

## Summary of the PhD Thesis

### **A Corpus-based Contrastive Approach to the Study of Interjections in English and Romanian. Consequences for Their Translation**

This thesis is a contrastive approach to the study of interjections in English and Romanian. It is based on linguistic, pragmatic and translation studies theoretical perspectives. The threefold theoretical research is grounded on the detailed analysis of a computerized corpus of selected texts especially from children's literature.

The theme of the research is primarily **justified** by its **topicality**. Until recently spoken language has long been regarded as somehow inferior as compared to the written expression considered the standard of language adequacy. Forms and structures of spoken language are produced spontaneously and their meaning is closely chained to the context and experience of enunciation. Expressions that are inherent to formal or informal verbal communication have not been sufficiently highlighted in dictionaries and grammars (Carter, 2006). Spoken interaction includes a variety of linguistic items and processes labelled *language formulae* (Quirck, 1972) or as *pragmatic markers* (Carter, 2006). These encode speakers' intentions and interpersonal meanings, operating "outside the structural limits of the clause" (Carter, 2006). These items contain discourse markers, stance markers, hedges, expletives and taboo words, greeting and farewell formulae, attention and reaction signals, interjections. However, these complex phenomena prove both powerful illocutionary force with expressive (emotive, affective), conative and phatic functions, and a high degree of creativity in the transmission of information. They are fully operational only in a given context; otherwise, they could neither be wholly understood, nor transferrable into another language. In addition, the context they belong to often transmits specific or universal cultural components which are frequently highlighted by their very presence in the text. Therefore, they require careful attention in order to understand the deep structure of the speakers' linguistic choices. The case of interjections is only one illustration of this perspective. In this thesis, our focus falls solely on interjections, "exclamative utterances" that "express positive or negative emotional

reactions to what is being or has just been said or to something in the situation” (Carter, 2006).

Considered essential elements of human language, with an obvious intrinsic relation to what they signify, interjections defy the fundamental principle of language, the 20th C Saussurean arbitrary, and have been repeatedly located at the "periphery of the linguistic system" (English sources: CGEL: 1985, LGSWE: 1999, Cuenca: 2000, Romanian sources: Constantinescu Dobridor (2001), Popescu 2011). Grammarians usually offer them a relatively small area in grammar books, or do not mention them at all. Considered as a part of speech with universal linguistic features (Eifring and Theil, 2005, Ameka, 1992) the interjection, a real "continuum between ‘showing’ and ‘saying’" (Wharton, 2003) requires, thus, a contrastive grammatical and pragmatic reassessment of its terminology, definition and classification.

Moreover, the contrastive linguistic and pragmatic examination of interjections in English and Romanian, also represents a translation challenge. According to the literature, interjections are idiomatic elements (Dominte: 1971, Minuț: 1997, Constantinescu Dobridor: 2001). The mediating process of translating between cultures may prove to be quite challenging, as the pragmatic meaning of texts cannot be unveiled without a proper consideration of their social, cultural, contextual and affective functions. Therefore, interjections are often impossible to be rendered in a target language via direct correspondences, because of cultural-historical differences and of the diverse views on the world specific to each people. Nevertheless, interjections require an equivalence due to both their frequency and their expressive strength, in terms of the language seen as a communication tool considered within the Saussurian concept of “parole”. As Roman Jakobson claims, finding equivalence in difference is the core issue of language and the vital concern of linguistics (in Munday, 2005). Studying linguistic and pragmatic directions from the translation studies perspectives, also aims at emphasizing translators’ "regularities of conduct" in an attempt to set up correspondences between different functional types of interjections and the translation strategies that were used in their translation.

The compiled **corpus** contains a variety of texts belonging to children's literature (works of fiction, stories, songs, poems and

rhymes for children). The main reason for choosing this type of literature is primarily related to my personal preferences for reading literary works that offer multiple layers of interpretation. It is well-known and amply detailed in the literary theory (Lewis: 1952, France: 1981, Alchin: 2007) that children's literature contains both surface meanings, for an "innocent" audience, as well as subtler, deeper and stimulating meanings that ensure posterity to the literary works. A second reason for this selection was the ample presence of interjections in these works. I oriented towards British and American classic novelists such as Sir James Matthew Barrie, Rudyard Kipling, Lewis Carroll, Alan Alexander Milne, Pamela Lyndon Travers, Lyman Frank Baum, Michael Bond, Shel Silverstein and Oscar Wilde. The corpus of texts consists of ten literary and their translation into Romanian. More specifically, the chosen titles are: *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (Barrie, 1910), *Peter Pan în grădina Kensington* (Barrie, 2005, translation by Nina Stănculescu); *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 2000), *Vrăjitorul din Oz* (Baum, 2000, translation by Jozsefina and Camil Baltazar); *A Bear Called Paddington* (Bond, 1992), *Un urs pe nume Paddington* (Bond, 2012, translation by Iulia Arsintescu); *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 2000), *Alice în Țara Minunilor* (Carroll, [1976] 2014, translation by Frida Papadache, and Carroll, 2007, translation by Mirella Acsente); *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (Carroll, 1991), *Alice în limea oglinzii* (Carroll, 2014, translation by Frida Papadache), *The Jungle Book* (Kipling, 2012), *Cartea Junglei* (Kipling, 2004, translation by Mihnea Gheorghiu); *Winnie-the-Pooh* (Milne, 2004), *Ursulețul Winnie Puh* (Milne, 2013, translation by Luiza Vasiliu and lyrics translated by Florin Bican); *The House at Pooh Corner* (Milne, 1928), *Ursulețul Winnie Puh. Căsuța de pe Strada Puh* (Milne, 2014, translation by Luiza Vasiliu and lyrics translated by Florin Bican), *LAFCADIO, THE LION WHO SHOT BACK* (Silverstein, 1991), *Povestea unchiului Shelby despre Lafcadio, leul care nu s-a lăsat păgubaș* (Silverstein, 2012, translation by Alexandra Columban), *Mary Poppins. The complete collection* (Travers, 1994), *Mary Poppins* (Travers, 1994, translation by Silvia Kerim), *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (Wilde, 2006), *Prințul fericit* (Wilde, 1991, in Văduva-Poenaru și Goci (eds.), translation by Const. I. Bondescu). For a comprehensive grammatical illustration of Romanian interjections, original idiomatic examples of

interjections have been extracted from Ion Creangă's *Memories of My Boyhood* (editions from 1989 and 2002). Moreover, in order to highlight pragmatic and translation aspects in which the creativity of spoken language is reflected at the level of interjections, I used a series of works that belong to the collective folk memory, such as English legends and ballads, and their translation into Romanian, and the so called "nursery rhymes". The selected nursery rhymes have not been translated into Romanian yet. Therefore, I suggested two personal translations in order to support my hypothesis that functional and creative translation is optimal in the case of interjections, in order to create a similar effect on target readers. Also, a characteristic of the creativity of spoken, demotic language is that it mainly occurs in collaborative and intimate communication environments. For example, it is manifest in the language used by pre-schoolers, termed *motherese* by Elliot (1981). In order to point out phonological, lexical, syntactical, discursive and paralinguistic similarities between interjections and children's language, I extracted examples from CHILDES (1984 and 2014). CHILDES is a virtual corpus that contains recordings of genuine spoken interactions with children. The brief foray into this corpus has confirmed both the common features and the fact that exclamations and interjections are extremely common in children's language.

I consider the use of corpora in the practice of translation as a methodological necessity because they offer the translator *genuine contextualised texts*. For the specific case of interjections, the terminological concordances from the literary corpus have been primarily identified by means of computer programs such as *Simple Concordance Program* and *AntConc*, and reconfirmed by a thorough "traditional" reading. The contrastive study of terminological concordances from comparable English and Romanian corpora clarifies polysemantic and multifunctional interjections. So all theoretical aspects related to grammar, pragmatics and translation of interjections are amply supported and illustrated with examples extracted from the digitized literary corpus.

In the context of the above, the main **objectives** of this thesis are:

- 1) a grammatical and pragmatic review of interjections, taking into account the relevance of translation studies for this approach;
- 2) a detailed analysis of the meanings conveyed by interjections in the communication contexts offered by the English and Romanian

corpus; 3) the definition of interjections in terms of pragmatic guidelines, such as deixis and the theory of speech acts, in children's literature, spoken literary texts, and in the language of toddlers; 4) the identification of translation strategies used by professional translators in conveying the meaning of interjections from English into Romanian, and setting up of the most common translation strategies used for specific functional types of interjections.

To achieve these objectives, I used **qualitative methods** that have been supported primarily by contrastive and pragmatic analyses of the corpus source texts and, secondly, by analyses of the corpora from the translation perspective. The **quantitative** side was ensured by statistical studied of interjections elicited from the corpus. Quantitative methods help to establish the most common types of interjections used in the two languages and their possible correspondents from English to Romanian. The **contrastive method** has been used from two angles in this thesis: from a grammatical and a translation studies approaches. From a grammatical perspective, this method is emphasized through the continuous bridges that were established between interjections in English and Romanian, under all aspects, from how they are treated in grammars, to their pragmatic functions and the consequences for their translation. From the perspective of translation studies, the contrastive method is used at the practical level. Thus, in order to generalize the translation strategies recurrently used in the case of interjections, I elaborately compared two translations into Romanian of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. These Romanian translations belong to different historical and cultural eras.

The thesis is **structured** in four chapters, followed by a series of annexes that thoroughly sum up the case studies of the corpus, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives.

Following Ameka's considerations (1992 b), my most consistent contribution to *Chapter I* is the personal functional classification of interjections, based on Jakobson's taxonomy on language functions. This typology differentiates between six classes of interjections: the first category of referential interjections clearly refers to the communication context and includes as subcategories onomatopoeia and informative interjections. The second category comprises primary and secondary expressive interjections which are speaker-oriented, as they convey the speaker's inner emotions. The third class,

conative interjections, is hearer-oriented and includes two subclasses, i.e. hortative and appellative interjections. The fourth class refers to phatic interjections and is the richest in subcategories of interjectional items that aim to maintain the channel of communication. Primarily divided into courtesy formulae and discourse markers, this category includes, on the one hand, greetings, farewells, thanking, apologizing, requesting and congratulation formulas, and on the other hand, response forms and elicitors, international linguistic routines, backchannels, hesitators, presentatives, utterance launchers and hedges. Although in literature it is considered that interjections cannot make explicit the poetic language function, I consider that euphonic refrains set up the fifth category of poetic interjections. Metalinguistic interjections form the sixth category and include interjectional items that are used to describe or speak about language itself.

All theoretical specifications are exemplified with illustrations from a digitalized corpus of ten literary works.

*Chapter II* of the thesis has foregrounded the pragmatic values of interjections from a general perspective as well as from a Relevance Theory standpoint. It has been noticed that, although they seem insignificant, interjections are found in speech acts, implicatures and presuppositions. **Relevance theory** has thrown light on the fact that interjections prove to be both deictic communication clues and verbal ostensive stimuli that, due to their functional characteristics, maximally respect the principle of relevance. More specifically, a linguistic ostensive stimulus can be optimally and relevantly expressed via interjections, with a minimal processing cost and with a maximum of linguistic and contextual benefits. In *Chapter III* I have also highlighted the context dependence of the inferential implications conveyed by interjections and the fact that they are expressions that function as markers of subjectivity, encoding linguistic procedures rather than concepts. More specifically, from a Relevance Theory perspective (**Sperber** and **Wilson**: 1996, **Blackmore**: 1992, 2010), interjections are considered intrinsic communication clues because their phonetic, graphical, semantic and syntactic properties reduce the effort which the auditor invests in gathering the intended interpretation of an utterance. Interjections have also been considered from the Relevance Theoretical framework applied to translation studies (**Gutt**: 1991) clusters. Still, had they been unnecessary expressions, interjections would have been

automatically removed from language use, which is not at all the case, as empirical experience and statistical data prove quite the contrary. The communicative dimension of interjections can, therefore, be best captured making use of the pragmatic canon (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1969, Levinson, 1983, Yule, 1996). All categories of interjections have been considered to encode deictic coordinates that imply both gestural and symbolic deictic usage. In terms of person deixis, it has been observed that interjections mark both the speaker and hearer role in communication. In addition, interjections are also highly time deictics, because they transmit an acute sense of immediacy. Moreover, interjections also convey proximity, as they refer to the situational and contextual realia. They attest thus features of spatial deixis. Discourse deixis is also conveyed by means of (especially phatic) interjections that contextually link the discourse. Social deixis is also illustrative in the case of interjections, as this word category encodes formality levels and social ranks of speakers and addressees. The Speech-Act Theory has been helpful to show the role, function and expression of interjections in illocutions, implicatures and presuppositions, regardless of their grammatically peripheral character. As shown in II.2, expressive and phatic interjections linguistically evince inner emotions in expressive speech acts. Furthermore, conative interjections are representative for directive speech acts, because they represent the speaker's linguistic stimulus in getting the addressee to perform something. Referential informative interjections can illustrate commissive speech acts, because they convey the speaker's commitment to some future course of action. Furthermore, the onomatopoeic subgroup of referential interjections can be regarded as representative speech acts, as they assert and illustrate descriptions of how the speaker considers and represents the world. A small number of interjections can be seen as declarative speech acts because they mark a change of a previous situation. As shown in the subchapter II.2.3., interjections are also considered pragmatic devices that produce implicatures and their specific uses illustrate the four co-operative maxims of conversation. Furthermore, subchapter II.2.4. shows that interjections convey contextual anaphoric information in terms of presuppositions. My most significant contribution to the second chapter consists in the investigation of the peculiarities of demotic creativity and in the exploration of the pragmatic relational functions of interjections in

children's language as well as in a child-specific type of discourse belonging to the folk memory: nursery rhymes. The core results of this analysis firstly show that interjections are similar to children's language in terms of holophrastic expression of egocentricity, emotion and spontaneous echo of the thinking process. Secondly, the procedural meanings conveyed via interjections are illustrated with well-known nursery rhymes.

*Chapter III* considers the methods and strategies of transferring the meaning conveyed through interjections from English to Romanian. Trying to recreate the meaning of creative, spoken discourse is a translation challenge. It has been shown therefore that in order to understand the meaning an interjection conveys in a source language, the audience should firstly translate it into the source language itself. Hence, translating interjections into a target language would imply understanding the deeper levels of their meanings, and conveying them into a target language through a *second level of contextual and pragmatic translation process*. As shown in *III.1.* all etymologic, phonetic, graphic, semantic, syntactic, functional and cultural features of interjections have to be taken into account in their transfer into a TL, in order to maintain the same effect and force of the original text. The research on how interjections are transferred into a TL is based on the study of translation strategies. Thus, the first cited research on strategies of transcoding interjections belongs to **Vinay and Darbelnet's** linguistic taxonomies. All classifications of translation strategies specific to interjections and attested bibliographically (**Cuenca**: 2006, **Shahrakik**: 2012, **Thawabteh**: 2010), were applied on my corpus of texts. Because these strategies were insufficient as compared to the ones found in the studied corpus, I have detailed my analysis using **Andrew Chesterman's** threefold taxonomy (1997) and illustrated each translation shift with examples from my corpus. Due to the fact that Chesterman's translation shifts refer very rigorously to all possible translation procedures, I have afterwards extracted only the most relevant ones for the particular case of interjections. Consequently, I finally developed my own classification of translation strategies which I consider optimal for conveying the meaning of interjections into a TL. All the explanatory data presented in *Chapter III* were collected from the literary corpus of children's literature.



*Chapter IV*, the last part of the thesis, is an ample and detailed practical analysis that tackles the possible translation challenges in translating interjections. It has been noticed that the categories of expressive and phatic interjections represent the most frequent types. Furthermore, I have chosen one single literary work in order to elaborately compare two of its translation versions into Romanian, from a contrastive perspective. The chosen book, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, belongs to the novelist Lewis Carroll. The reason for choosing it is that I consider this literary work an extremely refined manner of thought-entertainment for children and adults alike. It is a story that plays with logic and fantastic happenings, tackling children's genuine and quick ways of perceiving reality changes, of dealing with adulthood in times and spaces where everything seems natural, where anything is possible. The chosen translation versions into Romanian are separated by almost two decades. I have brought statistic and qualitative arguments that confirm **Gideon Toury's** statement that historical socio-cultural aspects are decisive factors in conveying the main functions of a translation. The criteria for selecting two Romanian translations from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* were based on the functional analysis model proposed by **Christiane Nord** (1991 / 2005). However, the detailed contrastive analysis (fully included in *Annex V*) has also highlighted similarities in the translation behaviour of the two TTs. These facts are fairly obvious even at the micro level of interjection transfer. Moreover, by means of statistic argumentation I have studied the translation strategies that have been mostly used for each specific category of interjection. Accordingly, I can say that the most frequently used strategies are the selection of the most appropriate target correspondent, different degrees of omission and unit shifts. Nevertheless, cases of borrowings, explicitation, interjection class change or use of semantically related correspondents are also extremely recurrent. This part concludes that functional and idiomatic creativity is an important factor for the most appropriate and acceptable transfer of interjections from English to Romanian.

I have shown in this research that in both English and Romanian grammars the word class of interjections is fundamentally different from all other parts of speech, in terms of phonological, morphological, semantic, syntactic features, and that its meaning is understandable only within the communication context. Furthermore,

interjections do not contain conceptual meanings, but encode procedural, contextual information. Therefore, interjections are best analysed according to pragmatic guidelines. In terms of translation studies, conveying the meaning of interjections into a target language is a challenge. Finding a correspondent in the target language has proven to be an imperative, and any omission of the source interjections leads to stylistic, suggestive and expressive losses. The applied analyses have demonstrated, both quantitatively and qualitatively, that although interjections hold a textual percentage of less than 1% in a literary work, in terms of style they exude the author's idiosyncrasies, while from the perspective of translation studies they prove to be communication clues that elicit the translators' idiomatic creativity and bring forth historical contextuality.