THE ROMANIAN DISCOURSE MARKERS *DE ALTFEL* AND *DE ALTMINTERI*. PATTERNS OF USE AND CORE FUNCTIONS

ARIADNA ŞTEFĂNESCU[1], SORINA POSTOLEA[2], VERGINICA BARBU MITITELU[3]

Abstract. The present paper sheds more light on the functioning and main features of a Romanian couple of synonymous discourse markers, *de altfel* and *de altminteri* ('as a matter of fact, in fact, indeed'). Based on the annotation of a corpus of 150 sample sentences and an in-depth qualitative analysis, our study discusses their core patterns of use and shows that they have specialised in signalling the discourse coherence relation of *Specification*, most often in the *rhetorical* domain (Crible and Degand 2019). Moreover, according to our findings, in all their uses, the markers indicate the Speaker's epistemic stance on what is being said, and this highlights their versatile and at the same time fuzzy pragma-grammatical nature as discourse markers and pragmatic particles of stance.

Keywords: discourse markers, Romanian, *de altfel/de altminteri*, discourse domain, discourse function, stance

1. INTRODUCTION

A discourse marker (DM) is a linguistic element that signals a discourse coherence relation defined as "an aspect of meaning of two or more discourse segments that cannot be described in terms of the meaning of the segments in isolation" (Sanders *et al.* 1992: 2). The discourse variation characterising the use of a DM is not unlimited, but displays some frequent recurrences, which shape and form various patterns. Analysing these more or less similar patterns of use helps in the description of a DM's procedural profile and in defining its *core procedural meaning* which, in turn, supports its classification from an evidence-based, less intuitive perspective. Ideally, each prototypical discourse variation pattern of a DM is likely to encompass a *procedural algorithm*, *i.e.* a stable combination of that DM's procedural parameters in agreement with the Speaker's (S) or Writer's (W) discourse resources, intentions and strategies, as well as with other pragma-discursive aspects.

The aim of our paper is to present and discuss the most frequent discourse variation patterns of two DMs, *de altfel* and *de altminteri* ('as a matter of fact, in fact, indeed'[4]),

[1] University of Bucharest, ariadna.stefanescu@litere.unibuc.ro.
[2] Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iaşi, sorina.postolea@uaic.ro.
[3] Romanian Academy Research Institute for Artificial Intelligence, vergi@racai.ro.

[4] There is no direct equivalent of *de altfel/de altminteri* in English. This is an empirical proof of their multifunctionality. Here and in the translation of our examples we provide the closest matches.

RRL, **LXV**, *3*, p. 307–322, Bucureşti, 2020

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

which have similar forms but different etymologies (see 3.1.) and are perfect pragma-grammatical synonyms in current standard Romanian. [5] Our study combined two methodological approaches: a) the annotation of 150 sample contexts containing the two DMs extracted from the written component of CoRoLa (Barbu Mititelu *et al*. 2018), using the annotation framework proposed by Crible and Degand (2019); b) an in-depth qualitative analysis of these contexts, which aimed to highlight the most frequent discourse resources and illocutionary forces present in the preceding discourse segment that works as a nucleus (S1) and in the segment containing the DM, *i.e.* the host segment (S2), and even in their larger co-text.

Section 2 presents the methodological approach adopted in our analysis, the structure of our corpus, and the theoretical premises supporting our qualitative analysis. Section 3 is devoted to a brief presentation of the etymology and overall use of *de altfel* and *de altminteri* in standard Romanian and to a discussion of our annotation results. The three main patterns of use, the core features, and the peculiarities of the two DMs are detailed in Section 4. The last section presents our conclusions, which highlight the multifunctional nature of *de altfel*, as well as some suggestions for further work.

2. WORKING METHODOLOGY

2.1. Corpus

The present study is based on the annotation and analysis of 150 sample contexts containing the two DMs extracted from CoRoLa: 71 contexts encompass *de altminteri*, and 79 use *de altfel*.

2.2. Annotation framework

A new framework for annotating DMs was recently proposed by Crible and Degand (2019). Having as a novelty the "two-dimensional account of DM polyfunctionality" (2019: 4), this scheme requires annotators to assign to each DM both a domain and a function and is meant to be applicable to written and spoken language alike, as well as to be highly reliable, in spite of the inherent subjectivity of the task. The motivation behind this new framework lies in the polyfunctionality of DMs in language: "the model aims at accounting for the meaning and function of the DMs, as well as for the speaker's communicative intention when using them" (2019: 10). If the former is accounted for by the functions proposed, the latter is captured by the domains, whereas the (theoretically possible) combination between any function and any domain illustrates the multiple functions that a DM may have in actual use. The framework defines a set of 15 functions [6] and four discourse domains (2019: 11–12): *ideational* (IDE) (corresponding to the "states of affairs in the world"), *rhetorical* (RHE) (related to the "speaker's meta-comments on the on-going

[5] Because of its shorter form, in this paper we will only use *de altfel* to refer to both forms.

[6] These are *Addition*, *Alternative*, *Cause*, *Concession*, *Condition*, *Consequence*, *Contrast*, *Hedging*, *Monitoring*, *Specification*, *Temporal*, *Agreeing*, *Disagreeing*, *Topic*, *Quoting* (Crible and Degand 2019: 12–13).

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

speech"), *sequential* (SEQ) (reflecting "the structuring of local and global discourse segments") and *interpersonal* (INT) ("linked to the interactive management of the exchange and the speaker-hearer relationship").

2.3. Annotators and the annotation process

The three authors, who are all trained linguists, assigned a domain and a function to each of the 150 sample contexts of use. They worked independently from each other, merely discussing together some problematic cases, for which the decision regarding the annotation was also made individually. Thus, inter-annotator agreement could also be calculated. The annotators assigned only one domain and only one function to each occurrence, so the cases of annotation disagreement could also be interpreted as ambiguous.

2.4. Parameters of formal and procedural analysis

Besides the annotation process described above, the 150 examples were also analysed according to more qualitative criteria, which helped us identify and classify the DM's discourse patterns in the annotated corpus. These surface characteristics – which we took into account in order to formally classify the patterns of discourse variation – were the following:

(i) conceptual independence (Hoek *et al.* 2017);
(ii) the host segment's intonational isolation, marked in writing by dashes, brackets, or commas;
(iii) the DM's presence in the vicinity of other text connectors.

3. GENERAL FEATURES AND ANNOTATION RESULTS

3.1. Etymology and current use

The DMs *de altfel* and *de altminteri* were created from the adverbs *altfel* and *altminteri*, respectively. The form *altminteri* was inherited from Latin. However, its origin is not certain: it was either Lat. *alius, -a, -um* + *mentem* or the contamination between Lat. *alia mente* and *altera mente* 'other mind'. *Altfel* is a Romanian compound adverb obtained from *alt* 'another' (inherited from the Lat. *alter*/*alterum*/*altrum*) and *fel* 'way' (a Hungarian borrowing), thus being newer than *altminteri* and less frequent in written texts until the late 18th century. *De altminteri* is attested in the oldest Romanian texts, but this phrase is attested later in language than the adverb *altminteri* (Ştefănescu 2019). Even newer is the locution *de altfel*, created after the syntactic model offered by *de altminteri* in the late 19th century (DA).

In standard contemporary Romanian, *de altfel* and *de altminteri* are still in competition, but there is a clear imbalance between the two forms. The former is 22 times more frequent than the latter both in the written and the oral components of CoRoLa. *Table 1* shows their frequencies (calculated per 10,000 tokens) in the different genres of CoRoLa and the prevalence of *de altfel* in texts from the memoirs genre, and of *de altminteri* in

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

journalistic texts. The spoken fragments are also characterized by a high frequency of *de altfel*, whereas *de altminteri* is hardly used in Romanian standard speech language because it has started to be associated with the stylistic value of "rare", or even "old".

Table 1.

Frequency of *de altfel* and *de altminteri* in the text genres from CoRoLa

DM	Written texts*							Oral texts
	IMA	MEM	JOU	BLOG	SCI	LAW	ADM	
de altfel	0.511	**0.788**	0.744	0.366	0.569	0.027	0.283	0.76
de altminteri	0.036	0.047	**0.057**	0.006	0.018	0.0001	0.012	0.03

*The genres of written texts in CoRoLa are: *Imaginative* (IMA), *Memoirs* (MEM), *Journalistic* (JOU), *BlogPost* (BLOG), *Scientific* (SCI), *Law* (LAW), and *Administrative* (ADM).

3.2. Annotation results

3.2.1. *Individual and average data*

The annotations made by each member of the team suggest that *de altfel* is rather versatile as far as the domains are concerned, but oscillates between two main functions, *i.e. Addition* (ADD) and *Specification* (SPE).

Table 2.

Individual annotation results per functions and domains

Domain	Function	Annotator 1			Annotator 2			Annotator 3		
		Count	%	Total domain %	Count	%	Total domain %	Count	%	Total domain %
IDE	ADD	2	1.3	**26.7**	6	4	**32.7**	14	9.4	**43.4**
	SPE	34	22.7		43	28.7		49	32.7	
	Other	4	2.7		0	0		2	1.3	
RHE	ADD	0	0	**46**	11	7.3	**38.6**	5	3.4	**28**
	SPE	61	40.7		44	29.3		36	24	
	Other	8	5.3		3	2		1	0.6	
SEQ	ADD	0	0	**24.7**	8	5.3	**26.7**	0	0	**28**
	SPE	37	24.7		32	21.4		42	28	
	Other	0	0		0	0		0	0	
INT	SPE	3	2	**2.6**	0	0	**2**	0	0	**0.6**
	MNT	1	0.6		3	2		1	0.6	
Total		150	100		150	100		150	100	

However, the picture becomes clearer when the average annotation results are analysed (*Table 3* below). In our sample corpus of written texts, the DM is rarely used in

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

the *interpersonal* domain – 1.8% of cases, showing a clear preference for the function of SPE (84.7%). Overall, it is mostly used in the *rhetorical* domain, closely followed by the *ideational*, and, less frequently, the *sequential* domains.

Table 3.

Average annotation results per functions and domains

Function / Domain	**IDE %**	**RHE %**	**SEQ %**	**INT %**	**Total function %**
ADD	4.9	3.6	1.8	0	**10.3**
SPE	28	31.3	24.7	0.7	**84.7**
MNT	0	0	0	1.1	**1.1**
Other	1.3	2.6	0	0	**3.9**
Total domain	**34.2**	**37.5**	**26.5**	**1.8**	100 / 100

The functions labelled as *Other* in the tables were *Cause, Concession* and *Contrast*, but they appear in a limited number of examples that were also cases of disagreement between annotators (see 3.2.2.). The function of *Monitoring* (MNT) in the INT domain was thought to apply to a few sequences of written dialogue.

3.2.2. *Inter-annotator agreement*

Inter-annotator agreement scores show that in only 28% of cases there was complete agreement among the three annotators, *i.e.* they assigned the same domain and the same function to the sample sentence. These cases of agreement are distributed into domains and functions as follows: 19 examples are annotated with the domain IDE and the function SPE; 14 examples – domain: RHE, function: SPE; 8 examples – domain SEQ, function: SPE; 1 example – domain INT, function: MNT.

Considering only the annotated domain, irrespective of the function assigned, we notice a higher agreement among annotators, 39%, which reflects the following annotations: 25 occurrences were assigned the domain IDE, 22 – RHE, 11 – SEQ, 1 – INT. Slightly lower is the agreement with respect to the function – *i.e.* when we ignore the annotated domain, 37%, distributed as follows: 55 occurrences were assigned the function SPE by all annotators and one occurrence the function ADD. The most frequent three domain confusions when the SPE function was chosen were:

RHE (selected by 2 annotators) – SEQ (selected by 1 annotator) – 13 cases,

IDE (selected by 2 annotators) – RHE (selected by 1 annotator) – 11 cases,

IDE (selected by 1) – RHE (selected by 1) – SEQ (selected by 1) – 10 cases.

The annotation results show that for a fifth of the occurrences, annotators found it difficult to distinguish between two functions (SPE and ADD): in 25 cases, two annotators assigned the former, and the other one assigned the latter function and in 7 other cases, two assigned the latter, and the third assigned the former. In all these 32 cases, when two annotators assign the same function, the domain may or may not coincide; the domain assigned by the third annotator may coincide with one of the domains assigned by the others or it may be a different one.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

Therefore, the results of our annotation experiment allow us to draw conclusions related to both the framework proposed by Crible and Degand (2019) and the specific nature of our DM of interest. On the one hand, it seems that when dealing with written Romanian texts and the DM *de altfel* it is not always easy to distinguish between the RHE and the SEQ domains or between the functions of SPE and ADD (both were major sources of disagreement in our case). The RHE domain "is linked to the speaker's meta-comments on the on-going speech and also includes relations between epistemic or speech-act events", referring to subjective relations and always including the Speaker's attitude or reasoning, whereas the SEQ domain "is linked to the structuring of local and global discourse segments such as topics and turns" (Crible and Degand 2019: 12). The functions of ADD and SPE in the RHE domain are described as "argumentative addition or emphatic effect" (2019: 25) and "addition of a detail which is subjectively appreciated by the speaker" (2019: 27), respectively. Moreover, ADD in the SEQ domain is defined as "continuity, mere linkage of utterances: the discourse continues with no added meaning" (2019: 25), whereas SPE in the same domain is "addition of a detail or comment which is presented as a parenthetical aside, withdrawn from the linear structure of the discourse (2019: 27). Most cases of disagreement involved sentences in which (as shown below) *de altfel* is used to introduce a segment seen as a side-comment or "a parenthetical aside" (being separated from the co-text by commas or other punctuation marks – which would make it a candidate for the SEQ domain) but containing "a subjective evaluation" or a "meta-comment on the ongoing speech-act" (which would make it a candidate for the RHE domain). The same goes for the distinction between ADD and SPE in the RHE domain, for instance, since it was not always easy to distinguish between "argumentative addition" (ADD) – which may include, in fact, a subjective evaluation – and the "addition of a detail which is subjectively appreciated by the speaker" (SPE). These results also highlight the fuzzy nature (Cuenca 2013) of *de altfel* and its status as a rather weak DM, as one can see from the analysis below.

4. DISCOURSE PATTERNS OF *DE ALTFEL*

The annotation process described above allowed us to shed more light on the way in which *de altfel* operates in actual discourse, its main functions and features, as well as its main patterns of use (see 4.2. to 4.4. below)[7].

The formal aspects standing out in the use of *de altfel* are the following:

(i) it is predominantly used in assertive monologic contexts and, with few exceptions, S2, the host segment, is placed after S1, the nucleus;
(ii) it has a free position in S2;
(iii) it tends to be intonationally isolated by pauses and to have a specific intonational profile (ascending-descending, with the stress on the first syllable);
(iv) it can combine with any other type of syntactic connector (*i.e.* additive, contrastive, causal, concessive, etc. connectives, relative and interrogative pronouns, sentence adverbials, etc.);
(v) it is completely de-lexicalised, unlike its etymological relative, the adverb *altfel*.

[7] For reasons of space we cannot discuss here all the discourse variation patterns of *de altfel* in Romanian, but only the most frequent in our data set. All the examples given are taken from CoRoLa.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

The general procedural aspects relative to the use of *de altfel* highlighted by our qualitative analysis are the following:

(vi) most often, the discourse function signalled by *de altfel* is SPE (followed by ADD) in the RHE domain (followed by IDE and SEQ) (Crible and Degand 2019);

(vii) the DM places the propositional content found within its scope in the discourse background;

(viii) the differences in the degree of assertiveness between S1 and S2 materialise in a specific array of discourse cues that emphasize the S's/W's strong presence in S1. As shown below, our analysis also included the manual tracking of contextual indicators which attest to a varying degree of assertiveness at the level of S2 and of the co-textual 'neighbours' of S1 and S2;

(ix) the DM is an indicator of the S's/W's *local stance*;

(x) the DM is used in the context of high semantic continuity between the two discourse segments it links, a continuity which is often maintained through discourse anaphora.

4.1. The procedural parameter of the second-rank discourse level

The DM *de altfel* has the capacity of placing S2 on a different discourse level than S1. The notion of *discourse level* is not identical to that of *discourse domain* as defined by Crible and Degand (2019), who focus on the relation between functions and domains. Our analysis takes into account the notion of *level* based on the distinction between *discourse foreground* and *discourse background*, which is shaped by the combined action of all the discourse cues and instances present in the sequence under analysis that work together in order to fulfil a certain strategic goal. This goal may be signalling, for instance, a certain contract with the Hearer (H) or Reader (R), or the fact that the S/W is building or presenting a certain self-image. In our corpus, the most frequent arrangement is that in which the information in S1 is placed in the discourse foreground while that in S2 is allotted a second rank in the discourse background. In other words, the propositional content in S1 is usually informative and has the illocutionary force of an opinion and/or value judgement that the S/W thinks to be new, true, valid, and relevant for the H/R. On the other hand, the propositional content in S2 is a second-rank piece of information, usually a **collateral comment**, a post-expansion to an opinion, as in (1), or even the uttering of a contextual presupposition, as in (2):

(1) Şi totuşi, ca să rămânem numai în perimetrul românesc postbelic, de la Ion Pop la Matei Călinescu, nu puțini sunt criticii importanți care i-au dedicat analize sobre şi profunde. *Aceasta e,* ***de altminteri****, linia savantă pentru care Paul Cernat optează fără ezitări*[8].

'And nevertheless, to remain only in the Romanian post-war area, from Ion Pop to Matei Călinescu, the important critics who devoted sobre and profound analyses to him are not few. *This is,* ***as a matter of fact****, the scholarly line for which Paul Cernat opts with no hesitation.*'

[8] In all examples, S2 is written in italics and the DM highlighted in bold.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

(2) Autoturismele vor fi dezinfectate după fiecare familie transportată – *cum* ***de altfel*** *au fost curăţate şi dezinfectate şi în trecut*.

'Passenger cars will be disinfected after each family transported – *such as,* ***in fact****, they were cleaned and disinfected in the past as well.*'

4.1.1. *Contextual cues augmenting or diminishing assertiveness*

The S/W's presence and the degree of assertiveness in an utterance are linked by a relationship of interdependence. Usually, the fragments in which *de altfel* is used include sets of discourse cues that signal, directly or indirectly, the S/W's presence. It is mainly S1, and the entire sequence as well – *i.e.* S1's previous and S2's subsequent co-text –, that usually includes discourse elements (lexical, morpho-syntactic, illocutionary, ortographic items) and discourse features (thematisations, polyphony etc.) which heighten the degree of assertiveness and are specific to S/W's strong commitment to the truth of the propositional content. This phenomenon is in sharp contrast with the S/W's effacement from the utterance (Angenot 1995: 69–93) or the use of resources signalling a S/W who diminishes their assertiveness. We will only mention here a few types of cues from the rich inventory we found in our corpus. Thus, S1 in particular may include propositions about the S/W's self (*Personal căutam să-mi explic şi atunci…* 'Personally, I was trying to find an explanation even then…'), various opinion hedges (*după cum spuneam...* 'as I was saying…', *în două vorbe...* 'in a couple of words…', *mai precis* 'more precisely', *ca să dăm un exemplu plauzibil…* 'to give a plausible example…' etc.), an opinion which may be shared with the interlocutor (*Chiar, uite, asta e o idee bună să…* 'Yes, look, it is a good idea to…'), performative openings (*Refuz să…* 'I refuse to…') or closings that attenuate the truth of what has been said before (*De altminteri nu se mai poate apăra şi nu ştim dacă ar avea vreun sens* 'In fact he can no longer defend himself and we don't know if it'd make any sense'), descriptions of one's own attitude (*Râdeam de frumoasele mele fraze* 'I was laughing at my own beautiful sentences'), subjective word order, modalisations, thematisations, emphasis, even pathos, numerous evaluations, exclamations, doxastic assertions and constructions meant to hierarchise the information (*e.g.* the construction *mai degrabă x decât y* 'rather x than y'), etc. In all this array of discourse resources, *de altfel* is itself a discourse cue that attenuates assertiveness.

The presence of the S/W is a discourse factor specific to an assertive rhetoric that works with various degrees of assertiveness to produce strategies meant to "pack" the propositional content as an assertion that is important in the communicative event, as less important, as a presupposition, as a type of content that was not previously planned by S/W, etc.

4.1.2. *Types of semantic continuity between the two segments*

Between S1 and *de altfel* S2 there is great ideational continuity[9], shaped, from case to case, through various anaphoras:

[9] The term *ideational* is used here with its wider meaning defined by Halliday (1996) or Martin and Rose (2007) and other authors dealing with functional analysis.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

(3) A avea totul, oricând, sursa cea mai fidelă a cumpătării, dacă nu chiar şi a silei. *Aceasta, **de altminteri**, putea fi cultivată încă mai din timp, din lunga perioadă a magazinelor pustii*.
'To have anything, at any time, the most faithful source of restraint, if not disgust as well. *This, **in fact**, could have been cultivated even earlier, from the long period of empty stores.*';

through lexical reprises and topic continuity:

(4) Panait Istrati e într-o nebănuită măsură un scriitor al specificului românesc*, fiindcă **de altfel** orice scriitor mare fiind trebuie să fie naţional*;
'Panait Istrati is, to an unthinkable extent, a writer of Romanian specificity, *because, **as a matter of fact**, any great writer should also be national*';

(5) De aceea, autorul are mai multă încredere în teologi decît în filosofi*, pe care **de altminteri** îi citeşte doar spre a-şi confirma intuiţia că oricine pune sistem în gânduri nu reuşeşte decât să le altereze*.
'This is why the author trusts theologians more than philosophers, *whom*, ***as a matter of fact**, he reads only to confirm his intuition that anyone who adds a system to thoughts only manages to alter them*'.

4.1.3. *The S/W's stance and face*

A certain amount of intersubjectivity with the H/R is the result of the S/W's *stance* being added to the utterance. The presence of s*tance* is another procedural feature specific to the use of *de altfel*.

As shown by Du Bois (2007), the notion of *stance-taking* is an emerging phenomenon (alongside politeness) which operates, together with the concept of *face*, in some of the newest discourse-related theories. *Stance* is signalled by various linguistic and prosodic cues, as well as by contextual, social, cultural etc. data that are relevant for a given sentence/ utterance. The discourse resources indicating the S/W's presence, such as the strategic use of direct speech, personal deictics, (*e.g. we* for *I*), etc., also contribute to the shaping of *stance* at the level of the utterance. We advance here the idea that, besides being a DM specialising in signalling a certain discourse function, *de altfel* is also a pragmatic particle of *epistemic stance* (Conrad and Biber 2000) with a role in expressing politeness (Landone 2012).

In emic terms, the phrase *de altfel* signals that the S/W takes the following standpoint on what is being said: s/he shows that the information delivered in S2 is less important than that in S1, that it is a (meta)comment, a remark, a detail, a thought that came unexpectedly to her/his mind and that, from case to case, s/he mentions confidently, but in passing, casually, ironically, or with detachment. We may say that the S/W's general positioning is that of a *competent speaker*, as s/he creates the self-image of a knowledgeable locutor[10], who does not, however, make a big deal of her/his knowledge.

[10] A collateral proof in this respect is the affinity that argumentative, academic, journalistic, and memorialistic types of discourse show with this DM (see *Table 1*).

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

Goffman (1979) shows that the S/W is the participant who decides on the production format of an utterance. He also mentions that the S/W may take on three communicative roles: *principal, animator* and *author*. The S/W may simultaneously play all the three roles, which coexist, but there are utterances in which the S/W embraces one role more than the others. In our case, if we transfer these theoretical tenets to the discourse sequences in our corpus, we may say that here the S/W plays the role of an *author* who expresses an opinion in S1 to which s/he then adds, in S2, a small detail, an allusion, sometimes malicious, as in (6):

(6) Fostul ambasador sovietic la Paris, Suritz, a trecut prin Bucureşti, în drum spre Moscova. [...] O misiune specială la noi n-a avut, căci n-a luat contact cu nimeni [...]. *Pare* ***de altminteri*** *că dl Suritz e în dizgraţie şi nu e exclus să facă cunoştinţă cu pivniţele GPU-ului...*
'The former Soviet ambassador to Paris, Suritz, passed through Bucharest on his way to Moscow. […] He had no special mission here, because he did not contact anyone […]. *It seems,* ***indeed****, that Mr Suritz has fallen from grace and it is not unlikely that he will soon get acquainted with the GPU's caves…*'.

Goffman describes the role of *author* in relation to the other two roles, and individually, as "Sometimes one has in mind that there is an author of the words that are heard, that is, someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded" (1979: 17). Intersubjectivity with the H/R starts from this type of positioning, in which the S/W is an *author* who identifies her/his interlocutor by intercomprehension, through the capacity of understanding details and, sometimes, his/her academic rhetoric, often sharing with the H/R a certain amount of common knowledge:

(7) Publică totodată un aproape scandalos, pentru mentalitatea vremii, proiect de *Istorie a literaturii române*, în principiu o replică la *Istoria literaturii române* de la origini până în prezent a lui G. Călinescu. ***De altminteri****, articolele şi cărţile publicate acum cuprind în mare parte fragmente ale viitoarei Istorii.*
'He also publishes an almost scandalous, for that time's mentality, project of a *History of Romanian Literature*, in principle, a reply to *History of Romanian Literature* by G. Călinescu. ***As a matter of fact****, the articles and books published so far encompass to a great extent fragments of that future* History.'.

4.2. The discourse pattern in which S2 is syntactically independent

Within this discourse variation pattern, the DM *de altfel* introduces, as a rule, an S2 that takes the form of a sentence or clause whose function is that of SPE in the RHE domain (see 3.2. above). In writing, S2 usually follows a full stop and the DM is capitalised, *e.g.* (7) above. The argumentative nature of the assertions in the two segments is different.

The nucleus is usually an opinion and/or a value judgement expressed by S/W. Due to its nature as an opinion, S1 has a high degree of assertiveness, because it involves the

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

fact that the S/W is sure of the truth of what is being said.[11] The satellite segment appears in discourse as the post-expansion of an opinion (Schegloff 2007: 115–118), it works as a discourse expansion that does not enrich the referential, narrative, denotative, concrete information in S1 – when the opinion in S1 has these features – but its evaluating information and attitudinal values. S2 may elaborate on, generalize, make more abstract (as in the example below) the content in S1 – to list only a few of the rhetorical effects of the discourse satellite:

(8) T. scrie o poezie discretă, conținând adesea un sens moral, exprimat limpede. ***De altminteri****, claritatea se dovedeşte a fi calitatea cea mai prețuită de poet.*
'T. writes a discrete type of poetry, which often contains a moral meaning, clearly expressed. ***As a matter of fact****, clarity proves to be the quality that the poet prizes the most*.'

The difference in the degree of assertiveness and discourse level between the two segments connected by *de altfel* depends on the nature of the assertive illocutionary forces present in the two segments. Opinion, which has been less studied by speech act theorists, has a higher degree of assertiveness by its realisation conditions themselves (Aijmer 1997, Ştefănescu 2013); it is an ideational content previously elaborated on and documented by the S/W, who is sure of the truth of what is being asserted. As a speech act, an opinion is a strong cue of the speaker's presence in discourse. S2 has a lower degree of assertiveness, it has the illocutionary status of a post-expansion to an opinion, and the DM works as an *illocutionary force attenuator.* We may notice, for example, that if the DM is omitted from (8), the assertive intensity of S2 is amplified, the propositional content of this segment is no longer felt as a backstage assumption, unplanned by the S/W, or, in emic terms, as an *afterthought* that might have crossed her/his mind at the moment of speaking itself. Unlike the assumption placed at a second-rank discourse level, the act of expressing an opinion is situated in the foreground, since it is the result of a process of reflection, of a more or less lengthy cognitive process. Assigning different assertiveness levels to two segments that are connected in discourse is, after all, the strategy of a knowledgeable speaker.

The attenuation of assertiveness appears under the circumstances of semantic continuity between the two segments (see 4.1.2.). In (8), the idea of *clearly expressed moral meaning* in S1 is included, continued and generalised by the metaphor *clarity* from S2.

Summarising what has been said here, the discourse pattern in which [*de altfel* S2] is a post-expansion to an opinion (in S1) has the following features:

(i) S1 is a foreground assertion, with a high degree of assertiveness (the S/W's opinion);
(ii) S2 is a background assertion with a diminished degree of assertiveness (post-expansion to an opinion);
(iii) the S/W's stance is that of a knowledgeable speaker who is somewhat detached from what is being said;

[11] There is a very close connection between an opinion and a value judgement, to the point that they cannot be dissociated, so that often a value judgement is also an opinion.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

(iv) the DM, together with all the other discourse resources present in the fragment, is responsible for the creation of a SPE coherence relation between the two segments.

4.3. The discourse pattern in which S2 is intonationally isolated but has no syntactic autonomy

This discourse variation pattern is characterised by the fact that S2, introduced by *de altfel*, is usually an embedded clause, intonationally isolated from the rest of the sentence – an isolation which is usually rendered in writing by dashes, brackets, commas. Moreover, we noticed that S2 often has a reduced semantic scope, covering only a phrase/ sentence constituent, as in (9)-(12).

This pattern is characterised by disfluency and a high degree of intersubjectivity with the H/R. In emic terms, S2 is felt by the H/R as a (meta)comment, a self-correction, a small unplanned, spontaneous detail seen as relevant for the interlocutor. In pragmatic terms, S2 is an *afterthought* whose discourse function is that of SPE, usually in the SEQ domain. In this discourse pattern, the procedural indications of S2 often involve blocking, at the level of the H/R's mental context, some assumptions, opposite evaluations or perspectives that s/he might have about the discourse topic approached, or blocking some potential presuppositions triggered by S1 that the H/R might embrace, etc.:

(9) Chisăliță privi neajutorat către Pârnaie, dar nu primi decât încurajări*, nefolositoare* ***de altminteri****.*
'Chisăliță looked helplessly at Pârnaie, but he got only some cheers, *useless* ***in fact***.'.

Semantic continuity between the two segments is maintained mainly through S2's syntactic dependency on a syntactic head in S1, as in (9)-(10), or through a summarizing textual anaphora (see *lucru/ something* in (12)). Most of the fragments in our annotated corpus belonging to this pattern contain an embedded clause with an antecedent in S1. A different stylistic variant of S2, which would remove the intonation specific to embedded clauses, would be that of a relative clause: *e.g.*, in (9), *dar nu primi decât încurajări, care erau nefolositoare de altminteri* 'he got only some cheers, which were useless in fact'.

Within this discourse pattern, the type of content in S2 may be classified according to the degree of discourse isolation: S2 is an evaluation of the referent made by the S/W that has the status of a presupposition (9); it is a piece of information that has a quoting, evidential function modelled as a contextual presupposition:

(10) În două vorbe*, rostite* ***de altminteri*** *chiar de Elisav,* romanul amână…

'In a couple of words, *uttered* ***in fact*** *by Elisav himself*, the novel postpones…';

it is a piece of information that functions as an epistemic modalizer and a contextual presupposition at once:

(11) Îmi pot închipui (***de altminteri*** *ştiu*) ce extraordinară înțelegere...
'I can imagine (***in fact*** *I know*) what an extraordinary understanding…';

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

it is a piece of information that marks the passage from the concrete to the abstract that is also presuppositional in nature:

(12) după ce se-ntâmplă să o ud într-o zi ploioasă – *lucru inevitabil,* ***de altminteri*** – obişnuiam să o las deschisă.
'after I happened to get it wet on a rainy day – *something unavoidable,* ***in fact*** – I used to leave it open.'.

When the DM is omitted together with its descending intonation, the discourse segment, if it is not long and has a semantic antecedent, loses its status of S2, its function and discourse domain, and the fragment becomes fluent and regains its syntactic continuity (see (9) and (10) with no DM). Another change brought about by omitting the DM is the reconfiguration of the segment as a thematising relative clause that keeps the intonation of an embedded clause and the status of an S2 that has the discourse function of SPE: *e.g.* (12) modified as *după ce se-ntâmpla să o ud într-o zi ploioasă – **ceea ce era** inevitabil – obişnuiam să o las deschisă* 'after I happened to get it wet on a rainy day – **which was** unavoidable – I used to leave it open'.

The omission test shows that isolating intonation (a para-verbal means of indicating stance, in fact) together with the lexical marking of *epistemic stance* by *de altfel* are enough to make S2 an independent discourse segment.

Summarizing what has been said here, the discourse pattern in which [*de altfel* S2] is intonationally isolated has the following procedural features:

(i) S1 is a foreground assertion with a high degree of assertiveness (resulting from the fusion of several discourse resources attesting to the presence of the S/W);
(ii) S2 is a background assertion with a diminished degree of assertiveness that we may describe, in emic terms, as an *afterthought*; it is a contextual presupposition;
(iii) the presence of S/W's stance (a speaker who is knowledgeable and somewhat detached from what is being said).

4.4. The discourse pattern in which *de altfel* is used with a causal connector

In the vicinity of causal syntactic connectors, *de altfel* may play the role of signalling SPE as a discourse *subfunction* and the span formed by S1 and S2 may be said to convey multiple relations (see Webber *et al.* 2019). In this discourse pattern, there is a "division of labour", *i.e.* the syntactic and textual connector introduces the main coherence relation (Ştefănescu, 2007: 194–219) – *Cause* in the RHE domain (Crible and Degand 2019) – and the DM signals the subfunction of SPE in the same RHE domain.

(13) Propagandă electorală face numai guvernul, *fiindcă,* ***de altfel****, numai el are nevoie...*
'It is only the government that uses electoral propaganda, *because,* ***as a matter of fact****, it is the only one that needs it…*'.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

The procedural meanings are similar to those discussed for the previous discourse patterns, *i.e.* different degrees of assertiveness in S1 and S2, S2 placed in the discourse background, the same type of local stance and a similar array of discourse cues signalling the S/W's presence in the utterance especially at the level of S1: hedges such as *dacă punem la socoteală* 'if we take into account'*, sunt foarte conştient* 'I am very aware that', *singura mea şansă* 'my only chance', etc.; the S/W's positioning through modalisers of certainty, doxastic assertions, hierarchizing constructions, such as *eu nu eram decât x* 'I was only x' or *este singura x* 'it is the only x', focalizers such as *numai, chiar* 'even, only'; polyphony etc. The features of this pattern that stand out in relation to the other two refer to the specific pairs of illocutionary forces present in discourse, which may take forms such as those exemplified below:

- *confession* (S1) – *justification* (S2)

(14) Am avut iarăşi [...] starea mea nocturnă de "revelaţie" (de fapt, n-am găsit niciodată un nume potrivit pentru ea, iar cel pe care-l folosesc aici mi se pare convenabil doar întrucât e slab, nemarcat, *căci, **de altfel**, în nebunia fără limite a visului meu "esenţial" [...] nu mi se revelează nimic, decât, poate, însăşi revelaţia…*
'I went once more […] into my nocturnal state of «revelation» (actually I have never found a proper name for it and the one I'm using here seems convenient just because it is weak, unmarked, *because, **as a matter of fact**, in the limitless madness of my «essential» dream […] nothing is revealed to me, except for, maybe, revelation itself…*';

- *promise* (S1) – *justification* (S2)

(15) Voi pune avocatul meu, *fiindcă **de altfel** îţi cunosc situaţia.*
'I will have my lawyer do it, *because **in fact** I know your situation*.';

- *explanation* (S1) – *justification* (S2)

(16) Se poate referi la idolatria asociată cu lemnul de copaci, *căci **de altfel** în Septuaginta şi Vulgata cuvântul este tradus cu «idolii», ca forma plurală a lui* [...].
'It may refer to the idolatry associated with tree wood, *because **indeed** in Septuaginta and Vulgata the word is translated by «idols», as a plural form of* […]'.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER WORK

Our annotation experiment and qualitative analysis show that the Romanian couple of synonymous DMs *de altfel* and *de altminteri* has pragmaticalised so as to signal the coherence relation of SPE, mainly in the RHE domain (followed by IDE and SEQ). The discourse variation patterns discussed – which were the most frequent in our sample corpus

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

– share a common set of constant procedural values (the passage from strong assertiveness in S1 to diminished assertiveness in S2; a certain referential continuity between the two segments and a local type of epistemic stance) and slightly modified ones: SPE as a discourse function or subfunction; S2 as an assertion that is less important than S1 or as a presupposition by the S/W; S2 being received, in emic terms, as the S/W's *collateral comment*, *afterthought*, or *justification*.

Our analysis of the main procedural features of *de altfel* shows that it is highly polyfunctional, acting, pragmatically, as an epistemic stance marker, an assertiveness attenuator (so as the indicator of a certain amount of assertive illocutionary force) and a DM specialised in signalling SPE in various discourse domains.

Further research may reveal other discourse patterns of *de altfel/de altminteri*, the discourse variation structures based on an etymologically related DM couple *altfel/altminteri* 'otherwise', as well as the cliché discourse routines that include these adverbials (*cum altfel?/păi altfel cum?* 'how else?'*, altfel zis* 'otherwise put', etc.). Moreover, further studies could also shed more light on the entire class of DMs specialised in signalling the function SPE in Romanian, as well as on their equivalents in other languages.

REFERENCES

Aijmer, K., 1997, "*I think* – An English Modal Particle", in: T. Swam (ed), *Modality in Germanic Languages*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1–48.

Angenot, M., 1995, *La parole pamphlétaire. Contribution à la typologie des discours modernes*, Paris, Payot.

Barbu Mititelu, V., D. Tufiş, E. Irimia, 2018, "The Reference Corpus of the Contemporary Romanian Language", in: *Proceedings of LREC 2018*, Japan, 1178–1185.

Conrad, S., D. Biber, 2000, "Adverbial Marking of Stance in Speech and Writing", in: S. Hunston, G. Thompson (eds), *Evaluation in Text: Authorial Stance and the Construction of Discourse*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 56–73.

Crible, L., L. Degand, 2019, "Domains and Functions: A Two-Dimensional Account of Discourse Markers", *Discours* 24, Varia, 3–35.

Cuenca, M. J., 2013, "The fuzzy boundaries between discourse marking and modal marking", in: L. Degand, B. Cornillie, P. Pietrandrea (eds), *Discourse Markers and Modal Particles. Categorization and description*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 181–121.

DA = *Dicționarul limbii române*, 1913, Tomul I, partea I, A–B, Bucureşti, Librăriile Socec.

Du Bois, J. W., 2007, "The stance triangle", in: R. Englebretson (ed.), *Stancetaking in Discourse. Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction*, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, John Benjamins, 139–182.

Goffman, E., 1979, "Footing", *Semiotica*, 25, 1-2, 1–29.

Halliday, M. A. K., [1985/1994/]1996, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*, London, New York, Sydney, Auckland, Arnold.

Hoek, J., J. Evers-Vermeul, T. J. M. Sanders, 2017, "Segmenting discourse: Incorporating Interpretation into segmentation?", *Corpus Linguistics and Linguistic Theory*, 14 (2), 357–386.

Ionescu, A., C.-M. Popescu, 2018, "Les marqueurs de changement de topique du discours en roumain: évolution sémantique et rôle pragmatique", *Discours*, 23, Varia.

Landone, E., 2012. "Discourse Markers and Politeness in a Digital Forum in Spanish", *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44, 1799–1820.

Martin, J. R., D. Rose, 2007, *Working with Discourse. Meaning Beyond the Clause*, London/New York, Continuum.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)

Sanders, T. J. M., W. P. M. Spooren, L. G. M. Noordman, 1992, "Toward a taxonomy of coherence relations", *Discourse Processes*, 15, 1, 1–35.

Schegloff, E., 2007, *Sequence Organisation in Interaction*, Cambridge University Press.

Ştefănescu, A., 2007, *Conectori pragmatici*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

Ştefănescu, A., 2013, "Utilizarea lui *(Eu) Cred că* în interacţiunea verbală", in: R. Zafiu, A. Ştefănescu, C. Mîrzea Vasile, R. Brăescu (eds), *Limba română: variaţie sincronică, variaţie diacronică. (II). Stilistică, pragmatică, retorică şi argumentare. Istoria limbii, filologie, dialectologie. Actele celui de-al 12-lea Colocviu Internaţional al Departamentului de Lingvistică (Bucureşti, 14-15 decembrie 2012)*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 181–198.

Ştefănescu, A., 2019, "The Use of *altminteri (otherwise)* in Romanian: From Adverb to Textual Connector", in: P. Furkó, I. Vaskó, C. I. Dér, D. Madsen (eds), *Fuzzy Boundaries in Discourse Studies: Theoretical, Methodological, and Lexico-Grammatical Fuzziness*, Palgrave Macmillan, 278–315.

Webber, B., R. Prasad, A. Lee, A. Joshi, 2019, *The Penn Discourse Treebank 3.0 Annotation Manual*, Technical report, Linguistic Data Consortium.

BDD-A31639 © 2020 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-27 12:59:53 UTC)