

III. LINGUISTIC CONFLUENCES

ENGLISH INFLUENCE ON ROMANIAN IN THE SPEECH OF A BILINGUAL CHILD: FROM LEXICAL TO GRAMMATICAL CONVERGENCE

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Abstract:

This article analyses the influence of English on the Romanian spoken by a bilingual child, by using a small corpus of utterances produced during informal conversations. The discussion focuses on the way in which Romanian lexical items and grammatical patterns are adapted to conform to English models in the absence of any formal transfers from this language.

Lexical convergence to English involves semantic extensions in Romanian words on the model of their foreign counterparts, while grammatical convergence is evident in a variety of constructions that replicate English structural patterns, such as the presence of overt subjects in contexts where they are not normally required, marked word order, non-standard use of gerundial constructions, omission of clitic pronouns, and changes in the grammatical properties of some verbs that result in alien-sounding constructions.

Key words:

Bilingualism, convergence, semantic calque, grammatical interference.

1. Introduction

When two languages come into contact, the result can be the transfer of morphemes, words and phrases from one language (i.e. the source language) to the other (i.e. the recipient language) or the mere adoption of meanings and grammatical patterns into the latter on the model of the former. The language contact literature describes these two processes by using a variety of terms, such as ‘importation’ of form versus ‘calque’ (Haugen, 1950), ‘borrowing’ versus changes in the function of a morpheme (Weinreich, 1953), ‘borrowing’ and ‘codeswitching’ versus ‘convergence’ (Myers-

Scotton, 2002; Silva-Corvalan, 1994, Winford, 2003), or 'matter replication' versus 'pattern replication' (Matras, 2009). However, 'codeswitching' and 'convergence' seem to be the terms most often used by researchers.

Although codeswitching and convergence are usually studied separately, the former is generally seen as a precursor of the latter. Thus, Myers-Scotton (2002: 247) believes that codeswitching is "*the main structural mechanism promoting convergence*", and Winford (2003: 69) points out that the agents of change are "*fluent bilinguals who practiced frequent code mixing*." Other researchers describe codeswitching as 'the foot in the door' or 'the worm in the apple' (Bolonyai, 1998) when it comes to language change, and some even use terms like 'overt' and 'covert codeswitching' (Schmitt, 2000) to describe what they regard as two facets of the same phenomenon. Support for the idea that codeswitching facilitates convergence comes from a quantitative study conducted by Bolonyai (1998) on Hungarian-English bilinguals in the United States, which found more structural convergence in the utterances that included instances of codeswitching than in those that were entirely monolingual.

Convergence is generally defined as a change in the way the lexical and grammatical patterns of a language are realized under the influence of a foreign model, which results in the two languages becoming more similar (Silva-Corvalan, 1994: 4-5; Myers-Scotton, 2002: 166). As far as the motivations behind it are concerned, some researchers see convergence as a compromise strategy resulting from the tension between speakers' sense of loyalty towards their native language and the need to reduce the 'cognitive load' imposed by the knowledge of a foreign language (Weinreich, 1953; Silva-Corvalan, 1994; Matras, 2009). Thus, Matras (2009: 235) believes that "*by allowing patterns to converge*", speakers become more efficient when they are in bilingual situations.

2. Methodology of research

This article studies lexical and grammatical convergence in the speech of a Romanian/English bilingual child whose native language is Romanian and who is also fluent in English. The child lives in Romania and is being raised in a Romanian-dominant environment.

A total of 120 utterances collected during informal conversations between the child and her parents are used to illustrate the lexical and grammatical changes that occur in her speech under the influence of English. In focusing on one bilingual speaker rather than on the language in general, I follow the direction recommended by Weinreich (1953: 33), who argues that by analysing *"the flowing speech of bilinguals," "particularly in circumstances where interference is little inhibited"*, one is more likely to come across the many interesting facets of language contact than by focusing exclusively on *"fixed languages."* An important consequence of this methodological choice is the fact that the examples of convergence identified in this study are spontaneous and ephemeral, and thus they cannot be considered representative of what is happening in the Romanian language at large. However, these isolated 'linguistic facts' can indicate the possible outcomes of the contact between English and Romanian.

3. Discussion of results

3.1. Lexical convergence

Lexical convergence involves a change in the semantic field of a word in the recipient language under the influence of a foreign model. The transfer of meaning that takes place between the two words is usually supported by some common semantic ground they share and/or by their formal resemblance. Perhaps the mechanism underlying lexical convergence is best explained by Weinreich (1953: 48) as follows:

"Often two existing semantemes, X and Y, of one language are merged on the model of another language, where the combined content of X and Y is represented by a single sign, Z. In the process, the expression of either X or Y is utilized for the merged pair and the other one is discarded."

Such semantic changes represent *"the most visible signs of convergence"* (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 196) and a major type of influence between languages, as evident everywhere in the language contact literature. Thus, Weinreich (1953: 48) shows that in Colorado Spanish, *ministro* 'cabinet official' acquired the new meaning of 'Protestant ecclesiastic' on the model of the English *minister*; Silva-Corvalan (1994: 171) notes that the word *parientes* 'relatives' in Spanish acquired the meaning 'parents', and *papel*

‘paper’ acquired the meaning ‘newspaper’ under the influence of English; finally, Constantinescu et al. (2002: 184) show that the Romanian *aplicație* borrowed the English meaning of ‘formal request’ and *audiență* is now used in the sense of ‘assembled listeners, spectators at an event’ on the model of English *audience*.

The prevalence of lexical influence in the contact between languages is supported by quantitative data. For example, in a longitudinal study of the Russian spoken by five Russian boys living in the United States, Schmitt (2000) found that almost 47 per cent of all cases of convergence in her data set were represented by semantic extensions, and that after two years this percentage increased to almost 60 percent.

About half of all instances of convergence in my data set take place at the lexical level, usually between words with similar meanings. For example, while English can use only one verb for ‘break’, Romanian employs different verbs to denote different types ‘breaking’: *a sparge* ‘break glass/shatter’, *a rupe* ‘fracture/split/damage’, *a încălca* ‘break a law/agreement’, *a strica* ‘cause to stop working’. In example (1), the speaker intends to describe an instance of ‘shattering’ involving porcelain, but under the influence of English *break*, neutralizes the distinction made by Romanian and employs the verb *rupe*. It is worth noting that the child is well aware of the verb *a sparge*, which she uses in the phrase *să spargi o farfurie* ‘to break a plate’ earlier in the same conversation.

- (1) a. BG Rom.¹: Și o auzit sunetul de parcă *s-ar fi rupt* porțelan.
 And he heard the noise as if *porcelain broke*.
 b. Gen. Rom.²: Și o auzit sunetul de parcă *s-ar fi spart* porțelan.
 And he heard the noise as if *porcelain broke/shattered*.

Also consider the following example:

- (2) a. BG Rom.: Îl *însotești* la pian?
 Do you *accompany* him at the piano?
 b. Gen. Rom.: Îl *acompaniezi* la pian?
 Do you *accompany* him at the piano?

¹ Bilingual Child’s Romanian.

² General Romanian.

Romanian differentiates lexically between ‘going somewhere with somebody’, for which it uses the verb *a însoți*, and ‘playing an instrument while somebody else sings’, for which it uses *a acompania*. English, on the other hand, uses *accompany* in both situations. In example (2), the semantic field of the verb *a însoți* is extended in the direction of the English verb, probably supported by the homonymy between *acompania* and *accompany*. However, it is not clear why *acompaniezi* is not used instead of *însoțești* in this example, since the word is congruent with its English equivalent both formally and semantically, and the speaker knows and uses it occasionally. This situation seems to offer support to the idea that convergence tends to be “a much more volatile and opportunistic strategy” than codeswitching, often taking an unexpected and even “erratic course” (Matras, 2009: 243).

Another example of a semantic calque is provided by *urmăresc* ‘follow’ in (3) below. Romanian distinguishes between *a urmări* ‘go behind somebody to see what they do’ and *a urma* ‘accept advice’. The speaker intends to convey the latter meaning, but as a result of her familiarity with the English *follow*, extends the semantic field of *a urmări* to cover the ‘following of advice’ sense too.

- (3) a. BG Rom.: Tot timpul încerc să-ți **urmăresc** sfaturile.
All the time I try to **follow** your advice.
b. Gen. Rom.: Tot timpul încerc să-ți **urmez** sfaturile.
All the time I try to **follow** your advice.

It is possible that the examples discussed above contain calques of whole collocations, but that these calques are evident only in the words where the two languages show semantic differences. Thus, although the phrases *to break porcelain*, *to accompany somebody on the piano*, or *to follow advice* may have served as models for the Romanian constructions, only one word in the each of these constructions has been adjusted under the influence of English.

More than 60 per cent of all semantic calques in my data set involve verbs, for example *a completat școala de boxing* ‘he completed the boxing school’ (standard Rom. *a terminat școala de boxing* ‘he finished the boxing school’), *n-am putut să-i plasez accentul* ‘I couldn’t place his accent’ (standard Rom. *n-am putut să-i identific accentul* ‘I couldn’t identify his accent’), *simte frunzele* ‘feel the leaves’ (standard Rom. *pipăie/atinge*

frunzele ‘touch the leaves’), *să porți SPF50* ‘to wear SPF50’ (standard Rom. *să folosești SPF50* ‘to use SPF50’), *poți să-i dai o fontiță* ‘you can give it a bow’ (standard Rom. *poți să-i faci o fontiță* ‘you can make it a bow’), *să fac o decizie* ‘to make a decision’ (standard Rom *să iau o decizie* ‘to take a decision’), *să-l învăț pe ăsta o lecție* ‘to teach this guy a lesson’ (standard Rom. *să-i dau la ăsta o lecție* ‘to give this guy a lesson’), *să obții în greutate* ‘to gain weight’ (standard Rom. *să iei în greutate* ‘to take in weight’).

Some include nouns, as in (4) below:

- (4) a. BG Rom.: Daca vreau să știu **timpul**, mă uit automat la mână
If I want to know **the time**, I look at my wrist.
b. Gen. Rom.: Daca vreau să știu **ora/la cât e ceasul**, mă uit automat la mână
If I want to know **the hour/ the clock**

Clearly, the semantic field of the noun *timp* ‘time’ in this example has been extended under the influence of English *time* to cover the meaning ‘time shown on a clock’, normally expressed in Romanian by *oră* ‘hour’ or *ceas* ‘clock’. Thus, the distinction the recipient language makes between time as clock-related and other meanings of the word is temporarily abandoned.

Some phrasal calques use words which do not exist in the recipient language. For example, the phrase *grână de nisip* in (5) is calqued on the English phrase *grain of sand* , but the word *grână* as such does not exist in Romanian, being used only in its plural form *grâne* ‘grains’. The correct word in this situation would be *grăunte* ‘grain’, which the child probably doesn’t know; however, once the decision to use Romanian is made, the speaker manages to accommodate the intended calque even if she doesn’t have all the necessary linguistic resources at her disposal. It is interesting to note that the phrase *grână de nisip* is used only once, while the codeswitched form *grain de sand* appears twice later in the same conversation. Thus, it seems that the tension between the speaker’s desire to use her native language and the desire to preserve its integrity by avoiding incorrect forms is resolved in favour of the latter.

- (5) a. BG Rom.: Ați fost și voi cândva cât o **grână de nisip**.
You once were the size of a **grain of sand**.
b. Gen. Rom.: Ați fost și voi cândva cât un **grăunte de nisip**.
You once were the size of a **grain of sand**.

Some semantic extensions involve adjectives, for example:

- (6) a. BG Rom.: Mi-am dat seama eu singură ca *sunt rea*.
I realized all by myself that *I was bad*.
b. Gen. Rom.: mi-am dat seama singură ca *sunt slabă*.
I realized all by myself that *I was weak*.

In Romanian, the adjective *rău* ‘bad’ is used only in the sense of ‘morally unacceptable/ naughty/ harmful/ unpleasant’ but not to denote ‘something of poor quality’, which is normally expressed by words such as *slab* ‘weak’ or even *prost* ‘stupid’. Still, in example (6) the child adjusts the meaning of *rea* to convey this sense, too, on the model of the English *bad*. Other examples of adjectives that change their meaning under the influence of English include *ferm* ‘firm’ to express ‘hard, solid’ (used in standard Romanian only with the meaning ‘strong/ not likely to change’) and *prezervat* ‘preserved’ with the sense of ‘conserved’ on the model of *preserved* (used in Romanian only for ‘protected, safe from injury’).

Lexical convergence to English sometimes involves the translation of entire collocations and idioms, such as *povești scurte* ‘short stories’ (standard Rom. *povestiri*), *să vină la viață* ‘come to life’ (standard Romanian *să prindă viață* ‘catch life’), *a avea timp pe mâini* ‘to have time on your hands’ (standard Rom. *a avea timp* ‘to have time’), *a cădea bolnav* ‘fall ill’ (standard Rom. *a se îmbolnăvi*), *a da cuiva o lectură* ‘give somebody a lecture’ (standard Rom. *a ține cuiva un discurs* ‘hold a speech for somebody’).

3.2. Grammatical convergence

Although grammatical interference between languages was traditionally thought to be unlikely or even impossible, Weinreich showed as early as 1953 that a close analysis of the spontaneous speech of bilinguals in everyday contexts can reveal a much higher incidence of structural transfers than the study of fixed languages would lead one to believe. He also pointed out that these transfers are short-lived and rarely become established in the recipient language, mainly because of the social parameters of the contact situation. Silva-Corvalan (1994: 166-167) employs the term ‘nonce syntactic borrowing’ to refer to such constructions, while Matras (2009: 240) sees them as evidence of the flexibility and resourcefulness characterizing bilinguals,

who can apparently resort to new grammatical patterns, not only words and meanings, to convey their intended meanings.

There are 70 utterances in my data set that show convergence to English structures, some of them also containing semantic extensions. Although these instances of grammatical interference are marginal in the speech of the child, they can indicate the general direction in which Romanian grammar could change under the influence of English.

3.2.1. Prepositions

Almost 40 per cent of all cases of grammatical convergence in the corpus are represented by prepositions which acquire new meanings under the influence of their English counterparts. For example, when used with the verb *a se împiedica* ‘trip’, the preposition *peste* ‘over’, which in Romanian characteristically means ‘above,’ acquires a new sense associated with falling, on the model of the English *over*. Thus, we have forms like the following:

- (7) a. BG Rom.: *s-a împiedicat **peste** un extension cord.*
He tripped **over** an extension cord.
b. Gen. Rom.: *s-a împiedicat **de** un extension cord.*
He tripped **of** an extension cord.

Other examples of changes in the use of prepositions include: *Atriu a căzut **peste** turn* ‘Atriu fell over the tower’ (standard Rom. *Atriu a căzut **de pe** turn* ‘Atriu fell off the tower’), *Se ducea la Harry **pentru** ceai* ‘She went to Harry for tea’ (standard Rom. *Se ducea la Harry **la** ceai* ‘she went to Harry at tea’) *Are roți **pentru** picioare* ‘It has wheels for legs’ (standard Rom. *Are roți **în loc de** picioare* ‘It has wheels instead of legs’), *cu un rubin **la** centru* ‘with a ruby at the center’ (standard Rom. *cu un rubin **în** centru* ‘with a ruby in the center’), *am scris **în** persoana întâi* ‘I wrote in the first person’ (standard Rom. *am scris **la** persoana întâi* ‘I wrote at the first person’), *trăiește **pe** campus* ‘(he) lives on the campus’ (standard Rom. *locuiește **în** campus* ‘(he) dwells in the campus’), *a venit **pe** echipa noastră* ‘(he) came on our team’ (standard Rom. *a venit **în** echipa noastră* ‘(he) came in our team’), *doarme **prin** asta* ‘(he) sleeps through this’ (standard Rom. *doarme **în** timpul ăsta* ‘(he) sleeps during this’), *e bună **cu** grafice* ‘(she) is good with graphs’

(standard Rom. *e bună la grafice* ‘she is good at graphs’), *nu i-a spus așa, la față* ‘she didn’t tell him to his face’ (standard Rom. *nu i-a spus în față* ‘she didn’t tell him in his face’), *pot să mă gândesc despre limerick* ‘I can think about the limerick’ (standard Rom. *pot să mă gândesc la limerick* ‘I can think at the limerick’), *mă duc să vânez pentru o batistă* ‘I’m going to hunt for a tissue’ (standard Rom. ... *să caut o batistă* ‘to look for a tissue’).

3.2.2. Overt subjects

When a language in which the subject can be omitted comes into contact with a language in which this is obligatory, the decline in the use of the pro-drop parameter seems to be a common phenomenon. For example, in a longitudinal study of Russian spoken in the United States, Schmitt (2000, cited in Myers-Scotton, 2002: 201) notices a sharp increase in the incidence of overt pronouns in subject position, and the same situation is found by Bolonyai (2000, cited in Myers-Scotton, 2002: 201) in her analysis of Hungarian-English bilinguals. Overt pronoun subjects in pro-drop languages can be explained through the lens of Weinreich’s proposal that, when a foreign structural pattern is more explicit than a native one, the bilingual speaker feels the need to reinforce the latter and express the “*categories of one system no less strongly than in the other*” (1953: 33).

The subject is often omitted in Romanian in the first and second persons, as well as in the third person if it can be retrieved from the larger discourse, overtly expressed subjects being generally used only to signal emphasis or contrast. The pro-drop convention is occasionally disregarded in the child’s speech, and personal pronouns appear in subject position even if they have no special discourse function and can be easily recovered from verbal inflections. For example:

- (8) a. BG Rom.: creierul dă ordine **ca tu** să respiri.
the brain gives orders *that you* breathe.
b. Gen. Rom.: creierul (îți) dă ordine _ să respiri.
the brain gives you orders *to breathe*.

It is difficult to argue that the construction *ca tu să respiri* is the direct result of interference from English, since the pronoun subject, although redundant, does not violate the grammar of the sentence. However, when the

need to express the subject overtly leads to an alien construction, English influence becomes evident. Consider the following example:

- (9) a. BG Rom.: dacă ai timp, o să ți-l dau **pentru tine** să-l încerci.
 if you have time, I will give it to you **for you** to try it.
 b. Gen. Rom.: dacă ai timp, o să ți-l dau _ **să-l încerci**.
 if you have time, I will give it to you *to try it*.

Here, the construction *pentru tine să-l încerci* is clearly calqued on the English *for you to try it*, since it introduces a new syntactic pattern to Romanian by allowing a noun phrase in the accusative case to function as the subject of the clause. Moreover, note the superfluous nature of *pentru tine* in this sentence, where the subject can be retrieved both from the verbal inflection of *încerci* and from the indirect object *ți-* ‘you’ in the main clause.

If we compare the sentences in (8) and (9) with their English counterparts, we realize that the influence of English does not necessarily involve a direct reproduction of its structures in a given context. In other words, the speaker doesn’t simply translate the English sentences into Romanian. What is involved here is an implicit knowledge of the English grammar (in this case the fact that the subject is obligatory and that it can be expressed by means of a FOR phrase), and the creative and somehow independent application of this knowledge to the structures of Romanian. Thus, as Myers-Scotton (2002) points out, the bilingual speaker taps into the grammar of the foreign language at an abstract level before the moment utterances are formulated. This idea is supported by other examples discussed in this paper.

3.2.3. *Word order*

Word order seems to be particularly susceptible to the influence of a foreign language, the specialized literature offering many examples of new order patterns introduced either in the speech of bilinguals, or in languages at large. Thus, Weinreich (1953: 38) describes the introduction of the English order MODIFIER + NOUN to Portuguese noun compounds in the speech of Portuguese-English bilinguals in the United States, and Thomason and Kaufman (1988: 55) discuss the change from SOV to SVO in Finnish under Indo-European influence.

Romanian and English are typologically related languages, with many similarities in word order. Moreover, Romanian order is relatively flexible, allowing words to move in the clause according to various syntactic and pragmatic rules, a situation which makes it difficult to argue that the marked ordering of some sentences in the data set represents a change in the direction of English grammar. Consider the following example, where the child explains to a friend why it is better for a basketball team to have only one captain:

- (10) a. BG Rom.: Daca **toți** am fi căpitanii, **constant** ne-am certa între noi.
If **all of us** were the captains, (we) **constantly** would fight each other.
b. Gen. Rom.: Daca am fi **toți** căpitani, ne-am certa **constant** între noi.
If **we** were **all** captains, (we) would fight **constantly** each other.
c. Gen. Eng.: If **all of us** were captains, we would **constantly** fight each other.

In Romanian, the subject can be placed before or after the verb according to various syntactic, semantic and pragmatic factors, but the postverbal position is generally preferred in subordinate clauses (Pană Dindelegan, 2013: 119-124). Similarly, manner adverbials often follow the verb, although they can also precede it in the marked order. Despite these preferences, both the subject *toți* ‘all’ and the adverbial *constant* ‘constantly’ in (10) are preverbal, reflecting English syntactic patterns. The English influence in this example is also evident at the lexical level: the adverb *constant*, which in Romanian is used only in the sense of ‘without variation,’ has been semantically extended to express ‘all the time, repeatedly’ on the model of *constantly*.

As Weinreich (1953: 38) points out, when a grammatical relation which is obligatory in one language is unnecessarily imposed in another, the result is often monotonous, but not incorrect, speech. Thus, the occasional overuse of the Subject-Verb or Adverbial-Verb orders in Romanian may create the impression of dull, rigid language, but without violating its grammar.

3.2.4. *Gerund constructions*

Although gerunds are relatively common in Romanian when they occur as adjuncts, as modifiers of nouns they are more limited in usage, being restricted to the learned style (Zafiu, 2005: 536). Examples such as (11)

below, although correct, are not characteristic of spoken Romanian, where finite relative clauses are preferred, and can thus be attributed to the influence of English:

- (11) a. BG Rom.: Era ca *un drum dispărând în orizont*, cu o casuță și niște brazi în depărtare.
It was like *a road disappearing in the horizon*, with a little house and some fir trees in the distance.
b. Gen. Rom.: Era ca *un drum care dispărea în zare*, cu o casuță și niște brazi în depărtare.
It was like *a road that disappeared on the horizon*, with a little house and some fir trees in the distance.

Note that grammatical convergence is accompanied by lexical convergence in this example, the phrase *în orizont* being probably a blend between the English *on the horizon* and the Romanian *în zare* 'in the distance'.

Sometimes, a gerund clause combines codeswitching and structural calquing, as in (12) below. Here the speaker first intends to use the English verb *being*, but then changes her mind and finishes the sentence in Romanian, probably due to the difficulty of switching between a Romanian pronoun and an English verb. Even so, the direct relationship between the English and the Romanian gerunds becomes evident:

- (12) a. BG Rom.: ar fi putut să fie la fel de bine *gossip*, eu *being* (pause) *eu fiind acasă sick*.
It could have very well been gossip, *me being at home sick*.
b. Gen. Rom.: ar fi putut să fie la fel de bine bârfă, *eu fiind acasă bolnavă*.
It could have very well been gossip, *me being at home sick*.

The replication of English gerundial forms sometimes leads to ungrammatical constructions in Romanian. For example, although the gerund cannot function as a subject predicative, the form *șchiopatând* follows the copula *a rămas* in (13) below:

- (13) a. BG Rom.: *A rămas șchiopatând* din cauza vaporilor.
He was left *limping* because of the fumes.
b. Gen. Rom.: *A rămas șchiop* din cauza vaporilor.
He was left an *invalid/with a limp* because of the fumes.

3.2.5. The article

Changes in the use of the Romanian article under the influence of English mainly include the employment of the indefinite article in contexts where Romanian would use a bare noun and, to a lesser extent, the employment of bare nouns in contexts where the definite article is required.

The indefinite article is omitted in Romanian when the noun indicates a property of the entity denoted, especially when it appears in the subject predicative position (Dragomirescu, 2013: 161) (*Ion este profesor* ‘Ion is teacher’) or after prepositions of ‘quality’ such as *ca, drept, de* ‘as’ (Nedelcu, 2013: 461) (*Lucrează ca recepționeră* ‘(She) works as receptionist’). In English, on the other hand, nouns functioning as subject predicatives or following a preposition characteristically require the indefinite article (Biber et al., 2000: 260). Thus, it is probably safe to claim that the use of *o* ‘a’ in front of *menajeră* ‘maid’ in this example is the result of English interference:

- (14) a. BG Rom.: Vrea să se angajeze *ca o menajeră*.
She wants to find a job *as a maid*.
b. Gen. Rom.: Vrea să se angajeze *ca _ menajeră*.
She wants to find a job *as maid*.

Similar constructions in my data set include *încercase să devină o actriță* ‘(she) had tried to become an actress’ (standard Rom. *încercase să devină _ actriță* ‘(she) had tried to become actress’), *vorbim engleza bine ca o nație* ‘we speak English well as a nation’ (standard Rom. *vorbim engleza bine ca _ nație* ‘we speak English well as nation’), *cum arătai ca un copil?*

‘what did you look like as a child?’ (standard Rom. *cum arătai ca si _ copil?* ‘what did you look like as child’). Stan (2013: 294) points out that bare noun structures in the contemporary language are limited compared to old Romanian, where they were “*more numerous and more diversified*.” From this perspective, it could be argued that the examples presented above, although the result of foreign influence, are in conformity with a trend already present in the recipient language.

Conversely, the definite article is sometimes omitted in contexts where it is required in Romanian, but not in English. For example, nouns used in comparative constructions after the prepositions *decât* ‘than’, *precum, ca, cât* ‘as’ characteristically take a definite article in Romanian, whereas English

nouns used generically in equivalent constructions are usually articleless. Consequently, the employment of the bare noun *plută* in example (15) below is probably a case of convergence to English grammar:

- (15) a. BG Rom.: Știi materialul ăla foarte ușor, *ca **plută** albă?*
Do you know that very light material, *like white cork?*
b. Gen. Rom.: Știi materialul ăla foarte ușor, *ca **pluta** albă?*
Do you know that very light material, *like **the** white cork?*

Other examples of bare nouns in syntactic slots that require definiteness are *vrea să spună că e mai bun decât fete* ‘(he) wants to say that (he) is better than girls’ (standard Rom. *e mai bun decât fetele* ‘(he) is better than the girls’) and *tot designul lui Superman era ochelari* ‘Superman’s whole design was glasses’ (standard Rom. *tot designul lui Superman era ochelarii* ‘Superman’s whole design was the glasses’). This tendency towards the omission of the definite article in contemporary Romanian is also discussed by Borș (2021) in her study of the language of cartoon subtitles.

3.2.6. Omission of clitic pronouns

Romanian clitic pronouns sometimes double direct and indirect objects, but this phenomenon is not categorical. Thus, Pană Dindelegan (2013: 138) points out that, although clitic doubling of postverbal PE-nominal phrases has become obligatory in Romanian in recent decades, “*the present-day use still shows some fluctuations*” and accepts forms both with and without a clitic (e.g. *(îl) cunosc pe Ion/ pe elev*). Similarly, doubling of indirect objects is obligatory when these are preverbal, but optional when they are postverbal (Iorga Mihail, 2013: 154). In light of these rules, the constructions in (16) below can be regarded as grammatically correct, although the omission of clitics before the indirect and direct objects in this sentence makes it more similar to English:

- (16) a. BG Rom.: Și aș vrea să _ *spun nepoților și strănepoților si copiilor mei* că _ *am purtat* odată pe spate *pe salvator*.
And (I) would like to tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren that (I) carried once on my back the savior.
b. Gen. Rom.: Și aș vrea să **le** *spun nepoților și strănepoților si copiilor mei* că **l-am purtat** odată pe spate *pe salvator*.

- c. Gen. Eng.: And (I) would like to CLT.DAT.3PL *tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren* that (I) CLT.ACC.3SG *carried once on my back the savior*.
And I would like to tell my grandchildren and great grandchildren that I once carried the savior on my back.

Clitic doubling of direct objects is obligatory when the PE-noun phrase contains a pronoun, even if this is postverbal. Thus, the construction *a făcut pe ei să apară* in (17) is clearly a calque of the English *made them appear*, and, although intelligible, it represents a violation of Romanian syntax. In this case, the omission of the obligatory clitic *i* is accompanied by the presence of the redundant pronoun object *pe ei*, which should normally occur only with an emphatic or contrastive meaning.

- (17) a. BG Rom.: ceea ce l-o făcut pe Dudley să creadă că (pause) *ăsta _a făcut* (pause) ***pe ei*** să apară.
which made Dudley believe that *this made them appear*.
b. Gen. Rom.: ceea ce l-o făcut pe Dudley să creadă că *ăsta i-a făcut _să apară*.
Which made Dudley believe that *this CLT.ACC.3PL made appear*.

However, such constructions are very rare in the child's speech and, when they occur, they are marked by pauses and hesitations as evident in this example. As a matter of fact, note that an accusative clitic (*I-a făcut pe Dudley*) is used earlier in the sentence, but omitted later.

Other constructions involving the omission of clitic pronouns include *să _învingă pe alții* 'to defeat others' (cf. *să-i învingă pe alții*), *dacă _răneai grav pe vreunul* 'if you hurt badly someone' (cf. *dacă îl răneai grav pe vreunul*), *dacă _dădeai mai mult decât o tăietură* 'if you gave more than a cut' (cf. *dacă-i făceai mai mult decât o tăietură* 'if you made him more than a cut'). These examples seem to support the idea put forth by some researchers that foreign interference in the speech of bilinguals is often manifested as a tendency towards simplification and the abandonment of non-obligatory categories in the recipient language.

3.2.7. Changes in verb subcategorization patterns

Sometimes, grammatical convergence affects the subcategorization patterns of verbs in the recipient language; this is called 'convergence at the

level of predicate-argument structure' by some authors (Myers-Scotton, 2002: 166). Consider the following example:

- (18) a. BG Rom.: Că visele *nu _ le* prea amintesc.
Because dreams (I) not CLT.ACC.3PL really remember.
b. Gen. Rom.: Că visele *nu mi le* prea amintesc.
Because dreams (I) not CLT.DAT.1SG CLT.ACC.3PL
really remember.
Because dreams, I don't really remember them.

The Romanian verb *a aminti* 'remember' is ditransitive, requiring both a direct and an indirect object, the latter often realized as a dative/reflexive clitic; still, on the model of the English transitive verb *remember*, the indirect object is dropped in (18). It should be pointed out that the correct form *mi-l amintesc* is used twice earlier in the same sentence, and the reflexive form of the verb (*a-și aminti*) occurs frequently in the child's speech.

Sentence (18) would be correct if, instead of the verb *amintesc*, the speaker had chosen to use its transitive counterpart *țin minte* 'remember/recall', i.e. *Visele nu le prea țin minte*. Thus, this example can be interpreted as illustrating something similar to lexical convergence: the synonyms *a-și aminti* and *a ține minte* are merged under the influence of the English *remember*, but it is their grammatical rather than semantic properties that are adjusted to fit the foreign model. This situation seems to support Silva-Corvalan's proposal that, very often, what looks like a case syntactic borrowing can be accounted for at the lexical level, being triggered by partial congruence between words in the recipient and in the source language. She calls this 'lexico-syntactic calquing' and suggests that "*what is borrowed across languages is not syntax, but lexicon and pragmatics*" (1998: 226, cited in Winford, 2003: 68).

This idea receives support from other examples in my data set. For instance, Romanian has two verbs corresponding to *sit*: *a ședea*, which is always intransitive and can denote an action as well as a state, and *a (se) așeza*, which can be used both transitively and reflexively (e.g. *Așază-te* 'Sit yourself'; *Așază copilul pe scaun* 'Sit the child on the chair'). In (19) below, *a ședea* has its semantic and grammatical properties extended so as to express 'put somebody in sitting position' under the influence of the English *sit*, which combines the transitive and intransitive uses. The influence exercised

on the Romanian construction by the English phrase *sat her in a chair* is also evident in the employment of the preposition *in* 'in' instead of the standard *pe* 'on'.

- (19) a. BG Rom.: *Or șezut-o într-un scaun.*
 (They) *sat her in* a chair.
 b. Gen. Rom.: *Or așezat-o pe un scaun.*
 (They) *sat her on* a chair.

Also consider this example:

- (20) a. BG Rom.: *ăsta și-a crescut rădăcini.*
 This CLT.REFL.DAT.3SG *grew* roots.
 b. Gen. Rom.: *ăsta și-a făcut rădăcini.*
 This CLT.REFL.DAT.3SG *made* roots.
 c. Gen. Eng.: This one *grew* roots.

Romanian expresses the meaning 'let something grow' by using the reflexive verbs *a-și face* 'make' (*și-a făcut rădăcini* 'made (itself) roots') and *a-și lăsa* 'let' (*și-a lăsat barbă* 'grew (himself) a beard'), while the verb *a crește* 'grow' is used in other types of constructions (*i-au crescut rădăcini* 'its roots grew', *i-a crescut barba* 'his beard grew'). In English, on the other hand, the verb *grow* can be used in all these situations. The speaker decides to use the reflexive construction, but, under the influence of English, extends the syntactic scope of *a crește* to describe a situation normally covered by *a face*. In this way, a syntactic distinction made in the recipient language is neutralized on the model of a foreign construction, the result being simplification and generalization of patterns. As noted elsewhere in the literature, this is a strategy bilinguals use in order to lighten "*the cognitive load of having to remember and use two different linguistic systems*" (Silva-Corvalan, 1994: 3-6).

Other examples of changes in the grammatical properties of verbs involve passive constructions, for example *sunt spusă sa fiu* '(I) am said to be' (standard Rom. *se spune că sunt* 'it is said that I am') or *s-ar putea să fiu zvonită să fiu ...* 'I might be rumoured to be' (*s-ar putea să se zvonească că sunt ...* 'it might be rumoured that I am'). Also consider this example:

- (21) a. BG Rom.: *O auzit-o pe soră-sa să-i spună* despre ăștia.
 He heard his sister *to tell him* about these guys.
 b. Gen. Rom.: *O auzit-o pe soră-sa spunându-i* despre ăștia.

	He heard his sister <i>telling him</i> about these guys.
c. Gen. Eng.:	He heard his sister <i>tell/telling him</i> about these guys.

Perception verbs followed by a noun phrase in the accusative can take the infinitive or the gerund in English, whereas in Romanian only the gerund is possible. In (21) above, the speaker uses the subjunctive instead of the gerund as required by Romanian grammar, a situation which might suggest the fact that the Romanian subjunctive is perceived as an equivalent to the English infinitive. This idea is supported by the similarity between the two verb forms in Romanian, where they are interchangeable after certain classes of verbs, but also by other examples discussed in this paper, in which the speaker uses the subjunctive to replicate infinite English constructions (see (8) and (9) above).

4. Conclusions

The analysis conducted in this paper shows that the strategies bilinguals employ in order to accommodate two linguistic systems can extend beyond the lexical field, into the realm of grammatical constructions. However, grammatical convergence is often brought about by individual words which change their structural and semantic properties in the direction of English models.

In general, the constructions that result from the influence of English fit into patterns already existing in Romanian and tend not to disrupt its structural makeup. As Silva-Corvalan (1994) also finds in her study of Spanish-English contact, the grammatical convergence described in this paper can be seen as resulting from the relaxation of some syntactic and pragmatic constraints in the recipient language, rather than as the introduction of completely new syntactic patterns. This situation confirms the idea put forth in the language contact literature that “*in cases of light to moderate structural interference, the transferred features are more likely to be those that fit well typologically with corresponding features in the recipient language*” (Thomason and Kaufman, 1988: 54).

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