looks really cool, much cooler than my old Renault Clio, which has been the witness of many and many road adventures…)'

(7) Are un cotidian, „Ziarul Lumina", postul de Radio „Trinitas", cu care a reuşit în ultimii ani să echilibreze spațiul mediatic. Şi **apropo** de modernizare. Biserica noastră este singura Biserică Ortodoxă din Europa, cred că şi din lume, cu un post de televiziune... (CoRoLa)
'It has a newspaper, "Ziarul Lumina", the "Trinitas" radio station, which helped it balance the media in the last years. And **speaking** of modernisation: our Church is

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the only Orthodox Church in Europe, and in the world I think, with its own TV station…'

(8) Thorache, întâmplător am dat de acest candid reprezentant al prieteniei între popoare. **Apropo**, văzuşi cum îl cheamă?
(https://www.garbo.ro/comunitate/forum/view_topic/8707/Cit-de-ridicol-e-ridicolul-pagina-16.html accessed August 2020)
'Thorache, I've casually come upon this candid representative of friendship between nations. **By the way**, have you seen his name?'

Furthermore, with this metatextual value[3], *apropo* is frequently accompanied by the interjection *(a)h*! or by the particle *păi*, and this accumulation of discursive markers is a specific trait of colloquial language, of spontaneous talks. However, sometimes this association configures and/or emphasizes the value of *apropo* as an echo marker, as it happens in (9) or, below, in (11):

(9) O formă clasică, mereu la modă şi care se potriveşte perfect tuturor formelor feţei. Acestea sunt caracteristicile principale ale modelului Mango. Dacă mai adaugi şi faptul că lentilele au protecţie UV400, o ramă solidă şi culorile cele mai în trend, lucrurile sunt clare: sunt ochelarii perfecţi pentru tine! Ah, şi **apropo de** claritate... ţi-am spus cât de fain vezi realitatea prin ei? (nerv.ro/ochelari-de-soare/2017051334-ochelari-de-soare-nerv-mango-black.html, accessed August 2020)
'A classical shape, always in fashion and perfectly suited to all face shapes. These are the main features of the Mango model. If you add the fact that the lenses have UV400 protection, a solid frame and the trendiest colours, things are clear: they are the perfect glasses for you! Ah, and **speaking of** clarity... have I told you how nice you can see reality through them?'

The metatextual functioning is not the only pragmatic value of the analysed word, since this item is a genuine topic orientation marker in some discursive contexts, as the speaker uses it to call the interlocutor's attention, to involve him/her in the communication act, as we can see below in (10a and b):

(10) a. … ceilalţi, între care mai mulţi tineri ofiţeri, în curent cu afacerea boicotului, privind-o cu admiraţie, îşi dedeau coate. Cucoana, foarte satisfacută, vrea să plece: – **A propo**, coniţă, sărut mâna: şampanie? Am ceva bun de tot; un Pommery extra, garantat. - Cum îl dai? întreabă cucoana, aruncând pe sub genele-i mai pudruite ... (Archeus.ro)
'the others, including several young officers informed of the boycott, looked at her admiringly and whispered to one another. The lady, very satisfied, wanted to leave: – **By the way**, Ma'am, excuse me: champagne? I have something really good; a great Pommery, mark my word. – How much? the lady asked, looking at him…'

[3] By *metatextual value* we understand that a discursive unit refers to the different kind of textual and/or discursive organization (see Bazzanella 1995: 226-257).

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b. Se apropie de mine şi, după ce examină atent strada, mă apucă intim de rever: – Ştii, dar **apropo**, unde te-ai muiat în halul ăsta? Uite ce multă apă rămâne în urma dumitale! (CoRoLa)
'He came near me and, after carefully examining the street, he grasped my collar: – You know, but **by the way**, where did you get so wet? Look at all this water!'

The anaphoricity, which is its core meaning, may be the factor determining the preference for the initial position in the sentence, although it can also appear at the end, both on an intradiscursive / interdiscursive level (see 11).

(11) E drept, avem printre noi personaje care nu sunt îmbrăcate ca de teatru, dar nu vând bilete la ocazie, ci acum împart pliante la concerte sau ziarul gratuit cu programul Festivalului Caragiale (care are loc săptămâna asta – intrare liberă, **apropo**) (CoRoLa)
'Indeed, there are some people among us who are not properly dressed for theatre, but they don't sell tickets, they just give out leaflets for concerts or the free newspaper with the programme of the Caragiale Festival (taking place this week – free entry, **by the way**)'

4.3. The Romanian word *pardon* (first attested in 1787, according to DLR) is an interjection originating from the homonymous French word *pardon*, which, as a noun, expresses (1) "the action of ignoring a fault, an offence, guilt, with absolutely no resentment", or had the meaning of (2) "indulgence", both of them taken over in the Romanian language. Also, as an interjection, the French etymon was used in politeness formulae in various circumstances (i) to present excuses; (ii) to ask someone to repeat something that has not been understood; (iii) to provide a correction, a contradiction or (iv) to forecast the interlocutor's astonishment or marking astonished admiration. Except the last meaning, for which the Romanian language uses the interjection *Vai*! 'Oh !', the borrowed word *pardon* has taken over all the other mentioned significances.

Nowadays, this lexical item expresses a politeness formula the speaker uses when s/he wants to excuse himself/herself for having disturbed or interrupted the speech of his/her interlocutor or to ask for permission to do something. This value, undoubtedly inherited from the original word, is seen in most occurrences of Rom. *pardon*, both in spoken and written language.

This lexeme also presents a wide range of semantic and pragmatic values, closely linked to the communicative context. Most frequently, *pardon* appears with the meaning of the negative pro-sentence *ba nu* 'oh no, this is not right', expressing the speaker's vehement protest against his/her interlocutor's way to speak and/or act (see 12). With this value, this lexical item is accompanied by a specific, grave and descending tonality and frequently appears in initial position, both on an intradiscursive / interdiscursive level.

(12) a. Vă rog să mă iertați! A, nu, **pardon**! Asta e ingratitudine! (DLRLC)
'Please forgive me! Oh, no, **excuse me**! This is ingratitude!'
b. [A:] Tu n-asculți! îl surprinse Alexandru Vardaru.// [B:] – **Pardon**! Ascult. De ce să n-ascult? (DLRLC)

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'[A:] You're not listening! Alexandru Vardaru surprised him. // [B:] – **Excuse me!** I am listening. Why shouldn't I be listening?'

c. A. Unde-i sirena cu trandafir şi cu Zamfirescu? De ce nu i-ați păzit? M-ați băut toată noaptea, mama... // B. – **Pardon**, **pardon**, dom' Bucă! Nu-ți permit să mă jignești! mârâi Trache ofuscat. (CoRoLA)
'A. Where's the mermaid with the rose and Zamfirescu? Why didn't you guard them? You've been drinking all night, damn it… // B. – **Sorry, sorry**, mister Buca! I won't allow you to offend me! Trache grunted unhappy.'

In some discursive situations, *pardon* acts as a genuine *marker of non-paraphrastic reformulation*[4], used by the speaker in order to rephrase information that has already been expressed. In such contexts, *pardon* is equivalent to (Rom.) *adică*, *mai bine zis*, 'that is, in other words' (see 13 below); most often, it is placed in the middle of the sentence, but it can also appear at the end and it should be pronounced briefly, punctually, not very strong.

(13) a. Bree, da' nu te credeam aşa prost; **pardon**, voiam să zic şiret. (DLRLC)
'I didn't think you were so stupid; **sorry**, so cunning I meant.'

b. [...] am să încep... cu începutul, motivat de întrebarea, sau **pardon**, întrebările: Cine sunt Izvoarele codrene?" (CoRoLa)
'[…] I'll start… with the beginning, motivated by the question, or **excuse me**, questions: What are Izvoarele codrene?'

The phatic value of *topic orientation or control marker* is also present in some discursive contexts where *pardon* appears with an ascending, interrogative intonation, as in (14) below. In this case, it is equivalent to (Rom.) *Hei!, Alo!*, *Ia te uită !* 'Hey! Look!' or to (Rom.) *Ce? Ce-ai spus?* 'What? What did you say?' (see (15)), and is most often accompanied by gesture (with the hand(s)) or by an interrogative look.

(14) – Alo?
– Bună, iubito!
– **Pardon**? Cred ca ați greşit.
– Nu, nu. Sunt destul de sigur ca pe tine voiam să te sun. E tarziu şi ar fi bine să te culci!
– La revedere! (https://www.wattpad.com/story/85579542-apel-la-00-00 accessed September 2020)
'– Hello?
– Hi, darling!
– **Excuse me**? I think you have the wrong number.
– No, no. I'm pretty sure it's you I wanted to call. It's late and you should go to bed!
– Goodbye!'

[4] The *non-paraphrastic reformulation* expresses a certain degree of semantic and pragmatic distance between the equivalence of two connected utterances (see also Popescu 2018: 359).

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(15) Mai departe nu ştiu ce s-a întâmplat cu el, ştiu doar că s-a însurat şi ştiu că stă în continuare prin zonă. Deci, **pardon**? Asta unu la mână. Doi la mână,... (CoRoLa)
'I don't know what happened to him afterwards, I only know that he got married and he still lives in the area. So **excuse me**? That's one thing. Secondly…'

In (16), *pardon* fulfils a *metadiscursive function*, since its argumentative role is to continue and develop the communicative exchange, also expressing a certain rectification of previous sentences:

(16) Nu se poate să-i faci aşa ceva, la cea mai frumoasă sărbătoare a ei! (Naşul voia să o urce pe mireasă într-un copac, n. n., ED). Oricum e destul de necăjită... pentru ce s-o expunem, că e, **pardon**, pe poziție. Are burtica mare. Şi pe urmă... până aici mă amuzai şi eu, însă... Du-te mata şi te culcă, dacă te-a ajuns băutura... Până la urmă a fost o nuntă frumoasă, zău aşa. De ce vrei să strici totul? (CoRoLa)
'You can't do this to her, on her most important day! (The godfather planned to get the bride up a tree, our note, ED). Anyway, she's pretty sad... why should we expose her for being, **I beg your pardon**, in position. She has a big belly. And then... it's been fun so far, but... You go get some sleep if you've been drinking too much... After all, it's been a nice wedding, trust me. Why would you ruin everything?'

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In our approach we have attempted at emphasizing, in the first place, the evolutive dynamics established within a linguistic system, as well as the constantly reinvented perspective whereby these language processes/phenomena must be seen and analysed.

From this point of view, the French influence has been and still is nowadays an unexhausted source for the renewal of Romanian, for linguistic reanalysis and reinterpretation.

It has been shown so far that the creativity of Romanian language, on the one hand, and the speakers' need to codify several concepts (ideas), on the other hand, determine more often than not a phenomenon of pragmatic re-semantization of certain lexical items, already stylistically marked given their form and/or origin.

This also means that the linguistic system uses structures expressing more or less explicit or more or less procedural meanings, transposing the higher or lower degree of pragmaticalization/grammaticalization of the concerned phrases, as well as the diverse capacity of each language to accomplish encoding and abstractization.

Pragmatic markers represent structures that undoubtedly codify ad-hoc/momentaneous concepts.

Regarding the Francesisms *merci*, *apropo* and *pardon*, originally adverbs or interjections, they have a parallel evolution with that of the corresponding units in the source language, functioning as genuine PMs in contemporary Romanian. As we have seen, they are confirmation and agreement markers, topic shift markers, reformulation markers, topic orientation or control markers, etc.

Finally, this approach could be useful for the accuracy of Romanian lexicographical descriptions, as well as for (teaching-oriented) exploitation in translation studies.

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DICTIONARIES AND CORPORA

Archeus.ro = *Linguistic resources for Romanian language*, http://www.archeus.ro/lingvistica/CautareTextWikisource?query=MERSI&pageNo=1

CoRoLa = *Computer-based corpus of reference for contemporary Romanian language*, http://corola.racai.ro/

DLR = *Dicționarul limbii române. Serie nouă*, 2010 [1958–2009], Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

DLRLC = Macrea, D., E. Petrovici (coord.), Al. Rosetti et al. (authors), 1955–1957, *Dicționarul limbii române literare contemporane*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

DLRM = *Dicționarul limbii române moderne*, 1958, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române.

RDW = Tiktin, H., P. Miron, 1986–1989, *Rumänisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz.

TLFi = Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Analyse et Traitement Informatique de la Langue Française, *Trésor de la Langue Française Informatisé*, (ATILF) /Université Nancy 2, http://atilf.atilf.fr/tlf.htm.

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