

## Conventional vs unconventional linguistic means of address. (Old and new greetings in Romanian)

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### Abstract

Among the linguistic mechanisms that individuals employ in the process of communication, one can also find means of address. Of these, an important role is played by greetings.

This study is aimed at identifying a series of forms / formulas of greeting used in contemporary Romanian public space and analysing them from a structural and functional perspective (with reference to their contextual pragmatic values). Alongside established (grammaticalised / clichéd) units, other forms will be recorded, conveying new semantic values that are determined by situational constraints.

Thus, a distinction will be made between two linguistic means of greeting: conventional ones (stylistically neutral and used by the entire community of locutors) and unconventional ones (recent imports, mostly in English, calques, which recreate the original pattern or are borrowed from the source language without any changes and are employed with an ironic or persuasive intention).

The corpus will be taken from the Internet.

Methodologically, the study will use the theoretical apparatus pertaining to psycho- and sociolinguistics, pragmatics, ethnology, and anthropology.

[...] there is a competence, a *saber* that refers to talking in given situations and about certain things, with certain interlocutors. It is what we say—with a negative connotation—when we realise that what we speak does not observe the norms, when we say that we are incapable of writing a letter to express our condolences, namely to create such a text, or when a madam calls it to our attention: “That’s no way to talk to a lady!” (Coşeriu, 1992–1993, p. 36, orig. Romanian<sup>‡</sup>)

The refusal to greet or to reply to the initiation phrase received as a gift does not mean you destroy something from your interlocutor’s figure, but it is as if you gave up on yourself, or removed your humanity system, or cursed your parents. It is as if you gave in to your instincts, or had your profile cloned after the image of Ionescu’s rhinoceros.

### 1. General observations

The beginning of every dialogue is determined by a ritualised verbal scenario, by a preface whose function is to initiate communication. This refers to the way in which interlocutors build bridges of communication towards each other. In greetings, viewed as *preliminary and compulsory expressive speech acts*, language becomes transitive, as these initiating proemial expressions (the various forms of greetings) say *something* about the sender and, at the same time, prompts the formulation, in reply, of the adjacent pair: the answer

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<sup>‡</sup>The quotations indicated as being originally in Romanian, French, or Italian (marked by “orig. Romanian”, “orig. French”, and “orig. Italian”, respectively) are only provided as translations.

to the greeting. This self-presentative structure, the greeting, is a special instance of language use, in which the speech act performed implies a reply even if the act does not take an interrogative shape (except for greetings expressed as questions).

Along with the diversification of communication channels in contemporary society (computer-mediated communication is dominant), there also occurs a multiplication of possibilities to trigger, maintain and cease verbal contact with an interlocutor. In its passage from direct “orality” (*face-to-face* verbal interaction) to indirect “writing” (distance interaction, mediated by an electronic device), interindividual communication is subjected to a process of “de-ritualisation”, of going beyond established structures, and tends to develop its own stock of forms of address, which are created by means of *conservation* and *innovation* alike.

Prestigious behavioural models (and linguistic ones implicitly) that have entered the contemporary Romanian linguistic space have also affected the field of means of address, by changing or combining the traditionalised forms of established linguistic means into / with other forms, which are deeply marked by the allocutive trend of the donor language. The current configuration of the act of address in Romanian is provided, on the one hand, by the avatars of the traditional, conventional and conventionalised allocutive system and, on the other, by the influences from the languages with which Romanian has been in contact (these influences are especially of Anglo-American origin, but they may be related to other backgrounds as well).

Greetings belong to stereotypical expressions of address<sup>1</sup> that individuals use in the process of communication.

The present paper focuses on this subtype of expressive speech acts, as their study allows one to make observations regarding aspects related to the initiation, perhaps even preservation, and termination of interindividual relationships. A greeting formula is the means by which a locutor begins and ends a verbal contract that is full of psychosocial implications that affect the speaker’s position within the community<sup>2</sup>.

## 2. Research objectives

This study—which is part of a more extensive research into unconventional greetings—aims at *identifying a series of forms / formulas of address, especially of greetings, used in contemporary Romanian public space* and analysing them on the levels of *structure* (formation mechanisms) and *function* (contextual pragmatic values). Alongside established (grammaticalised / clichéd) units, other forms are recorded, conveying new semantic and stylistic values that are determined by situational constraints. The article discusses verbal structures used as greetings in contemporary Romanian, considering them, on the one hand, ritual forms of communication and, on the other, “ritual deviations”<sup>3</sup>.

Concretely, the paper aims at:

- presenting the class of greetings as speech acts;
- establishing a typology within the class in question;

<sup>1</sup>“A criterion to distinguish greetings from other stereotypical formulas in everyday communication is provided by the analysis of the typology of conversational turns that typically occur in the case of greetings. Whereas anniversary exchanges require in reply an expression of gratitude (*happy birthday / thank you*), greetings usually occur in a particular type of adjacency pair, which is deeply ritualised and characterised by the presence of a form of greeting in both first and second position and, at least prototypically, of the so-called “echo-response”, namely the repetition as a preferably unmarked complement of the same form that appeared in the first element (such as *hello / bello*). However, in actual everyday communication, there are only a few greetings that are conceived as canonical adjacency pairs and, at the same time, there are some forms that are difficult to assign exclusively to the category of expressing greeting or gratitude, such as *good night*, which may imply both an echo-reply and the answer *Thank you, and the same to you*, which is typical of anniversary wishes” (Pietrini, 2010, p. 238–239, orig. Italian).

<sup>2</sup>“The close connection existing between greeting formulas and the social structure of the community who employs them, with its hierarchy of values, cultural stereotypes and conceptual patterns, allows one to grasp from the choice to use a certain greeting significant clues regarding the type of social and personal relationships that exist between the participants in an interaction” (Pietrini, 2010, p. 235, orig. Italian).

<sup>3</sup>The phrase is taken from Hobjilă (2008) (orig. Romanian).

- analysing the units considered in the case of online and face-to-face communication;
- expressing opinions regarding the peculiarities of greetings in Romanian culture;
- identifying the main features of the Romanian pragmatic type with respect to the parameter investigated.

The corpus is collected from the Internet.

As methodology for the proper decoding of the functions of verbal greetings, the study employs the theoretical apparatus specific to discourse analysis, psycho- and sociolinguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, ethnology, and anthropology.

The greeting speech acts investigated belong to the *individual level of language*. Some of these are frequently used by a large number of speakers; thus, they stop being language facts and enter the language system, thereby passing to the *universal level of language*<sup>4</sup>.

Two categories of verbal greetings can be distinguished:

- *conventional* (which are established, stylistically neutral, and acknowledged / used by the entire community of locutors), and
- *unconventional* (which are recent imports, mostly in English, calques—recreating the original pattern or borrowed without any changes from the source language—and innovations).

### 3. The Romanian system of address

*Addressing* is a specific means of relating a locutor to an allocutor in communicative processes. The relationship between the two actors in a communication may be established exclusively on the linguistic level, or (also) on the non-linguistic and paralinguistic level.

Addressing

- implies two fundamental actions: “designating the receiver by means of nominal or pronominal forms and requiring him/her to adopt this role, by using the vocative case (with a specific intonation) and / or the imperative form of utterances” (DSL, s.v., p. 27, orig. Romanian);
- is realised in speech by means of a *set of markedly ritualised / standardised terms and expressions*: “In general, these expressions have got, besides their deictic value (to express the ‘second person’, that is, to refer to the receiver of the message), a relational value, which serves to establish between the interlocutors a certain type of socio-affective connection (in an extended acceptance of deixis, one could say that these expressions pertain both to ‘personal deixis’ and to ‘social deixis’)” (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002, p. 30, orig. French).

The linguistic means used in the realisation of the act of address are divided into two categories (see Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002, p. 30; DSL, p. 27):

- nouns* or *substitutes* (adjectives and numerals used as nouns): proper names (first names, family names, nicknames, diminutives, and so on) and appellatives, such as generic personal appellatives (*domn* ‘sir’, *doamnă* ‘madam’, *femeie* ‘woman’, *băiat* ‘boy’, and others), generic kinship terms (*mamă* ‘mother’, *tată* ‘father’, and so on), names of interpersonal relationships (*coleg*, *-ă* ‘colleague’, masculine and feminine form; *vecin*, *-ă* ‘neighbour’, masculine and feminine form), names of titles, positions and occupations (*director* ‘principal’, *decan* ‘dean’, *ministru* ‘minister’, and others), evaluating or qualifying names (*mincinos* ‘liar’, *leneș* ‘lazy’, *viclean* ‘cunning’, *harnic* ‘hardworking’, and so on), and endearments or insults, in the vocative case (*prostule* ‘stupid’, *dragule* ‘dear’, *drace* ‘devil’, *zîno* ‘fairy’, and others).
- pronouns*. In Romanian there exists a very wide range of pronouns that are used in polite address<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup>For the discussion regarding the levels of language, see Coșeriu (1992–1993, p. 27–47).

<sup>5</sup>“My ears are often ‘grated’ by some forms of address that I hear on the television, by the lack of respect that is conveyed by certain means of talking about / with others. Thus, sometimes, various TV show hosts hobnob with remarkable figures, with elderly guests, anyway, with people with whom / about whom they should talk more politely, observing the traditions of the Romanian people and also the Romanian language, which provides so many means of polite expression. [...] Average politeness is a characteristic of the Romanian language that allows for nuances in speech which do not exist in other languages

Moreover, there are three grammatical means of expressing address: *familiarity* (by means of *tu* ‘you’, personal pronoun, second person, singular form + verb, second person, singular), *average politeness* (by means of *dumneata* personal pronoun denoting politeness + verb, second person, singular), and *absolute politeness* (*dumneavoastră*, politeness pronoun + verb, second person, plural).

The principles that govern the choice of a certain element or another in the Romanian system of terms of address are in agreement with a number of variables: “social status and role relationships between interlocutors (formal terms of address vs familiar terms of address)” (Manu Magda, 2010, orig. Romanian); socio-professional status (names of functions, occupations, titles); “the age factor is usually marked by the use of + / – polite forms of address (literary: *domnule* ‘sir’, *doamnă* ‘madam’; familiar: *nene* ‘mister’, *unchiule* ‘uncle’, *tanti* ‘lady’, *tataie* ‘pop’, *mamaie* ‘granny’, *șefule* ‘boss (masculine)’, *șefă* ‘boss (feminine)’, and so on; or regional: *babule* ‘pop’, *bade* ‘mister’, *dodă* ‘sister’, *gagă* ‘lady’, *lele* ‘missus’, *leliță* ‘little lady’, *liță* ‘gal’, *mătușă* ‘aunt’, and others), associated with pronouns denoting a + / – equality relationship between interlocutors (*tu*, *dumneata*, *mata*, *matale*, *tale*, *tălică* ‘you’) (*ibidem*); variations of names denoting kinship, attributed in colloquial speech in communities that are differentiated from a diastratic perspective.

Depending on the degree of formality of the context of communication, the choice of forms of address occurs as follows:

- a) “in informal situations, marked by intimacy, familiar terms of address are employed—vocative forms of proper names or appellatives and second-person singular forms of verbs” (*ibidem*, orig. Romanian);
- b) “formal situations, which are defined by social distance and pertinent differences relating to social status, correspond to more complex forms of address (formal terms of address), associated with second-person plural forms of verbs” (*ibidem*, orig. Romanian).

and which we should use when we feel the utmost need to hobnob with the elderly or people that are our superior in rank / position, and so on. [...] The richness of forms of the politeness pronoun, its impressive development—its variation according to degrees of politeness, the preservation in language of old forms (‘domnia sa’ [your lordship]) alongside new forms that they result in (‘dumneasa’)—are proofs of the old age and importance of this pronoun in Romanian and mirror the mentality and psychology of the Romanian people, its attitudes and behavioural models, which have been established in time. The Romanians’ psychosocial and behavioural models make up the solid foundation that underpins such forms—of the personal pronoun of politeness, as well as other forms of expressing reverence (addressing someone by using the terms ‘doamnă / domnule’ [Madam / Sir], ‘mamă-soacră’ [Mother-in-law], ‘domnule inginer’ [Engineer] instead of ‘domnule X’ [Mister X], and so on). By contrast, what can one see today? On this basis—which is deeply rooted and perhaps as old as the Romanian people—there occurs the superimposition of superficial forms, which are calqued on foreign models that were, in their turn, created from other bases. I refer here, of course, to the American pattern. We could say about the Americans that their nation ‘was born democratic’. The American democratic system allows for a social—up—down—‘game’ defined by variability and mobility on the scale of (social, economic, and political) success; thus, there are unstable social and interpersonal relationships within all social strata and socio-professional classes, and these relationships may change over night (rich > poor; somebody > nobody). Naturally, these aspects are reflected in one’s behaviour and attitude towards other people, and also in one’s language. [...] The ground on which the English (American) politeness system is built is completely different from the one to which the Romanian system corresponds, which was created on a less flexible basis and were influenced by the Orient; the Romanian system, in which the expectation of deference is greater, is found at the border between the model of oriental caste system (see the Romanian political system, which is only flexible on a horizontal level, but not on a vertical one) and the model of western democracy (which is more active in the cultural-artistic field). One should also mention here poverty—whether we like it or not, this is characteristic of the Romanian people—, which facilitated people’s living together (closeness appeared naturally, it was not sought or imposed) and, therefore, the precise delimitation of those people that one considers close (family, friends and neighbours) from everyone else, towards whom address is varied: average politeness (towards one’s equals), absolute politeness (towards one’s superior in rank / position). Thus, different interpersonal relationships call for different means of expressing politeness. What happens in the Romanian mass media—the adoption of foreign forms into the completely different autochthonous context—is not only wrong, but also simply ridiculous. It is ridiculous for some ‘nobodies’ that consider themselves on a par with important figures, grey-haired persons who could be their grandparents, and that do not understand—or do not accept—that the Romanian people’s common sense does not allow for this equality. Or they just go with the ‘flow’, this wave that carries us all westwards... [...] Why do the respect for the existing autochthonous background and people’s common sense become obsolete? Why do we have to parrot foreign models over and over again? For God’s sake, why can’t we be DIFFERENT? Why do we blindly adopt western models that are entirely unrelated to autochthonous psychological and moral identity? Why do we avoid our own models of expression / address and the corresponding genuine Romanian language? Why do we avoid our essential identity?” (Andrei, 2005, orig. Romanian).

At the same time, the choice of vocatives and pronominal allocutives is based on aspects regarding the symmetry / asymmetry of interpersonal relationships.

## 4. Greetings—addressive subtypes of expressive speech acts

### 4.1. Conceptual delineation

When this paper was written, in Romanian specialised literature one was unable to find a study that approached greetings from the perspective proposed here. There is only a book from 1984 (Pietreanu) and several random articles (see the bibliography), which discuss traditional greetings and pay little attention to new means of address and the functions they fulfil in communication.

Greeting speech acts were defined in various ways, according to the pragmatic mechanisms involved in their structure. Thus, the *greeting* is:

- a communicative behaviour, by means of which a speaker shows his / her availability towards the interlocutor;
- “a deliberately communicative behaviour, which is expressed through linguistic devices that are established by everyday language use and are significant for the sociocultural norms of politeness” (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 8, orig. Romanian);
- “a communicative, gestural or verbal (or both gestural and verbal) behaviour, whose significance is known by a social micro- or macro-group and which is used as a token of one’s attention, respect and politeness towards another person or group” (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 29, orig. Romanian);
- “a word or gesture of affection, affinity or deference, often formal, towards a person when he / she is met or taken leave of” (Sabatini & Coletti, 2005, orig. Italian);
- “a means of expressing *interest* and *willingness* towards the addressees or *surprise* to meet them” (Necula, 2012, p. 7, orig. Romanian);
- an “initiating kind of expressive speech act” (orig. Romanian), followed by another responsive or consecutive act of greeting, which establishes a relation of structural complementariness with the previous act (see Necula, 2012, p. 10).

As regards the moment when a greeting is addressed, this type of speech act does not display a fixed position in a verbal episode, as it may be placed at the beginning or end of such a construction, or even inside it.

### 4.2. Verbal greetings, as self-presentational acts

A verbal greeting is an essential unit in an interaction; it is a speech act opened / oriented towards the interlocutor. Prototypically, greeting acts have two functions: *ritual* (ensures the observation of the maxims listed for the politeness principle) and *strategic* (guarantees discursive cohesion by eliminating conversational pauses) (cf. also DSL, s.v. *act*, p. 17–18).

Greeting is an illocutionary act, “achieved through the use of language in concrete communication situations” (DSL, s.v. *act*, p. 18, orig. Romanian) that “associate the propositional content of an utterance with a specific conventional force, determined by the sender’s communicative intentions” (DSL, s.v. *ilocuționar* ‘illocutionary’, p. 256, orig. Romanian). As such, a greeting is likely to carry a truth value (thus, the act is *constative*, see DSL, s.v. *constativ* ‘constative’, p. 135) and, at the same time, a *performative* potential (its realisation is successful or unsuccessful, depending on the addressee’s decoding competence) (see Austin, 2005 and Searle, 1972—speech act theory).

Verbal greetings pertain to the category of *expressive* speech acts (see Proost, 2009, p. 997; Degand, 2009, p. 1013). Through the intention associated by the locutor with the speech act performed, the latter expresses “a certain psychological state or attitude, determined by a property or action that can be linked to the sender or receiver” (DSL, s.v. *ilocuționar* ‘illocutionary’, p. 256, orig. Romanian).

The present research starts from acknowledging the migration of certain greetings that are specific to informal registers of communication to standard Romanian (i.e., their position in language use is abandoned in favour of the one in the language system, which leads to new stylistic applications), as a consequence of the value shifts that occurred in post-totalitarian Romania. Alongside other colloquial verbal expressions of social deixis, greetings have the role of signalling a locutor's orientation towards the allocutor in contemporary Romanian. On this level, they function as *indices of allocutivity* ("linguistic markers of the *conative function* (of address) and *phatic function* (of preserving contact between interlocutors), and they are proofs of the attention that interlocutors pay to one another during interaction", Manu Magda, 2009, p. 459–460, orig. Romanian).

The main function that greetings fulfil in communication is *linguistic self-presentation*. Presentation "is the linguistic operation that corresponds to the intention to determine the *mode of existence* of a *being* (or *process*)" (Charaudeau, 1992, p. 302, orig. French). By means of greetings, locutors express their intention to determine their own way of being by establishing a connection with interlocutors (the *constative / descriptive* component of the speech act initiated) and, at the same time, activate / materialise this intention by synchronising the utterance act with the performance / coming into being of the propositional content performed (the *performative* component).

The following analysis will show how some of the units of analysis considered may be linked to other pragmatic aspects than those that are characteristic of societies (such as the Romanian one claims to be) defined by the principle of acknowledging and sharing customs regarding hierarchically organised role relationships (in which the fundamental criterion in the choice of greetings is their appropriateness / relevance to (see Sperber & Wilson, 1996—relevance theory) the social situation in which a locutor is found in relation to the interlocutor).

Therefore, *a greeting is a self-reflexive presentational speech act, by means of which a locutor expresses an intention to agree / disagree with the prescriptions of the code of pragmatic politeness that is specific to the linguistic community in question.*

#### 4.3. Linguistic and pragmatic functions

Greetings fulfil various functions in the process of communication:

- *conative* function: issuing a perlocutionary challenge to one's partner to take part in a dialogue ("addressing and designating the interlocutor, indicating the end of a speaking turn and designating the 'successor', indicating relationship, and so on", Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002, p. 31, orig. French);
- *phatic* function: in distance / mediated dialogue, when temporary gaps occur, a locutor may (re)issue other verbal expressions as greetings, in view of assessing the allocutor's interest in the continuation of the dialogue;
- *metalinguistic* function: a locutor mentions / designates, by using an explicit performative verb, with or without an accusative form denoting the beneficiary, the act of greeting by means of utterances such as "(Te) salut" [(you.ACC) greet.IND.PRES.1SG 'I greet you']<sup>6</sup> and "Te-am salutat" [you.ACC=have(I) greeted 'I have greeted you'] (these constructions may themselves function as actual greetings);
- *naming (identifying)* function: when they meet or take leave, interlocutors do not have to say each other's names, but they ought to say hello to one another; the way in which the greeting is expressed becomes a distinguishing sign for the addresser;
- *social* function: from a social viewpoint, greetings have an integrating role. There are rural communities (whose number keeps decreasing, due to the expansion of urbanisation) in which locals greet people whose acquaintance they did not make in advance.

<sup>6</sup>I have come across the answer "You are doing your duty".

#### 4.4. The culturally-conditioned significance of greeting(s)

4.4.1. The choice of variants from the allocutive system of a language is made in agreement with the sociocultural conventions of that linguistic space<sup>7</sup>, which vacillate from one linguistic territory to another depending on the richness of the inventory of forms of address that the territories possess.

As expressive speech acts, greetings need to be discussed from the perspective of pragmalinguistics and sociolinguistics. Besides the strictly informative component that a greeting may activate, it also actualises another component, the affective one, which carries the illocutionary force of the respective utterance. In use, one can identify situations in which the propositional content of an expressed greeting does not tally with the addresser's intention. This is specific to context-bound greetings (see, especially, formal situations of communication, which demand the observation of a certain greeting protocol), which one may call *conformity greetings*; suitability to the situation of communication determines the suspension of any affective attitude. From this perspective, greetings are verbal supports based on which honest or dissimulated feelings are conveyed.

The felicity conditions for a greeting are fulfilled only if the allocutor can correctly decode the message expressed by the addresser (if the message is validated according to the addresser's expectations).

4.4.2. In Romanian culture, as in other cultures, greetings function as verbal expressions that concentrate the *modus vivendi* of the person performing them. Greetings store locutors' *encyclopedic knowledge* and interlocutors' *conversational history*, their temporary predisposition. People that do not exchange greetings are chided by the community, who casts upon them unappealable judgments, such as "Nu are cei șapte ani de acasă" ('They lack the manners that they should have been taught at home'), "Bună ziua, căciulă, că stăpânul n-are gură!" ('Good day, hat, I see your master does not have a mouth', said about someone who does not greet), and others. The person that does not say hello or bid farewell is stigmatised as a simple, uneducated / conceited individual. Some contemporary locutors' indifference to complete the ritual of greeting is more and more often recorded in oral conversation and in written (electronic) interaction<sup>8</sup>. Non-greeting is steadily becoming a form of greeting, as putting the custom of greeting into practice is construed as belittling. In what follows, two divergent opinions (excerpted from a dialogue found on an online forum of discussions) are adduced as examples, with respect to the absence / presence of the obligation to greet in present-day society:

*A. – I do not think greeting is very important. Many times, I "forget" to greet and I am often reprimanded for this, which I find quite bothersome, because I do not consider I have to greet, just as I am not obliged to reply. Moreover, greeting by means of "servus" is a custom dating back to the*

<sup>7</sup>"Psychologically, the feeling of empathy or respect is similar, or perhaps even identical, in all humans, but its external expression is determined by cultural models of behaviour" (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 16, orig. Romanian). "[...] greetings are selected according to sociolinguistic rules, which determine the use of terms that are considered appropriate both for the interlocutor's status and the concrete situation of communication. As a form of communication, a greeting reveals the specific nature of a situation, but also the specific aspects of a certain culture, of everyday, common aptitudes, which are difficult to decode by an outsider interlocutor" (Cojocari, 2008, orig. Romanian).

<sup>8</sup>The main rules of greeting of the Romanian people are: "it is appropriate for men to say hello to women, the young to the elderly, subalterns to their superiors, newcomers to the people that are already present in a certain place, the person walking to the person standing still. People that are unacquainted may greet one another especially when there is the goal of establishing a social contact, which can be made between any kind of people, *thus even between strangers*. Politeness requires that we say hello to strangers when we enter an institution (a business establishment), an office, a train compartment or lift, a small shop, and so on. However, one does not greet strangers in a big shop, a railway station, a post office, on a bus or tram. In a city, strangers do not greet each other, as opposed to people in villages, who exchange greetings even if they do not know one another (well). When the greeting is addressed to a group, one does not have to shake hands with every member; if one does shake hands, it is advisable that one should start with the persons who ought to be treated with more respect (superiors, the elderly, women, and others). When the group is very numerous, shaking hands may be omitted and only the verbal greeting is expressed, which may or may not be accompanied by a slight nod of the head and leaning forward of the body" (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 17–18, orig. Romanian).

time of the Romans, when slaves were obliged to greet their masters with “servus” (I am your slave), to show their subordination to the master [...].

**I do not say servus to anyone, especially not to my “superiors”, but neither to those who are approximately on the same level with me or lower, because I am nobody’s servant. However, I do say “servus” to children I meet outside my block of flats, who greet me with “how do you do”.**

**B. – Well, where is the respect if you do not say hello to people you know and where is education and respect if you do not reply to a greeting? [...]**

A. – I think that we should first and foremost clarify what everyone here understands by “respect” and “education” (we have already defined them many times, but I do not mind repeating). Secondly, is greeting an obligation?! (In this case, pardon me, but respect means submissiveness, and I cannot agree with this significance, even if most people actually mean this by respect (namely submissiveness)). However, I believe respect means equality, and one can develop a respectful attitude through education (not taming) based on persuasion (not on enforcement)! [...]

**B. – Yes, greeting is an obligation! When you pass by persons you know, you treat them with respect if you greet. If you pass by them as if they were an advertising board, where is the respect? Does saying “good afternoon” imply that you are not equal? That one is the other’s subordinate? So you do not believe that respect means treating a person with the same consideration that he / she treats you. [online, orig. Romanian]**

4.4.3. Neutral greetings, which were imposed by the behavioural patterns from the communist period, on the one hand, and the abandonment of any code of ethics regarding the performance of greetings in the post-communist era, on the other, are the extremes that generated the situation of greeting in the contemporary Romanian language.

In the totalitarian period, verbal interaction was built on respect for hierarchical interpersonal relationships, a situation that had repercussions on the adequacy of one’s address to a given context. After the fall of communism and the disengagement of language from the control of censorship, there is less and less strictness in discursive practices, especially as regards the construction of means of interpersonal verbal address.

Deference, as the constitutive model of pre-revolutionary conversational participations, is dismissed by the *familiarity*, *relaxation*, and *democratisation of intercommunicative strategies*. The place of pre-democracy professionalised discursive rigour (pertaining to “wooden language”) was occupied by *relaxed* (oral and written) texts, which are free of any formal constraints, *de-contextualised* (conceived without taking into account whether the texts are appropriate to the situation of communication) and *heterogeneous* (they are a mixture of autochthonous models and recent borrowings). (For a description of contemporary social mechanisms and practices of communication, cf. also Magda, 2004, p. 255–278 and Magda, 2007, p. 62–101). Social distance, previously determined by the asymmetry of social roles and formal contexts of communication, is considerably reduced or erased by the familiar proximity that was instituted after social and especially moral boundaries were lifted, which occurred as a result of the demise of the totalitarian regime. It is increasingly frequently that we use in address a sort of Anglo-Americanised Romanian language and promote the respect of clique solidarity, of de-conventionalising the conventional, of camaraderie along the lines of Balkan friendliness<sup>9</sup>. Established terms of address are consciously repudiated by virtue of a *verbal epidemic* of poorly managed hobnobbing<sup>10</sup>; *we talk to one another on a par*, irrespective

<sup>9</sup>For the connotation of the term *Balkan*, see Felecan (2013).

<sup>10</sup>A correct diagnosis for the contemporary Romanian society regarding the loss of the ability to speak in a civilised manner is found in the following description: “Hobnobbing is fashionable. It is the mark of clique cordiality, of victorious democracy, of ‘American’ sociability. [...] We thereby prove that we are ‘connected’, contemporary, globalised. [...] We hobnob. We are on a par. Friends. We were born yesterday. [...] ‘Dumneavoastră’ (‘you’, politeness pronoun) is only said mockingly, only when you want to express antipathy, distrust, contempt. Only hobnobbing is ‘normal’. [...] when you may hobnob with anyone, when hobnobbing becomes a habitual activity, the tender or friendly prestige and miracle of the use of ‘you’ is degraded. Normally, we should need to work our way to be able to use ‘you’; one should get there as a result of a delicate chemistry of emotions, a

of context or social status. From this point of view, contemporary Romanian is a space of inadequacy<sup>11</sup>, of improvisation, in which every person feels he / she has got the right to address another as he / she pleases and in which, paradoxically, however, people do not get along and any attempt of social dialogue eventually founders into polemics.

On the one hand, local mass media, who feels they have the right to question every rule of conduct (even the usefulness of mutual respect), and, on the other, the import of foreign verbal behavioural patterns, which are not in agreement with the national ethnic and moral spirit and stem from the rush to integrate into the Western-European and transatlantic trend, have led to the appearance of a *hybrid inventory* of verbal forms and practices. We speak and, implicitly, greet in a language in which norms are established in use and the use goes so far as to ignore the commonsensical practice of greeting (see the impoliteness that the President of Romania, Traian Băsescu, showed on various occasions of formal communication, by refusing to shake hands with certain public figures)<sup>12</sup>:

*President Traian Băsescu did not shake hands with Gabriel Oprea, Radu Stroe and Relu Fenechiiu at the swearing-in ceremony from Cotroceni Palace.*

*President Băsescu shook hands with Prime Minister Victor Ponta and Vice Prime Minister Liviu Dragnea, after they were sworn in.*

*Subsequently, Vice Prime Minister Gabriel Oprea was sworn in. He then walked towards President Băsescu to hand him the signed oath, according to the protocol. Oprea gave the document to the President, who took it, neither of the two showing any sign of wanting to shake hands.*

*President Băsescu did not shake hands with the ministers Radu Stroe and Relu Fenechiiu either [online, orig. Romanian].*

*After a ceremony in which the members of the European Parliament, who were elected on Sunday,*

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patient boost of trust and a reciprocally acknowledged affinity. ‘You’ is a way of rephrasing—in the context of intimacy—the institution of respect. On the contrary, the escalation of hobnobbing establishes indifference, stereotypy, greyness. Distance between people becomes monotonous, hierarchies are erased, affective nuances of communication become irrelevant. [...]

Every now and then, it seems to me that most of everyday wrongs are the result of a bad management of hobnobbing, the effect of its excess. The government indifferently hobnobs with journalists, journalists playfully hobnob with the government, ministers hobnob with institutions, institutions hobnob with citizens, citizens hobnob with one another and we all hobnob with Europe. Differences, dignities, etiquette, protocol, are all old-fashioned. We are sinking in the homogeneity of ‘you’, and ‘you’ is semantically turning into ‘nobody’. We could use some polish. We could use a short politeness epidemic” (Pleșu, 2006, p. 77–79, orig. Romanian).

<sup>11</sup>In the performance of expressive speech acts, greetings implicitly, the Romanian language proves to be conservative as regards acknowledging the figure that holds the discursive power and observing social distance: “[...] in Romanian culture, the obligation and priority to initiate this act usually falls on the speaker whose status is inferior. Moreover, the latter chooses greetings by adapting them to the addressee’s identity, in order to indicate first and foremost the differences in age and social status (and, sometimes, even gender-related differences). The Romanian speakers’ sensibility to the parameter of discursive power and social distance is even mirrored by the behaviour of the locutors with a superior status. They may encourage the decrease of distances in communication and show readiness to negotiate the interpersonal relationship in favour of the inferior allocutor, by choosing to reply using an asymmetrical greeting, perhaps from the colloquial register” (Necula, 2012, p. 14, orig. Romanian).

<sup>12</sup>Nienhaus (2009, orig. Italian) talks about the tendency to replace gestural greetings with verbal ones: “The transformation of certain gestures into verbal formulas does not stand for a general tendency to reduce greetings to words. The initial and final parts of an act of communication are, instead, characterised by the impact of gestures and external presentation of interlocutors even more so than central parts. When we meet a person, our first impression usually refers to their appearance: facial expression, gestures, posture, and clothing. The dominance of our seeing ability in the perception of reality determines the initial contact with another person. In the contexts of intercultural communication, which are determined by the assessment of interaction efficiency, there is the tendency to ritualise and normalise these aspects. It is no coincidence that, faced with a fashionable diminishing of formality in the world of business, commerce and politics, we pay great attention to the first impression that may trigger the beginning of negotiation, and so on. Apart from representatives of the army and other similar public officials, today, perhaps, only ‘bankers’ (and politicians, to some extent) support and accept the ‘division’ (dark suit, reserved demeanour, forced smile, and so on). The decrease in the use of individual presentation is obviously derived from the intention to reduce the risk of making a ‘fool’ of oneself from the first eye contact, while, on the other hand, one becomes exposed to the levelling of grey uniformity”.

received their certificates of Romanian representatives in the European Parliament, the leader of the Great Romania Party, when asked about how he commented the fact that **the head of state refused to shake hands with him**, stated that Bănescu “is not civilised” [online, orig. Romanian].

Former presidents Ion Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu participated today, at Cotroceni Palace, in the ceremony celebrating the turning of ten years since Romania was invited to enter NATO. [...] The last time when the three appeared together in the same picture was on December 1, 2009, but then **Traian Bănescu refrained from shaking hands** with Ion Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu [online, orig. Romanian].

The Minister of External Affairs, Andrei Marga, was given what could at least be called a hostile welcome by President Traian Bănescu at Cotroceni Palace. After being sworn in, **Marga walked towards the head of state to shake hands, but the latter hesitated**. Nevertheless, he did say some hard words to Marga, according to the expression on his face, which was caught by the cameras, and then shook his hand in a hurry, for the sake of protocol [online, orig. Romanian].

4.4.4. Preface and epilogue to any standardised dialogue, greetings convey information, on the one hand, about the locutor’s psychological and social status and, on the other, about the context of communication. Based on the pattern of heuristic verbal behaviour (see GALR, p. 834), greetings fulfil a structural function in dialogues, with the adjacency pair *greeting – reply to greeting* underlying the organisation of discourse: “What the first party says both conditions and creates an expectation for what the second party will say” (Duranti, 1997, p. 245).

Finally, greetings are speech acts by means of which locutors demonstrate the level of moral, social and intellectual education they possess. The premises of a dialogue are established based on how we greet or are greeted. Greeting is a culture-bound communicative behaviour, governed by each nation’s specific differences. Regardless of the parameters that determine a culture’s means of manifestation, there is no culture in which individuals do not preface their verbal contact (an actual dialogue) or do not mark their meeting on a verbal or gestural level.

## 5. Greeting forms

According to a traditional approach, the *greeting* is “a form of politeness, established in use, therefore a conventional form of verbal expression of deferential address” (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 83, orig. Romanian).

*As expressions of greeting communicative behaviour, greetings are utterances or groups of utterances by means of which the greeting act is expressed and whose aim is to convey attitudes with a psychosocial value.* Along with other terms of address, greetings are lexical elements used in polite speech.

Established greetings are clichéd, stereotyped, petrified linguistic structures, fixed by means of repeated usage and determined by locutors’ sociocultural behaviour in various situations of communication.

Speakers’ linguistic attitude during greeting speech acts is *pragmatic* par excellence, as they make a *stylistic selection* between the possibilities offered by the system: interlocutors do not necessarily create new means of address<sup>13</sup>, but *un-create* and then *re-create* or *re-build* greetings from bases that exist in the language stock: “[...] in the act of greeting, one cannot talk about creation in the sense of linguistic ‘innovation’, but as functional imitation [...]. It is not a passive imitation of linguistic models and forms, but their employment according to the communicative intentions of every speaker” (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 44, orig. Romanian).

The actualisation of greetings<sup>14</sup> is influenced, to a variable extent, by objective and subjective coordinates, such as:

<sup>13</sup>“The field of greetings is probably more dynamic than one would believe it to be, but speakers have a hard time noticing its changes: because the basic elements are preserved and those that are no longer fashionable do not disappear immediately. As in the case of personal names, fashion determines the frequency of use, but does not eliminate anything from language” (Zafiu, 2003, orig. Romanian).

<sup>14</sup>“[...] the use of greetings is not only a matter of speakers’ individual freedom, but also of observing the norms of conduct

- the temporal moment when an interaction takes place (in the morning, at noon, in the evening);
- the time period in which the locutors did not communicate;
- the interlocutors' age and gender;
- the number of participants in the interaction;
- the socio-professional status of the participants in the intercommunicative act;
- the nature of the social relationships between the interlocutors;
- the degree of formality / semi-formality / informality of the interaction;
- the level of distance / familiarity of interpersonal relationships.

### 5.1. The pragmatic algorithm of greetings

Being *deeply ritualised* and *stereotypical*, *open* and *potential* speech acts, verbal greetings are aimed at triggering a verbal / nonverbal reaction from the addressee. Conceived as a *bimembral construction*, a greeting therefore demands the occurrence of an adjacency pair, revealing the intention of connecting the locutor's self to the interlocutor and implying that the receipt of this offer be confirmed by the interlocutor's paying his / her due. The latter cannot be indifferent to the addresser, but has to manifest his / her gratitude by replying with a kind of "verbal gift" of the same nature: "In this way, participants continually display their awareness of how their use of language contributes to the constitution of the social event they were engaged in" (Bublitz, 2009, p. 891–892).

A *verbal greeting* is a *targeted construction*, uttered in numerous and various moments of everyday existence. It is, perhaps, one of the most common expressive speech acts and implies the existence of at least *two participants*, both of whom are *active elements* of greetings as behavioural linguistic acts.

Depending on the *external variable of the realisation of greetings* (the channel of communication), one can identify:

- greetings typical of "real" communication (face-to-face conversation) vs
- greetings typical of mediated communication (by means of television / radio / Internet / mobile phones).

As regards *linguistic and extralinguistic factors that are specific to the process of communication*, greetings may be *conventional* or *unconventional*.

The sources underlying the formation of the investigated units comprised, on the one hand, *internal material* (changes of older, conventional greetings, original combinations or functional transformations of certain traditional forms and phrases) and, on the other, *external references* (borrowings).

Greetings have different realisations in every language and also within the same language, in its diverse functional variants. Thus, there is a series of *circumstantial verbal expressions* used in the realisation of greetings in Romanian, which vary according to the characters in a communicative act, its context, the interlocutors' status / role, and the nature of the communicative relationship. Therefore, one may distinguish between greetings prompted by meeting / farewell situations, birthdays / name days, weddings, funerals, and religious celebrations.

Due to the mixture of communicative behaviours (the transfer of unconventional greetings into contexts reserved for conventional forms, a change stemming from individuals' decision to stop supporting hierarchical interpersonal relationships, to delete social distance and, implicitly, deference, but to replace the latter with homogenising egalitarianism), one cannot talk today about a professionalisation of greetings according to *diastatic* and *diaphasic* parameters<sup>15</sup> (nowadays, perhaps, their distribution is

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that exist in our linguistic community. The rules of 'linguistic etiquette' that govern the use of greetings originate both in the Romanian language *in se* and especially in that *to be appropriate*, which exists in our civilisation's code of behaviour" (Pietreanu, 1984, p. 24, orig. Romanian).

<sup>15</sup>Coşeriu (1992–1993, p. 38, orig. Romanian) talks about three major types of linguistic variety: "*diatopic variety* (space-wise), *diastatic variety* (between social and cultural strata in a community), and *diaphasic variety* (between ways of speaking, determined by the very situation of speech and the elements of this situation, namely who does the talking, with whom, about what, in what circumstances)".

only diatopic<sup>16</sup>). Instead, there occurs a specialisation of greetings according to “real” / virtual media of communication. Therefore, the analysis of contemporary greetings is no longer effective as regards the parameter investigated and with respect to variables that once proved functional and diagnostic in relation to Romanian addressive behaviour. This is the reason why the present paper proposes a descriptive approach to facts, whereas the observations noted have a particular rather than generalising nature.

In what follows, the study discusses some *performative expressions specific to unconventional greetings* in “real” and “mediated” contemporary Romanian<sup>17</sup>. The abundance and variety of these expressions are valid arguments for the *dynamic nature* that defines this sector of contemporary vocabulary<sup>18</sup>.

Thus, the units investigated are *actual contemporary unconventional greetings*, or forms that became *unconventional circumstantially* (by means of *combinations, lexical and / or semantic changes*) but are based on conventional greetings.

## 5.2. Greetings in “real” communication

Verbal interaction takes place in agreement with certain communication rituals that determine the cohesion index of the adjacency pair *greeting* (active) – *greeting reply* (reactive)<sup>19</sup>. Locutors in every linguistic community develop a symptomatic verbal behaviour, within which traditional components of an interaction (*stimuli–utterance* (greeting) + *reaction–utterance* (greeting reply)) are desemanticised as a result of their repeated use in fixed constructions, which is why they function as mere markers of interpersonal social contact. Prototypically, in Romanian, greeting utterances take the shape of noun phrases (*Bună dimineața / ziua / seara* ‘Good morning / afternoon / evening’, and so on), or verb phrases (*Te salut* [you.ACC greet.IND.PRES.1SG] ‘I greet you’).

### 5.2.1. Direct means

#### 5.2.1.1. The “avatar” type or “ritual introductions”<sup>20</sup> (conventional greetings).

*Bună ziua* (‘good afternoon’), *Bună seara* (‘good evening’), *Bună dimineața* (‘good morning’), *Noaptea bună* (‘good night’), and *La revedere* (‘goodbye’) are established, ritualised kinds of greetings, stylistically neutral, used by a locutor when meeting an interlocutor (the first four) or taking leave of him / her (all five). These conventional forms take various (unconventional) shapes obtained by means of *inversion*: *Ziua bună*, *Seara bună*, or the *insertion of a modifier* and the *change of the head noun*: *La bună vedere* (‘until

<sup>16</sup>“The inhabitants of Bucharest greet one another with ‘bună’ (‘hello’). Only Transylvanians still say ‘servus’, but not all of them. In Cluj, Sibiu and Banat, they use ‘ciau’ or ‘ceau’. Although all Romanians are familiar with ‘servus’ and some use it even if they have nothing to do with the Ardeal region, the greeting is only used frequently in the area between Brașov and Covasna. In the regions with a Hungarian majority, the greeting suffered changes. Hungarians say ‘servus tok’ and reply ‘szia’” (a participant in a forum of discussions, [online](#), orig. Romanian).

<sup>17</sup>Unconventional greetings do not characterise contemporary Romanian exclusively; for instance, there are historical records according to which, in the interwar era, the inhabitants of the city of Ploiești used the question “What are you drinking?” as a greeting: “In interwar Ploiești, there used to be a bar for about every 200 inhabitants. One could talk business here and wait for train connections. Historians believe that this is what led to the municipality being known as the city of ‘What are you drinking?’. The inhabitants of Ploiești carry the burden of the myth that they are quite the party lovers and enjoy killing time in bars ever since the interwar period. Writers note the name of the city of ‘What are you drinking?’ and claim that this can be accounted for by the fact that the people of Ploiești do not greet each other as in other parts of the country, by means of common structures, but straight with the question ‘What are you drinking?’” ([online](#), orig. Romanian).

<sup>18</sup>The present study was not aimed at discussing particular situations of greeting usage (greeting forms specific to various rural areas in the country and various socio-professional circles (relating to religion, sport, occupations, and others)). The latter will be the object of further, more extensive diachronic and synchronic study on means of greeting in Romanian. At the same time, on a different occasion, the author aims at making a comparative research into greetings, that is, into the means in which these are realised in other languages of various backgrounds: Romance, Germanic, Slavic, and others.

<sup>19</sup>Liddicoat (2007, p. 106) calls the two elements of an adjacency pair *first pair part* and *second pair part*, underlining that the relationship between the two is determined by the first member of the pair: “Therefore, a question must be followed by an answer to be heard as a completed sequence: it cannot be followed by a greeting or a farewell even though these are also possibly SPPs [= second pair parts] in other contexts”.

<sup>20</sup>See footnote 3.

we meet again’, ‘see you again soon’). These *expressive transformations* are employed with an “archaising and localising stylistic intention” (Zafiu, 2003, orig. Romanian).

The code of verbal ethics recommends the use of *La revedere* (‘goodbye’) only when taking leave in an asymmetrical context (relative to the distribution of social roles). Thus, solely the person whose social status is superior (age- or rank-wise) ought to use this form of greeting. Nevertheless, in contemporary addressive practice, there exist situations of blatant breach of the aforementioned rule of address, occurring out of ignorance and lack of care, on the locutor’s side, to adapt to the communication situation<sup>21</sup> (for instance, a student says *La revedere* to a teacher when taking leave).

These *avatar-greetings* are lexical and semantic resources for the appearance of subsequent types.

### 5.2.1.2. The “renovated” type or “ritual deviations” (“revised” conventional greetings).

*Subtype actual ( clichéd) greeting + specifying the allocutor*: old greetings are subjected to a process of “refurbishment” through the addition of certain referential markers (which designate the addressee).

The greeting *Bună seara, România, bună seara, București!* (‘Good evening, Romania, good evening, Bucharest!’) was established by Andreea Esca, the longest-lasting news bulletin presenter in Romania.

The ritualised, stylistically neutral greeting *Bună seara* (‘Good evening’) deviates from the ritual through the metonymic mention made to the addressee.

*Bună seara, prieteni!* (‘Good evening, friends!’)—the greeting said upon entering the stage by Cristian Minculescu, the former lead singer of a Romanian rock band.

*Salutare, națiune!* (‘Greetings, nation!’)—the greeting addressed to his listeners by Andrei Gheorghe, the host of a radio show, *13–14 cu Andrei* (‘13 to 14 o’clock with Andrei’).

*Bună ziua / seara dumneavoastră și invitaților / ascultătorilor dumneavoastră!* (‘Good afternoon / evening to you and your guests / audience!’)

One needs to point out the abusive use of this greeting in certain television and radio shows, in which the presenter’s telephone guests join the talk by means of a superfluous successive indication of the addressees: the host, who is present on the set or in the studio, and the guests, who are on the set / in the studio or the alleged viewers / listeners from their homes: *Bună ziua / seara dumneavoastră și invitaților / ascultătorilor dumneavoastră!* (‘Good afternoon / evening to you and your guests / audience!’).

The presence of the beneficiary does not need to be lexically and grammatically marked

- by means of the politeness pronoun, which designates the first component of the referential phrase, i.e., the host, and
- by means of the noun *guest* in the singular / plural form, which designates the second component of the locutive reference,

as this presence is implied by the greeting. Greetings are not isolated, monologic speech acts; moreover, the addressee’s being mentioned, as an addition to actual greetings in the case of the aforementioned shows, does not ensure the activation of the greeting, which remains incomplete and only one-dimensionally actualised (or, when the guest / guests on the set greets / greet as well, the reply to the greeting is also actualised).

### *Subtype Bună!* (‘hello’)

From the conventional greeting *Bună ziua* (‘good afternoon’), there frequently occurs the shortened form *Bună*<sup>22</sup>, a sort of equivalent of English *Hi*. This does not have a perfect correspondent in Romanian,

<sup>21</sup>Here is the opinion of a participant in a thread on greetings from a forum of discussions: “[...] in every civilised country in the world, greeting signifies equality, impartiality, and respect. There is no differentiation in greeting. Only Romania, an extremely humble country, affords to have types of greetings in order to distinguish people according to their position on the social or financial ladder, their rank or class, and so on” [online, orig. Romanian].

<sup>22</sup>“How could this ‘Bună’ (‘hello’) be translated or with what could it be replaced? I would not know what to tell you! I have always had an aversion to it. It is juvenile showiness, conveyed and perpetuated through the ignorance or even education of adult parents, who boast on having smart and fashionable children! I have always found that the most appropriate greetings

as the feminine adjectival form *bună* ('good') demands a noun (*ziua* 'afternoon' / *seara* 'evening', carrying the semantic information) as the head of the phrase, because it bears no meaning by itself. There is the tendency to give *Bună* a polysemantic role, which encompasses the significance of all the other greetings related to various times of the day. This unspecific and unadjusted greeting is used by students from all forms of schooling to greet one another and, sadly, their teachers. The multiple hierarchy of the Romanian system of address imposes some restrictions on the use of this type of greeting, whose place is well delineated by a series of functional constraints regarding verbal markers of politeness<sup>23</sup>.

*Subtype (Să ai / aveți) o zi bună (și ție / tuturor)! ('Have a nice day' / 'And you, too', singular and plural forms)*

These forms entered the Romanian language as calque formations of English phrases: *Ai grijă de tine* ('Take care of yourself', used by locutors when taking leave) is an adaptation of the phrase *Take care*, whereas *Să ai / aveți o zi bună* ('Have a nice day') or *O zi bună (și ție / tuturor)* ('A good day' / 'the same to you / everyone')—with the allocutor marked by means of the dative case or a performative verb + / – subject: *Vă / îți urez și eu o zi bună* ('I also wish you a good day')—are adapted after *Have a nice day*. In the last case, the well-wishing semantic and pragmatic content is reinforced and, at the same time, the greeting is remotivated, while in the prototypical structure *Bună ziua* ('Good afternoon') the well-wishing can no longer be perceived. "The imitation of the foreign expression [*Have a nice day*] is not an exact calque, as it observes Romanian grammatical and lexical rules: the normal position of the adjective and the prototypical semantic affinity with the noun. The impression of 'foreign body' is not created by genuine deviations, but by the fact that the new structure appears as a rewriting of the greeting that is neutral par excellence—*bună ziua* ('good afternoon')" (Zafiu, 2003, orig. Romanian).

The phrase also takes other shapes, obtained by means of partially synonymous substitutions: *Să ai / aveți o noapte liniștită / un week-end reușit!* ('Have a restful night / a great weekend').

*Subtypes Hai, pa! / Bine, pa! ('Well, bye' / 'OK, bye')*

*Pa!*<sup>24</sup> is a conventional interjection-greeting, specific to the southern part of Romania and frequently occurring in youth and adult speech alike, in order to signal the end of a meeting. In standard use (as it was already described), the aforementioned greeting is indicative of interpersonal relationships that are symmetrical with respect to social and role status, thus suggesting the disappearance of social distance between individuals and encoding familiar (intimate) relationships.

When preceded by the predicative interjection *hai*, whose role is to verbally activate an action, the greeting *Pa!* has its meaning intensified, namely that of achieving a (temporary) discontinuance of a meeting, thereby hastening the end of the visual / aural connection between the interlocutors. *Hai* acts as a verbal intensifier of the action described by the meaning of the actual greeting and, at the same time, makes the action appear as an ultimatum.

*Raed Arafat, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health, stated on Wednesday evening for MEDIA-FAX that the doctor from Cluj who is said to have insulted a patient had an "abnormal" behaviour,*

were the worldly impartial 'Bună ziua' ('good afternoon') of the southerners and the Transylvanian folk forms 'Doamne ajută' ('God bless') or 'Dea Dumnezeu bine' ('May God give the best'), with the replies 'Să ai pace' ('May you have peace') and 'Să fii binecuvântat' ('May you be blessed')! The rest are instances of occidental emancipation that occurred in the wrong place!" [online, orig. Romanian]. "If these 'Bună' ('hello') and 'Servus' are used by the young when they greet everyone, including the elderly or strangers, this is an extremely ugly thing. How did this trend come about? I do not think this is a problem that affects Transylvania alone, but the entire Romanian nation. Whether you are from Transylvania, Moldova, Oltenia, or Muntenia, politeness is not only normal, but also compulsory. Perhaps nowadays politeness and the basic education one should receive at home are old-fashioned; everyone has to be 'cool' and 'trendy', to be in tune with what they see on the TV and in cheap magazines" [online, orig. Romanian].

<sup>23</sup>For a contrastive approach to this type of greeting in Romanian and Spanish, see Mihăilescu (2008, p. 427).

<sup>24</sup>Cf. German *pa*, Hungarian *Pá*. It is a greeting used for taking leave "by children and in speaking with children or, in a familiar context, between adults" (DEX, orig. Romanian). The greeting is synonymous with *La revedere!* ('goodbye').

which may be penalised by the College of Physicians.

According to local media, a 57-year-old patient from Cluj-Napoca, who had been diagnosed with cancer, had asked his family physician, Ionel Mircu, for referrals on several occasions, and the latter eventually refused to provide them. After the patient wanted to move to another family doctor, Mircu sent him an SMS with the following text: “Consider that all the holidays and benefits granted to you and your wife were gifts. You have got so little time to still enjoy your life. PS. **Well, bye, jerk**” [online, orig. Romanian].

Anca Cojocaru, this new “power girl” of the music industry, teaches us from experience how to say “**Well, bye**” and move on trustfully, without wasting our dreams and hopes. Today, the artist releases her first video, the one for the song “**Well, bye**”, directed and filmed by Alexandru Popescu, who gave us videos for artists like Akcent, Connect-R, Raluka, Adrian Sina, and many others [online, orig. Romanian].

What about you? How did you party? I want some juicy details. Kisses. **Well, bye!** [online, orig. Romanian].

Another type of contemporary greeting, derived through the same mechanism of combining lexemes from language, is *Bine, pa!* (‘OK, bye’). In this case, the greeting *Pa!* (‘bye’) is preceded by the adverb *bine* (‘OK’), and the phrase obtained has got a concluding function. *Bine* expresses the consensus or lack of consensus on the data provided by the locutors during their meeting; its purpose is to mark the end of the interlocutory context by means of a supplementary verbal marker (besides the greeting itself) that confirms the discontinuance of the contact.

Through the lexical-pragmatic auxiliaries placed in a strong position, both new greetings encode, in general, the tense ending of a meeting, the partially defined intention to cease communication and, implicitly, the relationship between the interlocutors.

The greeting *Bine, pa!* (‘OK, bye’) became widespread after it was promoted by Mircea Badea, the coiner of the phrase and presenter of a pamphlet-style television show, *În gura presei* (‘In the mass media’s den’), broadcast by the television channel Antena 3 and rerun on Antena 1. Initially, Mircea Badea used it to end his daily show, in which he mockingly expressed his attitude towards present-day politicians, at whom he scoffs whenever he has got the chance. Once the phrase was acknowledged as a specifying marker, the term-greeting expanded its sphere of validity, as Mircea Badea turned it into a monosemantic yet polyvalent message. The presenter posted on Facebook two photos of a plane (see Figure 1), with the caption (*Iar*) *Bine, pa!* (‘(Once again) OK, bye’), and his fans knew how to decode the message properly: the author of the message was leaving the country.

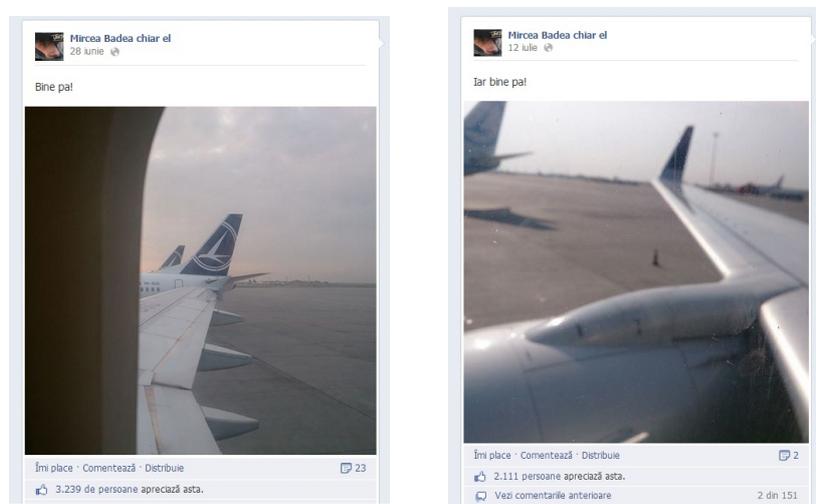


Figure 1: <https://ro-ro.facebook.com/pages/Mircea-Badea-chiar-el/339817559450850>

### 5.2.2. Indirect means

#### *Brand-greetings from the habitual language register of the high class*

Some of the representatives of Romanian video and audio mass media established, on the level of collective mentality, a series of verbal structures that, by means of repetition, became *equivalent* to greetings. Wishing to distinguish themselves from other fellow television or radio figures in autochthonous public space and to boost their rating, the characters in question employed certain *polyvalent structures* in Romanian to express greetings:

- *phrases expressing well-wishing*<sup>25</sup>: the verb in the subjunctive mood found in these utterance-greetings refers directly to the state of the addressee:

*Să fiți iubiți!* ('May you be loved!')—the utterance by means of which Radu Moraru, the host of the television show *Nașul* ('the godfather'), aired for a while on the channel B1, took leave of his viewers. A similar greeting was "invented" even by the president of Romania, Traian Băsescu: *Să trăiți bine!* ('May you live well'), an utterance whose semantic boundaries exceed those of mere well-wishing and proliferate the meaning of *slogan*.

- *assertive sentences*:

*Trăim în România și asta ne ocupă tot timpul!* ('We live in Romania and this takes up all of our time')—the utterance by means of which the same Mircea Badea ends his meeting with the viewers every evening (*ironic subtext*: life in Romania, with all the events it involves, is so full that it occupies one's time entirely).

*Țineți aproape!* ('Stay close')—the utterance-greeting of Marius Tucă, the former host of the television show *Marius Tucă Show*. He used this sentence to say goodbye to his viewers every evening (*subtext*: the sentence implicitly expresses an invitation for the viewers to keep watching his show).

Due to the widespread use that facilitated their establishment in locutors' "linguistic conscience", these new structures function as *expressive markers* that are *registered* in the system of representative contemporary Romanian greetings and develop the behaviour (stability) of occupation-bound greetings: *Fir întins!* ('taut line', fishermen's greeting), *Vînt din pupa!* ('Wind at your stern', sailors' greeting), *Cer senin!* ('clear sky', pilots' greeting), *Noroc bun!* ('good luck', miners' greeting).

### 5.3. Greetings from communication mediated by electronic devices

On accessing various Internet websites, one can easily notice the use of greetings that differ from those employed in oral communication. In this respect, computer-mediated communication (via e-mails, Skype, Yahoo! Messenger, Facebook, blogs, and forums) and communication by means of mobile phones (via SMS) are dissociated from regular communication.

Among the characteristics of greeting types found in online conversations, the following can be mentioned:

5.3.1. The presence of abbreviations / acronyms: *nb* for "noapte bună" ('good night'), *bd* ("bună dimineața" 'good morning'), *Sal* (*salve* "salut" / "salutare" 'hello')<sup>\*</sup>:

Ευθαλία Ευθαλία  
*fugi*  
**nb (noapte bună)**  
*somn ușor*  
*și bălăceală plăcută!*

<sup>25</sup>This kind of phrases may be used as greetings and as well-wishing and thanking expressions (cf. Rădulescu, 2009, p. 401).

<sup>\*</sup>The translation suggested for the examples provided under §5.3.1.–§5.3.5. is found after each example, in square brackets. To the extent it was possible, the informal quality of the original texts was preserved. In the translations, the words written in bold are English counterparts of Romanian greetings, whereas those in bold and italics already displayed a foreign (mostly English) form in the original examples. Therefore, they were simply kept as such, just as it was in the case of other phrases or sentences, written only in italics.

Geicu Andrei  
*îți dai seama ce varză sunt eu :)) mai varză ca varza ta din frigider  
 ms somn ușor, **nb!***

[Ευθαλία Ευθαλία  
 scram

**gn (good night)**

sleep tight

and happy bathing!

Geicu Andrei

you have no idea how messed up I am :)) more messed up than the mess in your room

10x sleep tight, **gn!**]

### 5.3.2. The abundance of imported greetings: calques on English units or borrowings from English:

marealexandra92: *ok. ne auzim. mulțu înk o dată. pupik*

photo.oana: *npc. te pup. Bye.*

Andrei Gheorghe

**heei** :\*

Ευθαλία Ευθαλία

**Hey** :\*

Group of female friends

– **Hey, girls!** *Weekend-ul ăsta merg la o nuntă, și weekend-ul viitor, în funcție și de programul vostru, vă scot la o înghețată de ziua mea, ok? Voi cum puteți?*

– *Girls, am vorbit cu voi cu toate și a rămas să ne vedem sîmbătă la 4, la mall. See you there! :\**

– **hello** *AJ just curious, se mai ține tîrgul de adopții?*

– **Hello**, *ne întîlnim mîine la 17:15 [...].*

– **hello**, *girls are any of you interested in free zumba classes?*

– **salut!!!!** *ce ziceți să ne întîlnim vineri [...].?*

– **hello**, *ladies, long time no see! Vă invit sîmbătă la ora 4 [...]. Vă aștept cu drag.*

– **Hello**, *everyone! propun o dată pt. Christmas party, ce ziceți de 27?*

– **bună**, *Aj, în legătură cu ajutorul pentru adăpostul de cîini.*

[marealexandra92: *ok. talk to you later. thanks once again. kisses*

photo.oana: *dmi (don't mention it). kisses. Bye.*

Andrei Gheorghe

**heey** :\* (emoticon for “kiss”)

Ευθαλία Ευθαλία

**Hey** :\*

Group of female friends

– **Hey, girls!** *I'm attending a wedding this weekend and next weekend, depending on your schedules, I'm taking you out for some ice cream for my birthday, ok? When could you make it?*

– *Girls, I talked to every one of you and we're meeting at the mall, on Saturday, at 4. See you there! :\**

– **hello** *AJ just curious, is the adoption fair still on?*

– **Hello**, *we're meeting tomorrow at 17:15 [...].*

– **hello**, *girls are any of you interested in free zumba classes?*

– **hello!!!!** *what do you think about meeting on Friday [...].?*

– **hello**, *ladies, long time no see! I'm inviting you on Saturday at 4 o'clock [...]. I can't wait to see you.*

- **Hello, everyone!** I’m suggesting a date for the *Christmas party*, what do you think about the 27th?
- **hello**, Aj, about the help for the dog shelter.]

### 5.3.3. The mixture of Romanian and foreign greetings:

Public group “Băimăreni” (‘inhabitants of the municipality of Baia Mare’)

- *Bună seara, de curînd am deschis un blog care se axează pe fotografie [...].*

– **Heyy!** *Ce faceți?*

Private messages

- [the same person] **hey**, *cum a fost ziua ta?*

**Hey there!** >:D<

*La mulți ani, heeei!* >:D<

- [the same person] **saluuut**. *da, pe site-ul ăsta mă uit*

**Salutaaaare**. *Ce să fac...*

**Saluuut!** *Ce mai faci?*

- [the same person] **hey**, *ce faci?*

**bună**

**hello**, *ce faci?*

- **salut**, *cum a fost?* / **hello**, *a fost bine, am scăpat* [conversation]

- **boo** / **boo back** *cum mai ești?* [conversation]

- **Sal!** *Sunt bine, puțin ocupată.* – **Heei:**\*

- **yello!** *mă bucur*

- **hya!!** *cf?*

- **howdy**. *tocmai termin cv work...*

- **biz!**

- **ciao**, *mihaela, excuse me, s-a stricat telefonul și nu am mai avut de pe ce să intru pe fb*

- **Salutare**, *Ela! Mulțumim.*

- **Bună**, *Mihaela. Noi am ajuns cu bine înapoi în state*

- **sal!** *noi suntem bn*

- **ciao**, *ce mai faci?*

- **Hello**, *Ce mai faci?*

- **hei**. *ce faci?*

Public group “Băimăreni” (‘inhabitants of the municipality of Baia Mare’)

- [– **Good evening**, I have recently set up a blog that focuses on photography [...].

- **Heyy!** How are you?

Private messages

- [the same person] **hey**, how was your birthday?

**Hey there!** >:D< (emoticon for “hug”)

Happy birthday, **heeei!** >:D<

- [the same person] **hellooo**. yes, that’s the site I’m looking at

**Hellooooo**. What could I be doing...

**Hellooo**. How are you doing?

- [the same person] **hey**, what’s up?

**hello**

**hello**, what’s up?

- **hello**, how was it? / **hello**, it was ok, i’m done (conversation)

- **boo** / **boo back** how are you doing? (conversation)

- **Hi!** I’m fine, a little busy.

- **Heei** .\*
- **yello!** I'm glad
- **hya!!** hru? (how are you)
- **bowdy.** I'm just finishing some *work*...
- **buzz!** (< Yahoo! Messenger "Buzz")
- **ciao**, mihaela, *excuse me*, my phone crashed and I couldn't log on to fb (Facebook)
- **Hello**, Ela! Thank you.
- **Hello**, Mihaela. We arrived safely back to the States
- **hi!** we're ok
- **ciao**, how're you doing?
- **Hello**, How're you doing?
- **hey.** how are you?]

5.3.4. The use of the familiar question *Ce faci?* ('how are you?', 'how do you do?') as a greeting. The substitution of established greetings with interrogative phrases (a common means of greeting in Anglo-American civilisation, see *How do you do?* and *How are you?*) (cf. also Duranti, 1997, p. 6), which are especially characteristic of Romanian rural sociocultural code<sup>27</sup>, is increasingly more frequent in the initiation of virtual dialogue:

photo.oana: *da' ce faci, hei?*  
marealexandra92: *apoi numai stau.*

[photo.oana: **how are you**, hey?  
marealexandra92: just sitting.]

5.3.5. The replacement of verbal greetings with nonverbal greetings (iconic signs: emoticons) (see Crystal, 2011, p. 23–24), see Figure 2;

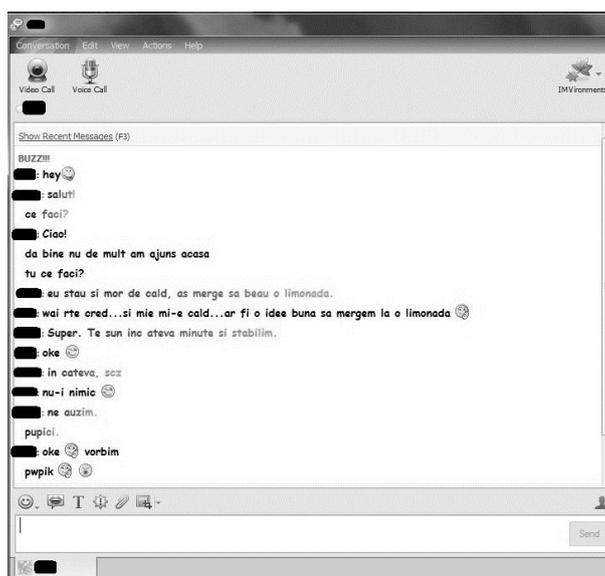


Figure 2: (Yahoo! Messenger window)

<sup>27</sup>In rural communities, residents begin conversations by means of question-greetings such as: *Ce faci?* ('How are you?'), *Ce lucrezi?* ('What are you working?'), *Acolo stai?* ('You live there?'), *Numai amândouă?* ('Only the two of you?'), *Nu vă e rece / cald?* ('Aren't you hot / cold?'), *Stați de vorbă?* ('Are you chatting?').

- [*hey* :-P (emoticon for “tongue sticking out”)]
- **hello!**  
how are you?
- **Ciao!**  
I’m fine, just got home  
how are you?
- I’m just sitting and dying because of this heat, I’d like to go out for some lemonade.
- oh, I believe you... the heat is killing me, too... it would be a good idea to get some lemonade ;-)) (emoticon for “hee hee”)
- Super. I’ll give phone you in a cple of minutes and we’ll set a date.
- oke ;-) (emoticon for “wink”)
- in a couple, sry (“sorry”)
- it’s ok ;-)
- later.
- kisses.
- *oke* ;- ) later
- kiss ;- ) :-\*]

5.3.6. The locutors’ increasingly frequent choice to start the conversation *ex abrupto*, without preceding it with a greeting:

*My friend Flavius Obeada replies to a comment I made on his blog, but not just in any way: he begins by greeting. I noticed he has got this habit, he does the same on facebook and everywhere else, I suppose.*

*What a ridiculous thing is this, ha ha, where does grandpa think he is, ha ha, this is the internet here, what’s with these old-fashioned stuff, ha ha! [...]*

*Unlike Flavius, I don’t feel the need to greet on the internet, not in comments, posts and often not even in e-mails. Not because I didn’t get or I were blind to the semantic content of greetings, but because I’m lazy or, all right, because I’m not well-bred. [...] [online, orig. Romanian]*

## 6. Conclusion

Greetings are expressive speech acts that are compulsory in ensuring successful communication, as their absence leads to the abrupt initiation of an interaction or creates the premises for the instalment of silence (non-communication).

Defined (in the previous sections) as verbal expressions of an affective behaviour, greetings “are more valuable function-wise than content-wise” (Zafiu, 2001, p. 183, orig. Romanian), due to the variety of their forms of manifestation. Greetings encode the nature of interpersonal relationships.

The increasingly pronounced tendency—recorded in the past two decades—to improve the traditional practice of greeting properly affects the *structure* of greetings.

Contemporary verbal greetings from “real” and mediated conversations are innovations (undergoing adoption) that are realised on the individual (discursive) level of language. Thus, as a result of the expansion of their use and recurrence in varied contexts of communication, they may enter the language (historical) system once they are acknowledged and validated by more and more speakers.

From the rich inventory of greetings in contemporary Romanian, some of the original individual uses were selected, as they proved to be true examples of stylistic inventiveness and expressivity. Thanks to their being adopted by more and more users and employed in various media of communication (“real” – oral / written – and virtual), these greetings tend to become generalised in the language due to intense

usage. In the examples investigated, the conventional norm (*universal congruence* and *historical accuracy*) (see Coşeriu, 1992–1993, p. 42) is infringed in favour of contextual *appropriateness*.

Several features of contemporary Romanian can be delineated as regards the parameter investigated. Some of these are specific, others are universal. In the latter case, observations can only be made as a result of a contrastive study on the situation in Romanian and the one in other languages, so as to avoid difficulties related to *intercultural equivalence* (cf. also Mihăilescu, 2008, p. 431). The aforementioned features of contemporary Romanian include:

- richness and dynamism of greetings in the informal register of communication (the gradual abandonment of established greetings and the promotion of those that are marked expressively (affectively));
- expressivity, due to stylistic spontaneity and affectivity;
- decline of conventional greetings (desemanticisation of traditional greetings), which are seen as insufficiently expressive, and their submission to a process of un-conventionalisation (their inclusion in new complex structures);
- speedy dissemination of new greetings, especially of those promoted by the mass media;
- victory of informality and semi-formality (“uncanonical” greetings) over formality (standardised greetings), a consequence of the inappropriate use of markers of allocutivity in contemporary Romanian (the formality of hierarchically organised social relationships is replaced with the *informality* (see also Pietrini, 2010, p. 264) (solidarity / reciprocity) of interpersonal relationships);
- evolution towards expression conciseness (the quantitative reduction of the phonetic body) and content neutrality;
- tendency to create original, composite, playful greetings, especially in online forums of discussions;
- analysis of greetings allows for the possibility to make observations relating to the evolution of interpersonal relationships and contemporary Romanian society, in general.

The inventory of verbal strategies used to initiate, maintain and discontinue dialogue in contemporary Romanian proves to be extremely *dynamic* and open to *new forms of address*, to a directly proportional extent in relation to the possibilities of the language (*combinations of existing material* or *innovations*)\*\*.

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