

# THE ROLE OF LINGUISTIC CONTACT IN THE EVOLUTION OF INTERJECTIONS IN THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This study examines how linguistic contact has shaped the evolution of interjections in Romanian, highlighting both the internal dynamics of this lexical class and the impact of the main languages with which Romanian has interacted throughout history: Slavic, Turkish and Greek. Starting from theoretical premises regarding the hybrid nature of interjections – marked simultaneously by spontaneity and cultural conventionalisation – the research demonstrates that Romanian forms emerged through a complex process of borrowing, phonological adaptation and pragmatic reinterpretation. Slavic influences are most evident in religious expressions and phraseological mechanisms, Turkish in interjections of approval and encouragement, and Greek in the liturgical register. The general conclusion is that Romanian interjections reflect a linguistic space characterised by areal convergences, cultural transfers and parallel developments, constituting a valuable expressive marker for understanding the history of language contact.

## Keywords

*Linguistic contact, Greek influences, Slavic influences, Turkish influences, interjections, lexical borrowing, pragmatics.*

## 1. Preliminary Considerations

Interjections represent one of the most dynamic and expressive word classes, characterised by spontaneity, orality and a strong emotive component. They convey states, attitudes, impulses or imitate sounds from nature and speech. Unlike other parts of speech, interjections are less constrained by strict grammatical norms, which makes them highly permeable to external influences.

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<sup>1</sup> This article, which examines the evolution of the interjection, was prepared as part of The Postdoctoral Research Project UOC, entitled ‘*The Relationship between the Internal Genius and the Universals of Language and Thought in the Romanian Interjectional System.*’

Interjections are not necessarily “universal”, even though they may be shaped by linguistic contact at phonological and pragmatic levels. This assertion underscores a nuanced perspective in linguistics, acknowledging both cultural specificity and susceptibility to external influence.

Although some studies from the 1990’s, such as F. Ameka’s<sup>1</sup>, suggested that interjections might constitute a universal part of speech, similar to nouns and verbs, subsequent research has shown the situation to be more complex. In general, interjections are considered “highly culture-specific”<sup>2</sup>. In 2003, the linguist Anna Wierzbicka argued in an extensive study that interjections are “often among the most characteristic features of individual cultures”<sup>3</sup>, a view echoed by Mark Dingemanse in a recent work<sup>4</sup>.

There is considerable diversity in the sources of interjectional forms, even for similar functions across different languages. Moreover, interjections with similar forms may carry very different functional meanings in distinct languages. In the aforementioned study, Dingemanse cites Wierzbicka’s example regarding the varying values of the interjection *pst*<sup>5</sup>, which in Polish signals a warning to keep silent, while in Russian it expresses disapproval.

Nevertheless, certain tendencies toward universality exist in some types of interjections. For instance, pain-related interjections may have phylogenetic precursors, being linked to common vocalisations<sup>6</sup>.

In a 2013 study, Mark Dingemanse highlighted a case of quasi-universality – the interjection *huh?*, which, according to the author, “*in all languages investigated, it is a monosyllable with at most a glottal onset consonant, an unrounded low front central vowel, and questioning*

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<sup>1</sup> Felix Ameka, 1992, “Introduction Interjections: The universal yet neglected part of speech”, in: *Journal of Pragmatics*, no. 18, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Skafte Jensen, Tina Thode Hougaard, Carsten Levisen, 2019, “Interjections in Scandinavia and Beyond: Traditions and Innovations”, in: *Scandinavian Studies in Language*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Anna Wierzbicka, 2003, *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: The Semantics of Human Interaction*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, p. 285: “*In fact, far from being universal and ‘natural’ signs which don’t have to be learnt, interjections are often among the most characteristic peculiarities of individual cultures*”.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Dingemanse, 2023, “Interjections”, in: Lier, E. van (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 488: “*We consider two possible explanations. The first is that *huh?* is similar across languages because it is an innate grunt. The second is that it is similar as a result of convergent evolution.*”

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*.

*intonation.*<sup>7</sup> This convergence is attributed to shared conversational needs. Dingemanse proposes two explanations: (a) it represents an innate grunt; (b) it results from convergent evolution<sup>8</sup>.

Even in such cases, as in others, specific languages impose a degree of conventionalisation and diversification<sup>9</sup>.

Linguistic contact can influence interjections both phonologically and pragmatically.

At the phonological level, interjections constitute an open lexical category for borrowing from one language to another, being even more frequently borrowed than other parts of speech, as shown in a study analysing 27 languages, according to Piispanen Peter Sauli<sup>10</sup>.

At the pragmatic level, borrowing an interjection sometimes involves adaptation to the new language in terms of form and/or function<sup>11</sup>. The borrowed element may cease to function exactly as in the donor language, being reshaped in the recipient language, which can also affect existing forms<sup>12</sup>. An example is the use of the word “jess” in Icelandic, Swedish and Finnish, derived from English “yes”. Although it is used to express a strong reaction to positive events (such as when someone scores a goal in a football match) or to conclude conversations, in Icelandic it is not employed to answer questions of any kind, for which the native form *já* is used<sup>13</sup>.

Thus, while certain underlying universal tendencies may exist for interjections associated with basic emotions or fundamental communicative needs, their specific forms, functions and usage are largely shaped by cultural and linguistic conventions. Moreover, contact between languages can

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<sup>7</sup> Dingemanse M, Torreira F, Enfield NJ, 2013, “Is ‘Huh?’ a Universal Word? Conversational Infrastructure and the Convergent Evolution of Linguistic Items”, in: *PLoS ONE*, vol. 8, no. 11, p. 6.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Dingemanse, 2023, “Interjections”, in: Lier, E. van (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Word Classes*, Oxford University Press, 2023, p. 488.

<sup>10</sup> Piispanen Peter Sauli, 2020, “An Ancient East Asian Wanderwort”, in: *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, vol. 73, no. 4, p. 571.

<sup>11</sup> Helga Hilmisdóttir, Martina Huhtamäki, Susanna Karlsson, 2023, “Pragmatic borrowing from English Pragmatic borrowing from English”, in *Nordic Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 46, no. 3, p. 255.

<sup>12</sup> Helga Hilmisdóttir, Elizabeth Peterson, 2023, “Language contact and language change, Impact on the languages of the Nordic countries”, in: Peterson Elizabeth, Beers Fägersten Kristy, 2023, *English in the Nordic Countries*, New York: Routledge, p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

significantly alter these elements, both through the introduction of new sounds or the phonological adaptation of borrowed ones, and through the adoption of new usage patterns or functions for pragmatically borrowed interjections.

In the history of Romanian, successive episodes of linguistic contact – with Slavic populations, with the Byzantine Empire and the Greek sphere, with the Ottoman Empire and also with the West (especially France) – have left visible traces in the vocabulary, including within the register of interjections.

In our study we examine Slavic, Turkish and Greek influences on Romanian interjections, and we also offer a brief comparison with French, a language that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century exerted a major influence on modern Romanian, as well as throughout Southeastern Europe.

With regard to borrowings from various source languages, on the basis of research employing modern methods for investigating lexicographic resources, it has been claimed that Romanian has borrowed words from more than 40 languages<sup>14</sup>. The authors use an automated, machine-learning-based data analysis system that “reads” dictionary etymologies and thereby identifies source languages.

Among these lexical borrowings, we consider that a significant number are interjections. However, by their nature, interjections are often spontaneous expressions, strongly anchored in cultural and emotional context, which makes the direct identification of borrowings or strict parallels between languages a complex and highly specialised linguistic task.

## **II. The Influence of the Slavic Languages on the Romanian Interjectional System**

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<sup>14</sup> In the article “Automatic Identification and Production of Related Words for Historical Linguistics”, published in: *Computational Linguistics*, Volume 45, Number 4, Alina Maria Ciobanu and Liviu P. Dinu state in note 23: “*Romanian borrowed words from over 40 languages (Ciobanu and Dinu 2014a). In our experiments, we use the top 20 languages in terms of number of borrowed words, so that we have enough training data.*”. In the bibliography, the work mentioned for 2014a is “An etymological approach to cross-language orthographic similarity. Application on Romanian”, in: *Proceedings of the 2014 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing*, EMNLP 2014, pp. 1047-1058, Doha. In this paper we did not find an explicit list of the “more than 40 source languages”; however, the authors present the methodology for extracting cognate words from electronic dictionaries when conducting their experiments and consistently select 20 donor languages for which they have more abundant data.

A review of the specialised literature leads to the conclusion that there has been a consistent and significant influence of the Slavic languages, including Old Slavic, on Romanian, as researcher Mihaela Illoiaia states in a 2023 study: “*Romanian has undergone substantial contact-induced influence by Old-Slavic and Balkan languages.*”<sup>15</sup>

Despite thorough search efforts using a variety of specific queries with resources provided by computational systems, we have not succeeded in identifying academic studies that offer a direct and exhaustive comparative analysis of the *corpus of interjections* in Romanian and Old Slavic.

Slavic influence on Romanian is profound and long-standing, affecting the general vocabulary<sup>16</sup>, and only in certain details the morphological particularities. It is therefore plausible that this influence also manifests at the level of colloquial expressions and interjections, albeit not so consistently in the form of direct borrowings, as might be expected, but rather through semantic calques or borrowings of pragmatic structures.

Romanian belongs to an area in which intense linguistic contact has led to structural and lexical convergences among languages from different families. Interjections and particles are often the first elements affected by prolonged contact<sup>17</sup>.

One of the particles of Slavic origin that entered Romanian is *da*. However, in the Romanian grammatical tradition the word “da” is not classified as a particle, but as an adverb (its basic value) or as an interjection (in short replies). Although particles are generally inflexible words, and “da” is likewise invariable, in Romanian the semantic and functional criterion is essential. On the other hand, particles do not have their own lexical meaning, but only modify the meaning of other words in various contexts.

Contemporary normative grammars (GALR, GBLR) classify “da” as an affirmative adverb and as an interjection (in short answers: *Da?* *Da!*). It is

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<sup>15</sup> Mihaela Illoiaia, 2023, *MIHI EST Construction: An Instance of Non-Canonical Subject Marking in Romanian*. Vol. 481. Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, p. 54. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783111055466>.

<sup>16</sup> As is well known, many lexicosemantic elements of Slavic origin remained confined to the folk, regional and archaic strata of Romanian, especially after the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when the so-called phenomenon of “re-Romanisation” of the Romanian vocabulary occurred, cf. P. Gh. Bârlea, 2009, *Limba română contemporană*, Bucureşti: Editura “Grai şi Suflet – Cultura Națională”, pp. 216.

<sup>17</sup> Grünke Jonas; Andreeva Bistra, Gabriel Christoph, Sabev Mitko, 2023, “Vocative Intonation in Language Contact: The Case of Bulgarian Judeo-Spanish”, in: *Languages*, vol. 8, no. 4, p. 19.

not included in the native category “particle,” which in Romanian has a very specific sense.

Some authors, however, use the term ‘particle’ in the case of “da”, as we find in Tomasz Klimkowski:

*“Although the Slavic etymology of the affirmative particle **da** in Romanian is practically unanimously accepted, it can be explained by applying the ‘theory of support points’ through an internal semantic evolution of Rom. **dar(ă)** ~ **da**, reinforced by an external, Slavic influence. In other words, the Slavic **da** found in Romanian a favourable support point enabling it to be adopted into its vocabulary.”<sup>18</sup>*

Nevertheless, Tomasz Klimkowski also notes that in his work he employs the model found in the specialised literature of German and Slavic scholars, and not the terminology of Romanian normative grammars:

*“... in German and Slavic linguistics these are most often termed particles. In Romanian grammatical tradition, the term **particle** designates rather a strengthening element attached to a word.”<sup>19</sup>*

He also specifies that he chooses to use the term “affirmative particle” in his demonstrative approach:

*“Therefore, regardless of the difficulty in distinguishing particles from other classes, particularly from adverbs, we shall continue to use the term **affirmative particle**, given the special value of such forms.”<sup>20</sup>*

We consider that “da” as an interjection is merely a short reaction used in dialogue. It does not form part of the logical structure of a sentence; rather, it is a response or a call, a brief, self-contained utterance expressing a spontaneous reaction:

“*Da?*” (as a reply to a call)

“*Da!*” (expressing surprise or quick confirmation)

“– *Maria!*

– *Da?*”

Here, “da” no longer represents a sentence but is simply a *verbal interjection* used in dialogue.

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<sup>18</sup> Tomasz Klimkowski, 2020, “Particulele affirmative în limba română – perspectivă diacronică și areală”, in: *Studia Romanica Posnaniensia*, vol. 47, no. 3, p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

These interjectional values are confirmed by the presence in modern Slavic languages (e.g. Bulgarian, Serbian, Russian, Polish) of this particle, which is extremely widespread and, besides similar affirmative functions, may also acquire interjectional nuances in various contexts, such as vehement agreement or surprise.

An interesting case is represented by interjections of religious origin or exclamations based on the Slavic word *Bogū*. The tendency to form interjections and exclamations from the root *bogū* (“god”) is present in many modern Slavic languages, not only in Old Slavic, as Andrea Trovesi notes when discussing the etymology of the word and its homonymous lexical families:

*“In Slavic languages and dialects, two lexical families are attested that can be traced back to the homonymous roots \*bogū with the respective meanings of ‘wealth’, ‘property’ and ‘god’, ‘divinity’.”*<sup>21</sup>

In Trovesi’s study we find a passage describing a phenomenon of grammaticalisation and lexicalisation in several stages, whose source is the Common Slavic form *bogū*:

*“The hypothetical derivational chain would start from a declarative sentence later reinterpreted as an exclamatory phrase, then rigidified into a phraseologism. This, in turn, becomes an adverb with exclamatory value expressing doubt, uncertainty, vague hope – such as ‘only God knows!’ – and finally transforms into a prefixoid.”*<sup>22</sup>

Here we observe a multi-stage process of linguistic evolution, whereby a declarative construction comes to be transformed into exclamatory phrases, fixed phraseologisms, exclamatory adverbs and ultimately productive prefixoids in exclamatory compounds.

We shall further outline the trajectory<sup>23</sup> that Trovesi identifies as a pattern in Slavic languages for expressions such as “God knows”, which he claims gradually evolve from free statements into a crystallised interjectional form.

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<sup>21</sup> Andrea Trovesi, 2023, “La famiglia di parole da base [bog] ‘dio’ nelle lingue slave (con particolare riguardo alle esclamazioni)”, in: Rosanna Benacchio (ed.), Gebert Lucyna (ed.), *Studi contrastivi di linguistica slava: grammatica e pragmatica*, Florence: Firenze University Press, p. 104.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 106

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 106-110.

The starting point is the declarative sentence, with the prototypical example: *Bogū znaet.* “God knows.”

In its initial stage, this is merely an ordinary affirmative sentence asserting a fact:

“Only God knows the unknown element.”

Then, Trovesi explains that the sentence is reanalysed pragmatically as an emotional expression marking uncertainty, conveying the speaker’s inability to respond precisely. This leads to values such as:

“Who knows?”

“Only God knows!”

At this point, the first step toward interjectionalisation (transformation into a fixed exclamation) occurs. The expression “God knows” ceases to be a sentence and becomes a lexicalised cliché. Trovesi emphasises that this rigidification is typical of the evolution of exclamatory expressions.

Now we are no longer dealing with the expression in ordinary syntactic terms but as a lexical unit with a general meaning: “Who knows?”

The next stage is transformation into an exclamatory adverb. These expressions come to function as exclamatory adverbs expressing doubt, uncertainty, vague hope, lack of knowledge. They are no longer phrases but autonomous adverbial units.

The final stage is transformation into a prefixoid, as Trovesi states. The exclamatory expression is reduced to its first element (“God” → *bog* / *boh* / *buh*) and becomes a prefixoid included in exclamatory compounds.

These are no longer phrases but lexical compounds with a general sense: “who knows who/how/where.”

Thus, this type of evolution is a classic example of:

- *lexicalisation* (sentence → fixed expression),
- *re-functionalisation* (syntactic unit → exclamatory unit → adverb → prefixoid),
- *partial grammaticalisation* (*bog-* becomes an element with a prefix-like function).

Trovesi stresses that this trajectory explains the emergence in Slavic languages of interjections and exclamations formed on the basis of *bogū*, illustrating the internal dynamics of the Slavic lexical system.

Romanian, although it did not directly adopt these interjections, uses its own religious exclamations (e.g., *Doamne!*, *Sfinte!*, *Maică!*) that can fulfil similar pragmatic functions. These may be linguistic calques or simply

evidence of “universals of thought”, since they function pragmatically in a manner similar to Slavic exclamatives:

Slavic	Pragmatic function	Romanian
<i>Bože!</i>	surprise, fear, imploration	<i>Doamne!</i>
<i>Bog znaet!</i>	ignorance, uncertainty	<i>Cine știe! / Doar Dumnezeu știe!</i>
<i>Bůhvíkdo</i>	uncertainty, indeterminacy	<i>Naiba știe, cine știe cine!</i>

The expressive function is universal, but the forms are cultural, since the reason all languages employ religious exclamations (invoking divinity) is universal: a threat, a surprise or a doubt that activates common emotional mechanisms.

Let us analyse several other interjections.

Category of Interjections	In Romanian	Equivalent in Modern Slavic Languages	Comparative Observations
Exclamations of Pain / Suffering	“au!”, “vai!”	Rus. “ou!” Pol. “oj!”	Exclamations of pain are typically similar across languages due to their physiological basis (natural sounds of pain). <i>Oi!</i> is common in Greek, Slavic and even in dialectal Romanian (in certain regions). Rom. <i>vai!</i> also has an analogue in ancient Hebrew/Greek expressions ( <i>oּוָי!</i> )
Exclamations of Joy / Enthusiasm	“ura!”	Rus. “ypa!”, Srb. “ypa!”	<i>Ura!</i> is an international borrowing, probably via French and Russian, but with wide European diffusion. In this case, Romanian and Slavic languages do not necessarily share a common internal evolution, but rather participate in a pan-European phenomenon originating in the military sphere (victory shout).
Interjections of Urging / Calling	“hei!”	Rus. “еу!” (ei!), Pol. “hej!”	We consider that the similarities are almost entirely onomatopoeic – sounds used to attract attention – which appear to be independent parallel developments rather than borrowings.

## II. The Influence of Turkish

In analysing the corpus of Romanian interjections for possible similarities or Turkish influences, we have observed the interjection “AFERÍM”, a well-known example of a Turkism.

Specialised literature confirms a significant influence of Turkish on Romanian, particularly at the lexical level, as a result of prolonged historical contact, as studies employing modern computational analysis techniques affirm:

*“The top eight languages ranked above are those with which Romanian has had the most intense cultural interaction, either more recently (English, for example) or in the past: during the period of ‘re-Romanisation’ of Romanian (when Italian and French influence was remarkable), or through continuous contact (with Turkish).”<sup>24</sup>*

Ciobanu and Dinu show in their study that, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, both Romanian and Turkish borrowed a considerable number of lexemes from French, a fact that explains the presence of an extensive corpus of Romanian-Turkish pairs with a common French etymon:

*“As for Turkish, we have decided to investigate the cognate pairs for this language because many French words were imported into both Romanian and Turkish in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and we expect to find a large number of Romanian-Turkish cognate pairs with common French ancestors, which might provide deeper insight into lexical similarity between the two languages.”<sup>25</sup>*

The authors identify 1,157 Romanian-Turkish pairs<sup>26</sup> in their dataset with a common French etymon, a finding that confirms the hypothesis formulated in the methodological section.

When it comes to specific interjections, a well-known case is, as mentioned above, *Aferim!*. In Turkish, *aferim* means “bravo”, “well done”, expressing praise or approval. The same function is preserved in Romanian.

Two other terms with exclamatory connotations are *haram* (“forbidden, sin”) and *halal* (“permitted, blessed”). Although primarily nouns/adjectives of Turkish origin, they can be used in Romanian with strong exclamatory value, expressing disapproval or approval<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> Ciobanu Alina Maria, Dinu Liviu P., 2019, “Automatic Identification and Production of Related Words for Historical Linguistics”, in: *Computational Linguistics*, vol. 45, nr. 4, 969.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 674.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 676.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mihaela Illoaia, 2023, *The MIHI EST construction: An instance of non-canonical subject marking in Romanian*, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, pp. 96-97.

In contemporary Romanian, *halal* is almost always ironic, expressing disapproval in the form of irony, equivalent to “shame on you!” or “bravo, but upside down!”. This is an example of lexical influence extending into the sphere of expressivity.

It is widely accepted in Romanian etymology<sup>28</sup> that *hai!* or *haide!* ('come on!') derive from Turkish *haydi* or *hadi*, used to urge or encourage. This represents a strong functional and phonetic similarity between the two languages.

The interjection *haide* has, according to DEX, the following variants: *haida*, *haid*, *aida*, *aide*, with uncertain etymology, its origin disputed among Turkish (*haydi*), Bulgarian (*haide*) and Modern Greek (*áide*).

Vasmer's Dictionary<sup>29</sup>, the principal authoritative source on the etymology of Russian words, explicitly cites Turkic/Tatar forms (*aida*, *äidä*, *haidä*) for the Russian interjection “*aǔda!*”, phonetically and pragmatically similar to the Romanian variant *aida*. Although it does not refer directly to Romanian, the fact that the Russian etymological dictionary acknowledges the Turkic origin of the Russian interjection illustrates how interjections can be borrowed from a contact language and, as is well known, Ottoman influence was strongly exerted for a long time in Southeastern Europe.

### III. The Influence of Greek

Greek exerted a strong influence on Romanian, consisting primarily of lexical contributions, especially in domains related to the Orthodox rite. This influence is distinct from that of Slavic, although both contributed (through the phenomenon of “chains of transmission”, whereby forms and meanings were passed “in relay”) to the development of Romanian vocabulary in the ecclesiastical register<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Ion Coteanu (coord.), Lucreția Mareș (coord.), 2009, *Dicționarul explicativ al limbii române* (DEX), ediția a II-a revăzută și adăugită, Academia Română, Institutul de Lingvistică, București: Editura Univers Enciclopedic Gold, s.v. *hai*.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii ruse*, Vasmer, M., 1964-1973, *Etimologicheskiĭ slovar' russkogo yazyka* (O. N. Trubachev, Ed.). Moskva: Progress, s.v. *aǔda*.

<sup>30</sup> This does not in any way imply that, in the secular register of Romanian vocabulary, Greek-origin words from different periods are fewer: *folos* and *a folosi* (“use”), *frică* (“fear”), *a (se) plăcăti* (“to get bored”), *proaspăt* (“fresh”), *prosop* (“towel”), *sigur* (“sure”), among others, form part of the fundamental vocabulary of contemporary Romanian (cf. P. Gh. Bărlea, 2009, pp. 201–205).

The academic studies consulted emphasise the importance of Greek influence on Romanian not only in Antiquity but also during the Byzantine and Phanariot periods, in fields such as religion and science, as Estelle Variot notes:

*“It is also important to distinguish the strong influence of Greek in Antiquity, which had morphological and syntactic consequences (the Balkan tendency to use the subjunctive mood, lexical contributions in certain domains related to the Orthodox rite and sciences etc.).”<sup>31</sup>*

Regarding loanwords with interjectional value originating from Greek, we have selected several that are known to be connected to Greek through their religious meanings.

*Aliluia!*, meaning “Praise the Lord!”, is an interjection of liturgical origin whose parentage is disputed between Church Slavonic (Sl. *aleluija*) and Greek (NGk. ἀλληλούια). It is clear to all that at the origin lies Heb. *hallelū Jah*, from which the Greeks borrowed it, most likely during the early Christian preaching. From Greek it was transferred into Slavonic. However, it is extremely difficult to determine when it entered Romanian, since Christian communities existed in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area before the great Slavic migrations, yet the earliest church texts were written in Slavonic, using Cyrillic characters.

A similar situation is that of the structure *Chirie eleison!* ‘Doamne, miluiește!’ (“Lord, have mercy!”), with variants such as *Chiralexai!*, *Chiraleisa*, *Chirales!* – versions of Gk. *Kύριε ἐλέησον*. These are likewise liturgical expressions, which appear to be examples of direct borrowings used in religious contexts.

## Conclusions

Interjections – those small outbursts of language – bear the imprint of cultural history more than any other lexical category. They reveal both the instinctive reactions of speakers and the subtle traces of the peoples with whom Romanian has come into contact. From the Slavic echo of *da* to

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<sup>31</sup> Estelle Variot, 2016, “La langue, point d’équilibre et d’harmonie entre le substrat, les innovations et les variations lexicales”, in: Mariana Pitar coord., 2016, *Le français à l’Université de l’Ouest de Timișoara: un demi-siècle d’enseignement et de recherche (1966-2016)*. Prefață și studiu introductiv: Mariana Pitar, Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, p. 313.

the exclamations once formed around the root *bogū*, from the Turkish vigour of *afirim* or *hai* to the Byzantine solemnity of *aliluia* and *Kyrie eleison*, interjections construct a mosaic in which spontaneity intertwines with tradition.

Despite certain universal tendencies – such as cries of pain or the physiological sounds of surprise – most interjections are profoundly cultural, shaped by historical developments, rituals, customs and the affective register of a community. Thus, Romanian, situated at the crossroads of Slavic, Turkish and Greek influences, among many others as in any natural language, has developed a rich and diverse interjectional repertoire, in which each form encapsulates a story of linguistic contact.

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