ON AUTONYMY
(WITH REFERENCE TO ROMANIAN)

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Abstract. In this paper, the autonymy is presented as a universal datum of the natural languages and as a fundamental element of the metalanguage. Within this framework, our main purpose is to define the term and make a distinction between language and metalanguage, on the one hand, and, inside the metalinguistic field, between autonyms and metalinguistic terms stricto sensu, on the other hand. The focus on autonymy aims at emphasizing its characteristics at different levels and at pointing out the specificity of this technique in Romanian, as compared with other languages.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although Gottlob Fregge was the first one to insist on the necessity of using specific marks to signalize the autonymous use and distinguish it from the "ordinary" use, it wasn't him to create the word *autonymous*. This privilege belongs to Rudolph Carnap (one of the best-known representatives of the logical positivism), who, in his book of 1934 ─ *Logische Syntax der Sprache* ─ introduced the adjective/adverb *autonymous(ly)*. Still, he didn't use the corresponding noun; he would speak of some specific uses of a certain expression rather than about autonyms, which may suggest the fact that, for Carnap, the autonyms are to be found in the discourse, but not in lexicon.

The term created by Carnap didn't have so much success, except for Germany, his native country, and, especially, France, where the term *autonymy* and its derivatives have been popularized by Josette Rey-Debove and are frequently used (with the observation that Rey-Debove modifies Carnap's definition consistently[1]). Moreover, Carnap himself didn't resort to this term too often in his papers posterior to 1934, ending by giving up to it, as proved by the description of the autonymous use without invoking the word *autonymous*.

[1] Since the name of a given object may be chosen arbitrarily, it is quite possible to take as a name for the thing, the thing itself or, as a name for a kind of thing, the things of this kind. We can, for instance, adopt the rule that, instead of the word **match**, a match shall always be placed on the paper. But it is more often a linguistic expression than an extra-linguistic object that is used as its own designation. We call an expression which is used in this way autonymous. (Carnap 1934: 156).

RRL, **LV**, *1*, p. 69–85, Bucureşti, 2010

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2. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPT

Unlike Carnap, who defines the autonymy starting from the etymology of the term[2], for Rey-Debove the autonymy is no longer a matter of polysemy, that is the coexistence of two (or more) possible meanings for a word/phrase, of which one could be labelled as 'normal' (*use*), and the other one as 'deviant' (*mention*). In her opinion, the autonym represents another sign, a 'metahomonym' of the sign in the object-language. "En dépit de son etymologie, l`autonyme ne se désigne pas lui-même (…), mais c`est un signe du métalangage désignant (signifiant) le signe du langage qui est son homonyme, et qui a une partie de son signifié en commun" (Rey-Debove 1997: 132).

2.1. Autonym vs. name

This ambiguity arises from the meaning of the English *name*, which usually refers to proper names (vs. *noun*)[3]. Moreover, the confusion is deepened by other common traits, such as intranslatability[4] and a specific morphosyntactic behaviour. So, if one uses the word *name* to designate a unique entity, as proper names do, then the autonyms are not proper names. And still, if from the semantic point of view, the autonyms are common nouns, syntactically they behave rather like proper names (the system of determiners, the preference for analytical inflection, the use of the preposition-morpheme *pe* for the direct object).

2.2. Autonymy ─ a matter of polysemy or homonymy?

There are arguments for both interpretations. Those speaking of polysemy took into account two different values of the same sign (*use* and *mention*). The problem with this theory is that, according to it, all words would become polysemic, having one meaning in the object-language and another one in metalanguage. So, for instance, in an example like:

[2] As an adjective, *autonymous* is a compound , cf. gr. *auto* and *onoma*, 'which defines itself as a sign in the discourse'. The concept, initially dealt with by Josette Rey-Debove, has been revisited by Jacqueline Authier-Revuz (1995) in her book dedicated to the comments which accompany the speakers' words.

[3] Rey-Debove (1978: 136) emphasizes that proper names contain autonyms in their signified, and not the reverse.

[4] Despite the fact that the vast majority of the proper nouns are not subject to translation, there are some situations where they can be translated, namely when they are compounds whose parts keep their meaning (such as: New Orleans → La Nouvelle Orléans). Others, if not translated, are subject to a certain change, which is necessary in order to match the phonetic structure of the target-language (eg: London → Londres → Londra; Napoli → Naples → Neapole etc). On the contrary, the autonyms cannot be translated or modified.

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(1) *Profesor* este persoana care predă o disciplină de învățământ (*Profesor* 'teacher' is the person who teaches a school matter), *profesor* 'teacher' would equally designate the person who teaches a school matter and the word meaning 'person who teaches a school matter'.

Against the polysemic interpretation, one can invoke the following arguments: the morphosyntactic behaviour of the autonyms is deeply different from that of the "ordinary" words (they present some traits of the proper nouns and some original ones). Moreover, unlike "ordinary" words, the autonyms are always subject to nominalization; and, finally, not only does autonymy turn any part of speech into a noun, but it can also turn everything into a sign, non-significant units included.

Even more complicated is to discuss about the autonyms of the homonyms and those of the polysemic words. Since there is no homonymy between autonyms, the autonym is, in both cases, polysemic, because two types of occurrences with the same morphological class (neuter/masculin noun) and the same supraordinate term (sign) belong to the same (polysemic) word.

2.3. Autonymy – 'weakness' or 'major strength' of the natural languages? [5]

Based on a fundamental characteristic of the language – the reflexiveness, the autonymy often appears in dichotomous pairs: *signs of things* vs. *signs of signs* (Augustin), *suppositio formalis* (when the word is used for its *signified*) vs. *suppositio materialis* (when the word is used for itself), throughout the Middle Ages. Later on, Carnap would speak about the autonymous symbol, used as a name for itself, whilst Quine (1940) would invoke the opposition between *use* and *mention*. Connected either with the polysemy or the homonymy, this peculiar use of language represents, undoubtedly, a source of ambiguity and, usually, ambiguity has a negative impact.

Actually, the label of "weakness", attached to the autonymy comes from the fact that it deepened the ambiguity between the world and the language used to express it (the opposition between *to be* and *to signify*)[6]. Moreover, since there is

[5] See also Roibu (2007a).

[6] Latin, for instance, favourized this confusion, since it had no article and permitted the declension of the autonym:

a). Homo est animal./ Omul este animal. (It is worth mentioning that in English, the generic use of a noun, that is, in examples such as: 'Man is an animal' is very difficult to separate from examples like: Man is a noun)

b). Homo est nomen./ Om este (un) substantiv. (the presence/ absence of the definite article being able to distinguish between object-language and metalanguage in Romanian).

Sometimes, in Latin, the autonyms introduced by metalinguistic terms could either bear the marks of the Nominative case or of the case required by their function in the context.

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no sign without an autonymous pair, the ambiguity expands to the whole vocabulary[7]. It is also worth mentioning that the autonymy presents some traits which have lead to its being characterized as deviant from the grammatical, lexico-semantic and prosodic rules, namely: nominalization (with an obvious preference for indefiniteness, singular, and the unmarked gender: neuter, for Romanian, masculine, for languages that did not preserve the neuter), the absence of synonymy and the use of specific marks, such as inverted commas or italics.

On the contrary, Benveniste (1974: 97) describes the autonymy as a 'major strength' and privilege of the natural languages, due to the fact that the autonymy has some positive outcomes, too. Among them, one can name: the economy of language, as a consequence of using the autonym as the name of a sign (the relation between them is motivated), the possibility to speak about signs that one does not know, as long as every unit of an utterance can be isolated and can function as an object of reflection.

The focus on signs, achieved by means of autonymy, can be connected with a certain lexical incompetence the speaker suspects his partner of and which he wants to remove. So, the autonymy reveals itself as an important didactic tool, helping the participants share the code and co(e)laborate during the verbal exchange. A two-sided entity, made of a significant and a signified, the sign provides the speakers with the possibility to refer to it in three different ways. One can speak about the whole sign, like in:

(2) *Generos* 'generous' este adjectiv (*Generous* is an adjective),

the *signified* of the autonym being the word *generos*; one can also speak about the *signified*:

(3) *Generos* înseamnă *darnic, mărinimos* (*Generos* means 'lavish, charitable'),

or the *significant* of the sign:

(4) *Generos* se scrie g-e-n-e-r-o-s (*Generos* is spelt g-e-n-e-r-o-s)

Apart from being a didactic tool, the autonymy indicates a certain attitude of the speakers towards the words being used, which can be quoted, commented on, assumed or kept at a distance. Another advantage is that the autonymy is a universal datum of the natural languages, i.e. every language can take as an object the elements of the code: *Prenez un signe, parlez-en, et vous aurez un autonyme!*

[7] Thus, the autonymy reveals itself as a source of a systematic and very productive homonymy, different from the kind illustrated by the accidents produced in diachrony: examples resulted from the phonetic convergence of different words, such as: lat. pirus > rom. păr$_1$ ('tree that produces pears') and lat. pilus > rom. păr$_2$ ('hair'), or from a former polysemic word, such as: lună$_1$ ('Moon'; 'natural satellite of the Earth') and lună$_2$ ('period corresponding to a complete rotation of the Moon').

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(Rey-Debove 1978: 144). Consequently, the autonymy represents, in fact, an intralinguistic, interlinguistic and intersemiotic system, by which we mean that autonymy allows the discourse in language L1 to integrate any item of language L1, of other natural languages L2, L3 etc, or even items of artificial languages.

Based on a complex semiotic structure, the autonymy represents the fundament of the natural metalanguage (Rey-Debove 1997: 334). Nevertheless, one should make a distinction between the metalinguistic words as such (part of a terminology ─ the metalinguistic system *stricto sensu*) and the autonymous words, noncodified interlinguistic words which are, all, masculine/neuter nouns with linguistic semantism, characterized by a peculiar morphosyntactic behaviour, invariability, absence of synonymy and translation.

Unlike the metalinguistic system stricto-sensu, very poor, as a result of the limited number of units (which are codified and serve at describing the autonyms), the autonymous system is theoretically unlimited, with reference to the language level it can reach, as well as to the number of units that can be used like that. As it isn't possible to provide a 'list' of autonyms, the conclusion is that one can use autonymously any sign of a language, irrespective of its morphosyntactic class, any unit inferior to the sign (phoneme, grapheme, syllable etc.), any string of signs, irrespective of length or grammaticality. In addition, each of these elements is able to refer both to a *type* or a *token* and can belong to another language than the one where it is 'autonymized'.

3. THE TRAITS OF THE AUTONYMS[8]

3.1. Morphosyntactic traits. The nominal function

At the grammatical level, the autonyms are characterized by nominalization (with preference for the singular, the indefiniteness and the unmarked gender – neuter, in Romanian), either as a result of combining with nominal determiners, or fulfilling the syntactic functions of the nouns. Whatever its significant might be, the autonymous sign is a noun. It cannot be otherwise, as long as speaking about a sign means taking it as a subject of the discourse and the subject of the discourse has a nominal function. So, in order to speak about a verb, a conjunction, a pronoun etc., one has to nominalize them. Thus, unlike eg. (5), where the signs are used 'normally', according to their morphological class (verb, conjunction, pronoun):

(5) Alergăm pentru că unii se grăbesc (We run because some are in a hurry),

example (6), using the same signs, but autoymously, contains elements which, on the one hand, are in an iconic relation with the homonymous signs – verb,

[8] See also Roibu (2007b).

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conjunction, pronoun –, to which they refer and, on the other hand, are placed in a morphosyntactic frame that 'nominalizes' them:

(6) Acest *alergăm* nu există în text (This *alergăm* 'run' is not in the text)
pentru că *pentru că* 'because"
unii *unii* 'some'

The double inclusion – within the level of the autonymous sign and that of the element signified by it – explains why an example like *Alergăm* is a noun is grammatically correct (the autonym functions as a noun/subject of the verb 'is') and, at the same time, unacceptable (by predication, which points at the referent of the autonym, the verb *alergăm* 'run'). In the case of this "special" nominalization, able to turn any unit into nominal elements "of discourse", it is very interesting to observe the formal variation between a definite and an indefinite noun (which raises questions about the relation between the autonyms and the proper nouns), depending on the kind of the metalinguistic predicate being used (*to signify, to designate, to say, to be called* etc.) and the function of the autonym in the context.

For instance, in eg. (7) there is an ordinary sign, semiotically simple, whereas in eg. (8) and (9), the words are mentioned as such and have specific semiotic and syntactic features and, sometimes, specific graphic marks ─ italic characters:

(7) Prietenii noştri sunt extraordinari (Our friends are extraordinary)
(8) *Prieteni* este substantiv, iar *extraordinari* este adjectiv (*Prieteni* 'friends' is a noun, whereas *extraordinari* 'extraordinary' is an adjective)
(9) *Prieteni* este mai scurt decât *extraordinari* (*Prieteni* 'friends' is shorter than *extraordinari* 'extraordinary').

In (8), the noun that functions as a subject has neither article nor determiners (which is quite unusual, although not impossible for the subject in Romanian), and the adjective '*extraordinary*' functions as a noun/subject, in (8), and, respectively, noun/modal of comparison, in (9). Both words allow the anteposition of some metalinguistic terms, such as *word/term/noun/adjective*, which may explain why they are used in the singular and belong to the unmarked gender (neuter, in Romanian, masculine, in other languages), as a result of an implicit agreement between the adjective and the noun, on the one hand, and between the predicative and the subject, on the other hand.

The nominal function of the autonymous sequence reduces the domain of ambiguity to nouns or, more specifically, to the units that occupy the position of a noun, as proved by the examples below:

(10) Scrie frumos/She writes beautifully (frumos/beautifully = modal abverb/modal complement)

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(11) Scrie *frumos*/She writes *frumos* 'beautifully' (*frumos/ beautifully* = noun/direct object).

3.1.1. *Determiners*

Within the nominal field, each language resorts to specific structures in order to remove the ambiguity between language and metalanguage. Romanian, like French, uses a determiner (definite or indefinite article) to restrict the reference of a noun, except for the cases where it is used autonymously. On the contrary, in Latin and English, the article does not appear in any of the two situations, the interpretation (linguistic or metalinguistic) depending on the context. That is why a series of examples, ambiguous in Latin and Greek, lack ambiguity in Romanian and French, due to the presence/absence of the article:

(12) lat.: Homo est animal (one speaks about the world → *homo* = a noun used the standard way; it belongs to the first level of language/object language)
(13) lat: Homo est nomen (one speaks about language → *homo* = a noun used autonymously: it belongs to the second level of language/metalanguage)
(14) engl: Man is an animal (one speaks about the world → *man* = a noun used the standard way; it belongs to the first level of language/object language)
(15) engl: Man is a noun (one speaks about language → *man* = a noun used autonymously: it belongs to the second level of language/metalanguage)
(16) fr.: **L'**homme est un animal // Homme est un nom
(17) rom.: Om**ul** este un animal // Om este (un) substantiv.

Nevertheless, even in French there is an area of ambiguity between the words which belong to the first level of language and the autonyms that have a unique referent. The next example can be interpreted in two different ways, according to whether the noun is placed in the object language or in the metalanguage:

(18) Le journal qu'il a écrit me fascine → El a scris jurnalul/He has written the diary. (*jurnalul/ the diary* = a noun used the standard way; it belongs to the first level of language/ object language);
→ El a scris *jurnalul*/He has written *jurnalul* = *the diary* (*jurnalul/the diary* = a noun used autonymously; it belongs to the second level of language/metalanguage).

It is also worth pointing out that in French and other languages with proclitic article (Italian, English etc.), its clarificatory function is restricted to the situations where the noun it preceeds starts with a vowel sound. In such cases, there is a tendency to pronounce the autonym as if it started with a consonant (that is, without any graphic or phonetic transition between the determiner and the autonym):

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(19) fr.: **Le** *ou* est une conjonction (≠ **L'***ou*)/*Ou* este o conjuncție (no article at all in Romanian)/*Ou* is a conjunction;
(20) fr.: L' étymologie **de** *ou* est connue (≠ **d'***ou*)/Etimologia lui *ou* este cunoscută/The etymology of *ou* is known.

One can notice that this tendency does not work all the time: the autonymous sequence is sometimes used with graphic and phonetic transition, by modifying the form or the pronunciation[9] of the article, which causes confusions between the object language and the metalanguage. Usually, the transition appears when the autonymous sequence comes from nouns that belong to the same language L1 of the metalinguistic discourse (the intralinguistic system).

(21) fr.: L'étymologie **d'***enfant*…/ Etimologia lui *enfant*... (no transition in Romanian)/The etymology of *enfant*…

However, if the autonymous sequence results from other parts of speech (apart from nouns) or non-independent elements (such as affixes or syllables), as well as in the cases where foreign terms are used (the interlinguistic system), the transition is abandoned:

(22) **Le/ ce** *on*…
(23) **Le** –*age* de *fromage*…
(24) Le sens **de** *instead*…

Although the generalization of the technique which involves the absence of the transition, would be a plus, it comes counter to the phonetism of language. In English, the autonyms are frequently subject to the same phonetic rules as the ordinary words:

(25) I forgot to put **an** *or* here (≠ **a** *or*)/Am uitat să pun un *or* aici
(26) The [ði] *or* is missing/*Or* (-ul?) lipseşte.

From this point of view, Romanian comes in between the languages invoked before. This can be explained by the fact that, in Romanian, the definite article and the vast majority of the determiners appear in postposition.

Given the situation, the difference between a unit used the standard way and a unit used autonymously is marked at the prosodic level (by a short pause and a certain intonation, in the case of autonymy) and, facultatively, at the graphic level, by using a hyphen between the autonym and the article, with the preservation of the phonetic link between them:

[9] In English, the definite article is pronounced [ðə], in front of words starting with a consonant sound, and [ði], in front of words starting with a vowel sound.

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(27) Jurnalul pe care l-a scris…/The diary he has written… → *jurnalul/the diary* designates an object and, consequently, belongs to the object language
(28) *Jurnal-ul/Jurnalul* pe care l-a scris.../*Jurnal* 'The diary' he has written... → *jurnal(-)ul/ the diary* designates the word *jurnal(-)ul/the diary*, so it belongs to the metalanguage (intonation and spelling may have some clarificatory function).

In the case of a noun marked with the definite article, it is just the context that may guide its interpretation as a sign which belongs to the object language (if it appears in a chain speaking about the world), or to the metalanguage (if it appears in a chain speaking about language):

(29) Jurnalul e pe masă/The diary is on the table (the noun *jurnalul/the diary* belongs to the object language)
(30) *Jurnalul* e un substantiv articulat hotărât/*Jurnalul* is a noun with a definite article (the noun *jurnalul = the diary* belongs to the metalanguage).

Still, the last example raises some problems with regard to the category of determination: is the noun *jurnalul* ('the diary') really marked with the definite article? In the sentence speaking about the world, there is no doubt about it. On the other hand, in the metalinguistic sentence, the non-autonymous noun *jurnalul* 'the diary' already has the definite article, which suggests that, in order to function as a real definite article noun, its autonymous equivalent should also be marked as such. And, since this is not possible, neither in Romanian, nor in other languages[10], the article is used once, with reference to the non-autonymous noun and, provided that the autonym is considered its meta-homonym, one could say, by extension, that it "borrows" the definite article, too.

3.1.2. *The declension*

Languages with declension may preserve the form of the autonymous sequence or may modify it, by adding specific marks. In Sanskrit, for instance, autonyms are declined normally[11], but the vast majority of languages treat them other way than their homonyms in the object language.

3.1.2.1. *The case*

As far as the case is concerned, the autonyms manifest a certain preference for the unmarked cases, the Nominative/ Accusative, the latter, with(out) preposition. When functioning as a direct object, two patterns are possible in Romanian: with the definite article, but without the preposition-morpheme *pe*, or the reverse,

[10] Forms like jurnalul-ul/the the diary haven't been recorded by now.
[11] In Latin, also, the autonyms introduced by metalinguistic terms could be subject to declension, which means that they appeared either in the Nominative, or in the case required by the function they had in that particular context.

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associated with the phenomenon of pronominal duplication, like in the situations where this syntactic position is fulfilled by (common or proper) personal individualized nouns. Still, the second pattern is more frequent, as proved by examples like:

(31) Am uitat să adaug *la*-ul (I forgot to add the *la*)
(32) Am uitat să-l adaug pe *la*[12] (I forgot to add the *la*)

The use of *pe* in the previous example is another point in favour of those who made a connection between the autonyms and the proper nouns, the two classes sharing some properties[13] (*supra* 2.1.).

When they are used in the Genitive or the Dative, the inflection of the autonyms is, usually, marked analitically, with the article preceding the noun, like in the case of the proper nouns. In addition, the only possible contexts contain either a metalinguistic term (part of the terminology) or another autonym:

(33) Sensul lui *nemernic* s-a depreciat (The meaning of *nemernic* has altered)
(34) Lui *copii* îi lipseşte un *i* (There is an *i* missing from *copii*).

Interestingly, despite admitting to the privileged position of the autonyms in almost all languages, Josette Ray-Debove poits out that one cannot use in the Nominative a word which is already marked for another case. Then, how to interprete examples like:

(35) *La facultate* este un grup nominal cu substantiv în acuzativ (*La facultate* is an NP with the noun in the Accusative case),

as long as it is obvious that, in the given context, the autonymous sequence *la facultate* is not in the Accusative case, but in the nominative, since it functions as a subject? And, if we accept that it is in the Nominative, we are confronted with the famous Liar's paradox, because in:

(36) *La facultate* este un grup nominal cu substantiv în acuzativ,

la facultate is, paradoxically, in the Nominative case. The problem can be solved if one admits that, despite the contradiction, both sentences are true, but each in a

[12] In English, both examples are translated by: I forgot to add the *la*.

[13] Rey-Debove (1997: 270−271) emphasizes the traits common to autonyms and proper nouns: le nom propre n'appartient pas au code d'une langue, mais à un autre code […]. Les noms propres sont un contenu denotative qui relève de la connaissance du monde et pas de la compétence langagière. La parenté entre noms propres et noms autonymes est évidente: ils sont interlinguaux et en principe intraduisible, non-codés et parfaitment tolérés par le discours qui les accueille […]. Le nom propre emprunte à l'autonyme son signifié connoté.

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different system of reference: *la facultate* is in the Accusative case, within the object language, and in the Nominative, within the metalanguage, where the phrase is used autonymously, as a complex autonymous noun, where *la* is no longer a preposition.[14]

3.1.2.2. *The gender*

The gender of the autonymous sequences is constant and restricts the ambiguity to nouns belonging to the same gender in a certain language. Autonymy resorts to the unmarked gender, masculine, for almost all languages, neuter, for Romanian. The gender of the autonym is not conditioned by the gender of the metalinguistic word preceding it (if any), although in Romanian almost all words that can introduce autonyms belong to the neuter. This trait causes another pseudo-paradox, in the situations where the equivalent of the autonymous word is masculine or feminine. (it gives the impression of breaking the rules of agreement):

(37) *Interesantă* este mai lung decât *importantă* (*interesantă Interesting* is longer than *importantă important*[15]),

where the autonyms *interesantă* and *importantă* carry the mark of the feminine, but *mai lung*, which qualifies *interesantă*, remains unmarked, which corresponds to masculine/neuter words used in the singular.

And still, the previous example is well-formed, because *interesantă* is the subject and in Romanian the rule of agreement works unilaterally, by which we mean that it is the subject to impose a certain gender (and number) to the qualifier (the predicative), and not the reverse. This situation can be explained by the fact that the two words belong to different levels: *interesantă* is a noun/subject in metalanguage, while *(mai) lung* is an adjective/ predicative in object language.

3.1.2.3. *The number*

The number of the autonymous sequences is variable, but does not depend on the number of the nouns signified by the autonym (the number of signs vs. the number of objects signified). Although languages try to preserve the invariability of the autonyms, the plural mark can sometimes attach to the morphology of the word. At least, this is the case in English, but even there, it is still possible to separate the autonym and the ending by graphic means, such as the use of the apostrophe. Compare examples (38) and (39):

(38) A sign pattern can have […] upward ANDS and downward ORS (Lamb, *apud* Rey-Debove 1978: 67);

(39) Instead of separating the words of the example with repeated *wh's*, we could separate them with other words (Bolinger, *apud* Rey-Debove 1978: 67).

[14] The same may be said about the sentences where the autonym seems to be marked for the Genitive or Dative case, in example such as: *Lui Maria nu este corect* (*Lui Maria* is not correct).

[15] No gender distinction in English.

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Another pseudo-paradox arises now, because in examples like:
(40) In the sentence/***Mice*** *is the plural of mouse*/*mice is singular*,

the singular of *mice* (autonym) does not result from understanding a metalinguistic term, such as *word*, as proved by the fact that an autonymous sequence made of two or more words does not trigger the plural form:

(41) **My friends* are plural.

The plural is possible if and only if there are two subjects of the discourse, that is two autonyms in the subject position:

(42) /*Oculist* and *eye-doctor* are synonymous/
(43) /*Oculist* şi *oftalmolog* sunt sinonime/

In Romanian, like in French, the plural marks are external. If the autonymous sequence is marked for the plural, it is just a plural in the object language, which does not bring about the plural of other components of the context. The system of determiners makes the situation even more complicated, the use of the plural resulting in an ambiguous reading (in the first language or metalanguage):

(44) *Tovarăş*-ii lui/săi mă scotea(u) din sărite. (His *tovarăş-ii* 'comrade'(s) annoyed me[16])
(45) *Tovarăş*-ii aceştia/acesta mă scotea(u) din sărite (These/This *tovarăş-ii* 'comrade'(s) annoyed me).

Theoretically, some of the determiners coming in postposition may be used in the singular, even if the autonym has a plural form; the predicate will appear in the singular (see the two examples above). The determiners preceding the autonym cause less irregularities, because, in such situations, the form of the autonymous word used in the singular remains unchanged. The plural, on the other hand, results in an ambiguous reading, like in the examples below:

(46) Aceşti (?) *tovarăşi* mă scotea(u) din sărite (These/this *tovarăşi* 'comrade'(s) annoyed me)
(47) La ce *tovarăşi* te referi? (Which *tovarăşi* 'comrade'(s) are you talking about?).

However, we have to say that the emphasizing determiner coming in front of the autonym cannot be used in the plural, even if the autonym has a plural form, whereas the indefinite and the negative adjectives are replaced by the

[16] In Romanian, the verb can be used either in the singular or in the plural; the same can be said with reference to the determiner acesta/aceştia ('these/ this') in the next example.

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corresponding pronouns, which accounts for the use of the preposition *dintre* (with a partitive value):

(48) Însuşi *tovarăşi* ... (*tovarăşi* comrade'(s) itself)
(49) Fiecare dintre *tovarăş*-ii săi... (Each of his *tovarăşi* 'comrade'(s) …)
(50) Niciunul dintre *tovarăş*-ii săi… (None of his *tovarăşi* 'comrade'(s) …).

The interrogative adjective and the homonymous relative adjective, unchangeable with reference to number and gender, may precede both the plural and the singular form of the autonym, without any formal change. The interpretation depends on the number of the autonymous noun (reference to a certain word or to its different occurrences).

3.1.2.4. *The article*

As far as the article is concerned, we have already emphasized the preference of the autonymous words for indefiniteness. In cases like:

(51) *Jurnalul* este articulat hotărât (*Jurnalul* 'the jurnal' bears the definite article),

the definite article belongs to the noun in the first level of language and, only by extension, can one we assume that the homonymous autonym bears the marks of the category of determination. We have to add here that the Genitive/ Dative form of the autonym requires the presence of the article, just like in the case of the primary language, where it plays the same function of syntactic integration.[17]

3.2. Suprasegmental traits

3.2.1. *Graphic marks*

In most of the cases, the autonymous sequences are signalized by the use of the inverted commas (quotation marks) or some specific (typo)graphic characters, such as the italics. However, we have to point out that these marks are polyvalent: sometimes, they correspond to the autonymous connotation (*scare-quotes*), emphasizing a derogatory use of the language, wich shows a condescending attitude of the speaker in relation to the hearer. In such situations, the quotation marks show the speaker's detachment, the fact that (s)he does not adhere to those words, but resorts to them just in order to make himself/ herself understood by the other:

(52) Marea mă trece într-o stare de *contemplatio* absolută. Mă duce la *unio* cu Dumnezeu. Ca să vorbesc în stilul misticii catolice (*Observator cultural*, nr. 129,

[17] In examples like: *Prezența de ce-ului*/the presence of the *why*; *grație de ce-ului*/thanks to the *why*.

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p. 19)/The sea makes me plunge into a state of absolute *contemplatio.* It takes me to *unio* with God. To use the terms of the Catholic mysticism.

At times, the italics have an emphatic function (eg. 53) or mark an expression taken from another language (the interlinguistic system), like in eg. 54:

(53) A început prin a vorbi despre *senzația de culoare*, apoi despre *culoarea însăşi*/ He began by speaking about the *sensation of colour*, then about the *colour itself*
(54) A fost un triumf, *par excellence*/It was a victory, *par excellence.*

3.2.2. *Phonetic marks*

Perhaps the only typical mark is represented by the phonic isolation of the autonymous sequence, corresponding to the graphic isolation marked by the use of the quotation marks or the italics:

(55) Ea scrie /*niciodată*/. She writes /*niciodată*/. (the autonymous noun *niciodată*/ *never*, direct object of the verb).

3.3. Semiotic traits

Any alphabetic language contains two kinds of units: some, corresponding to the first level of language and to the metalanguage (*stricto sensu*), are characterized by internal synonymy and interlinguistic translations; the others, corresponding to the autonymous use, have no synonymy and, usually, no translation.

The ordinary sign (*use*) is considered simple from the semiotic point of view and it points to a referent from the external world (for instance, the action of walking, in the following example):

(56) Merge la bibliotecă în fiecare săptămână (He goes to the library every week).

The facts subordinated to the autonymy ─ the autonymy *stricto sensu* (eg. 57) or autonymous connotation (eg. 58) ─ permit two simultaneous actions: they signify the sign, while also refering to it:

(57) *A merge* arată o acțiune (*A merge/to walk* expresses an action);
(58) Vorbeşte mereu despre *cartea* lui, dacă se poate numi aşa (He always speaks about his *book*, if one may call it like that).

In the case of the autonymy *stricto sensu* one deals with a sign that is semiotically complex: its significant is homonymous with that of the ordinary sign, but has a different morphosyntactic value, as a result of the nominalization (see eg. 57), while the signified is a sign itself. Examples like (58) illustrate the autonymous

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connotation, including the autonym as one of the components. In the above-mentioned example, the sign *cartea/book* has the same morphosyntactic value and the same reference to the world as it does in the case of the ordinary sign, but this reference to the world is doubled by a reference to the sign which intermediates it. So, the speaker simultaneously refers to the thing and to the sign by means of which, he speaks about the thing, *hic et nunc*.

Consequently, one can say that in examples like (56), the speaker refers to the world through the agency of a transparent sign, which disappears throughout this mediating function; in examples like (57), the sign itself becomes the object of the discourse, while in examples like (58), the speaker refers to the world through the agency of a sign, which is no longer transparent, because it interferes in the act of providing reference. As a result, synonymy is suspended, as long as the signified of the autonym is a sign itself (made of a signified and a significant). That is why a relationship of synonymy ─ by which we mean a semantic equivalence between signs with different significants ─ between ordinary signs is impossible, as illustrated by the following examples:

(59)a. Capitala României a fost supranumită "Micul Paris" (The capital of Romania has been called "The small Paris")

b. Bucureştiul a fost supranumit Micul Paris (Bucharest has been called "The small Paris")

(60)a. *Micul Paris* este un grup nominal (*Micul Paris/ The small Paris* is a noun phrase)

b. **Bucureşti* este un grup nominal (**Bucureşti/Bucharest* is a noun phrase).

In (59), a relationship of synonymy is possible, because both examples belong to the object language, which is not the case in (60), as a result of the presence of the autonymous signs. This resistence to the test of synonymy emphasizes the fact that the two autonymous signs have two different referents, non-liable to select the same class of predicates.[18] However, there is no reason why limitting the sign designed by the autonym to the mere significant, because it still signifies a signified, with all the consequences this may bring about.

If in example 59), the speaker refers to the world by means of a 'transparent' sign (inside the first-level language), in 60), the object of the enunciation is the sign itself (inside an autonymous context, belonging to the second-level language). Between examples 59) and 60) there is an opposition between a simple sign and a sign with a complex semiotics, but, in both cases, the enunciation is simple. Consequently, we can say that, in the two examples, we speak about different 'objects': the 'object' Bucharest, on the one hand, and the word *Bucharest*, on the

[18] See also examples like:
a) *Locuinţa lui este mobilată cu gust* (His dwelling is tastefully furnished)
Casa lui este mobilată cu gust (His house is tastefully furnished)
b) *Locuinţă vine de la a locui* (*Locuinţă* comes from a *locui*)
**Casă vine de la a locui* (*Casă* comes from a *locui*)

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other hand, but we speak the same way. In other words, 60) differs from 59) by the presence of a (homonymous) sign with a different (complex) semiotic statute, and not by an enunciative modality.

At the semantic level, the autonyms are characterized by opaqueness (the reference to the world is achieved via the interposition of the sign on the trajectory which leads to the object it designates), linguistic semantism (the signified of the autonym contains the theme 'language'), absence of synonymy and translation. The autonyms share the last two features with the proper nouns, as long as both of them are non-codified interlinguistic units, without translation, but perfectly tolerated by the context that 'hosts' them.

In addition, the autonyms have no actual reference, because one speaks about language in itself and for itself. Example 61) illustrates a "devitalized" use (within a metalinguistic context), as opposed to the affective use of the same phrase in 62)[19]:

(61) − De ce nu vrei să mă însoţeşti? (Why won't you come with me?)
− De aia (Because)
(62) *De aia* este o locuțiune adverbială (*De aia* is an adverbial phrase).

In the previous example, the autonym lacks the actual reference and the speaker's emotional involvement, as opposed to the ordinary sign, which contains all these marks. Within the metalinguistic context ***De aia*** *este o locuțiune adverbială*, the autonym is inserted in a "devitalized" context, but even here, we can see that we deal with a discursive functioning of mention (autonymy), permitted by the peculiar statute of the autonymous sign, but which it does not involve in any way.

So, whenever one deals with effects of sense due to the autonymy, one shouldn't question the distinction between the ordinary sign and the autonymous sign: they are examples of a form of language ─ the autonym ─ and a complex development of its possibilities in the discourse.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The main goal of this paper was to describe the autonymy at different linguistic levels and to point out the specificity of this technique in Romanian by

[19] Still, autonyms do not cease to refer to the world: because the sign refers to another sign, the 'wordly' signified is preserved and the context is perfectly understandable. What is missing is the actual reference, but the virtual reference is still there. The explanation resides in that the metalanguage is stronger (from a semiotic and a referential point of view) than the primary language, which it designates. The autonym is a sign which signifies another sign, the latter signifying, in its turn, the world. Consequently, everything that is signified by the ordinary sign is also signified by its autonym, the signified of the first being included in the signified of the second. In such examples, the actual reference is missing because one speaks about language in itself and for itself, and the reference appears only in connection with the actualization.

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comparison with other languages. Since the suprasegmental and semiotic features are common to all languages, specific traits occur just at the grammatical level (although all autonyms are nominal units with a strong preference for indefiniteness, singular and the unmarked gender): the system of determiners and some points of inflection make the difference between Romanian and other languages, especially those with proclitic articles.

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