ENGLISH AS A MODEL OF NEUTRALITY?

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POINTS OF REFERENCE & FOCUS

"language myths", (Watts 2011)

"ideology of the standard language" (Milroy and Milroy 1999)

Recent metalinguistic comments on gender-inclusive language choices in Romanian concerning non-binary persons

[Gender Talk (2020-2021), Episodes 2&4]

"MASCULINE/FEMININE/NEUTER" IN ROMANIAN

THREE NOMINAL AGREEMENT CLASSES

Traditional analyses and current reference grammars of Romanian recognize **three genders**.

Gender - expressed through agreement (e.g. attributive adjectives)

However
SINGULAR: masculine/neuter syncretism
PLURAL: feminine/neuter syncretism

There are also analyses arguing for **two genders in Romanian** (e.g. Bateman and Polinski 2010).

BINARY OPPOSITION

There are **only two agreement patterns** in the singular and in the plural: masculine/feminine.

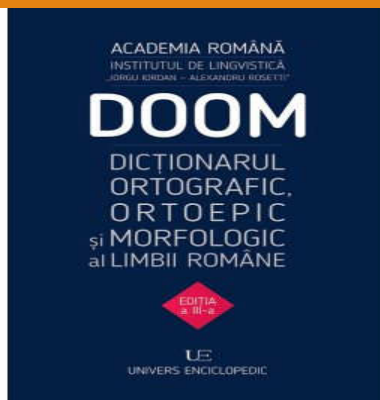| Masculine	Feminine
băiat inteligent –	fată inteligentă
[intelligent boy	intelligent girl]
băieți inteligenți –	fete inteligente
[intelligent boys	intelligent girls]

PRONOUNS

EL [he], EI[they]   EA [she], ELE [they]

ACADEMY-GOVERNED CODIFICATION versus A "WORK IN PROGRESS"

The absence of mentions or guidelines regarding gender-inclusive language for non-binary persons in present Romanian normative texts./The absence from existing dictionaries of a significant number of English loanwords for LBTQI+ identity, with the notable exception of "gay" (Introduced by the 2005 DOOM)

ACADEMIA ROMÂNĂ
INSTITUTUL DE LINGVISTICĂ
"IORGU IORDAN – ALEXANDRU ROSETTI"

DOOM

DICȚIONARUL
ORTOGRAFIC,
ORTOEPIC
și MORFOLOGIC
al LIMBII ROMÂNE

EDIȚIA
a III-a

UE
UNIVERS ENCICLOPEDIC

Emergent guidelines from gender equality promoters (including LGBTQI+ organizations

Gender Talk
• A podcast on Anchor

(2020 -2021)

gender talk podcast

A FOCUS ON METALINGUISTIC COMMENTS:
"GENDER TALK": ON THE LINGUISTIC INCLUSION OF NON-BINARY PERSONS

EPISODE 2 – GENDER AND LANGUAGE –April 22, 2020 : A discussion between Dani (the interviewer) and Maria (introduced in the podcast as a Romanian linguist living in France) Gender Talk • A podcast on Anchor

EPISODE 4 – GENDER AND NEUTRAL LANGUAGE –March 1, 2021: A discussion between Dani (the interviewer) and Dea (introduced in the podcast as an agender person and as a gender-identity activist) Gender Talk • A podcast on Anchor

AGREEMENT: ADJECTIVES, PARTICIPLES, DETERMINERS
1) **–x** (Dea describes it as a preferred strategy. Detailed discussion by Dea of present difficulties of attaching the –x to lexical roots /but/ Maria states that "x won't work for very long, because it breaks the equivalence between reading and writing"): **obositX [tiredX]; interesatX[interestedX]**
2)**@** (Perceived by both Dani and Dea as possible only in writing)
2) Mention by Dea (who identifies as agender) that not all non-binary persons prefer the -x
PRONOUNS
1) **e-x (** versus masculine el/ feminine ea) (Discussed by Dea)
2) Using names instead of pronouns for non-binary persons
3) Mention of the second-person politeness person in Romanian **_dumneavoastră_** (singular and plural) as a possible choice for addressing non-binary persons.
4)Mention of Romanian reflexives, as well as of possessive determiners as possibly helpful choices
In Romanian the reflexive **_se_** and the possessive determiners **_sale (sg.)/săi (pl.)_** are unmarked (male/female) (Dani: "They are our own")

"THE COMPLAINT TRADITION"
LANGUAGE COMPLAINTS CONCERNING
GENDER NEUTRAL-LANGUAGE

Dan Caragea, Romanian translator from Portuguese, August 2022

On gender-neutral language: "the new dictatorship of political correctness"; "pure hypocrisy", "a remodelling operation by lexicologists from the US and the EU", "domesticated language"/in contrast with Romanian: " too rebellious a language, and too quirky to be remodelled" Dan Caragea: Limba noastră cea de toate zilele – Ați auzit de neutralitatea genului în limbă? (occidentul-romanesc.com) *My translation, my emphasis*

Alexandru Călinescu, professor of French literature & Romanian translator from French, March 2021

On gender-neutral language: "Gender ideology has created an entire series of problems regarding the use of personal pronouns. In order to refer to a trans person you sometimes have to resort to acrobatics. In the name of female and male equality, French grammar is subjected to true torture, rules change, jobs are frenetically feminized (often leading to lexical aberrations), and trying to impose the monstrous inclusive writing (...)" De la galanterie la impolitețea agresivă (dilemaveche.ro) *My translation, my emphasis*

Andrei Pleșu, philosopher & former Minister of Culture, May 2017

He uses the phrase "the tin language" for what he calls "the frantic torture of language by the translation of current, available terms in a surreal Romglish", adding that "in the United States similar linguistic oddities have appeared...But they can be assigned to the paranoid-ideological precautions of political correctness" Noua limbă de tinichea | adevarul.ro *My translation, my emphasis*

DECONSTRUCTING "LANGUAGE MYTHS"

Myths = "communally told and shared stories that help members of the community to socially construct their worlds by "languaging" them" (Watts 2011: 294)
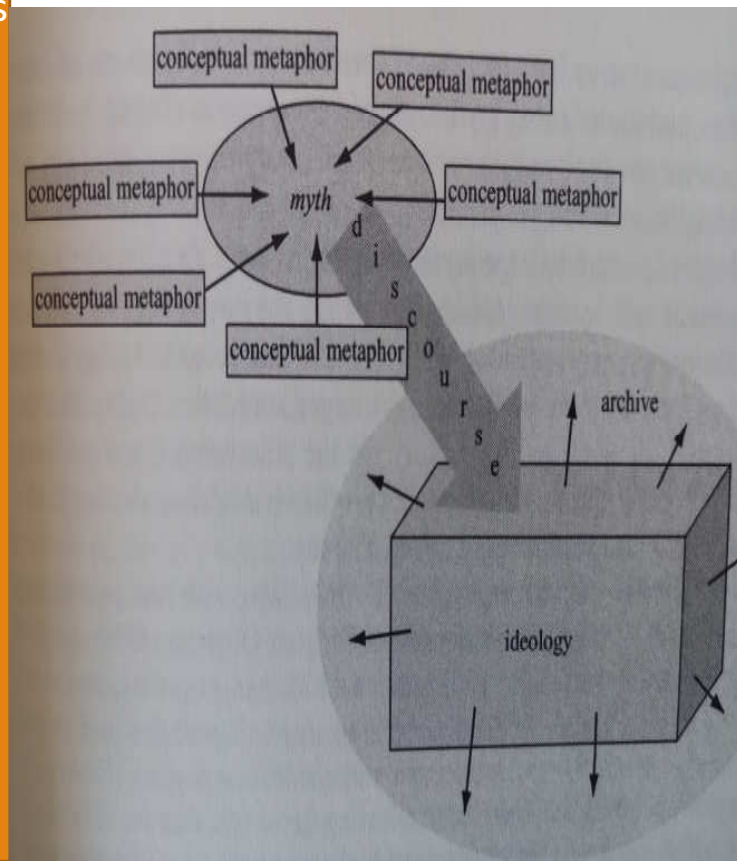
(...) every discourse on language is ultimately based on myths representing beliefs about language" (Watts 2011: 260)

"**Myths** draw on common **conceptual metaphors** to create stories that are then produced and reproduced socially through discourse. The stronger the myths become or the more support one myth draws from the others, the greater the likelihood is that a language ideology will emerge. If the ideology becomes part of the dominant hegemonic discourse of a social group, it will give rise to statements that are equivalent to "laws", thus constructing an archive of what and what cannot be said or believed in" (Watts 2011: 22)

Language ideologies: "constructed by discourses that have language (language attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and convictions about language as their central theme"(Watts 2001: 299)

At the basis of all myths (conceived of as "a nexus") - **linguistic homogeneity myth** (Watts 2011) ="...that language should be a coherent, homogeneous system that all its speakers use, or at least should use. It expresses a teleology of language in which the end goal, the ultimate purpose of the process of historical development, should be some kind of perfection (Watts 2011: 300)."

CODE-MIXING, HETEROGENEITY, NONSTANDARDIZATION IN *GENDER TALK*

SOURCE TEXT

Dani: Perfecțiunea nu-și are locul aici, sau dorința de perfecțiune și cu toții o să greșim. Pare că este inevitabil. Uite, **even I,** de vreo două ori când te-am **misgender** pe tine, mai ții minte... Și Doamne m-am simțit supernasol. Adică îmi aduc aminte, îmi cade lumea în interior. Îmi dau seama că și așa se simte lumea când mă **misgender** pe mine. Mă face și pe mine să fiu empatic pentru că și eu greșesc. Adică, cumva**, it happens**. Îmi cer scuze, îmi pare rău. **And I'll try not to do it again**. (Gender Talk, Episode 4), *My emphasis.*

TARGET TEXT

Dani: Perfection has no room here, or striving for perfection, and we all make mistakes. It is probably inevitable. Look, even I, once or twice when I misgendered you, do you recall...And God, I felt super lousy. That is, my inner world crumbles. I realize that is how people feel when they misgender me. It makes me empathic because I also make mistakes. That is, somehow, it happens. I apologize, I'm sorry. And I'll try not to do it again.

My translation, my emphasis

ENGLISH is *SUPER-ACCESSIBLE* ROMANIAN/ROMANCE LANGUAGES ARE *SUPER-GENDERED*

Maria: … engleza …limbă de altfel superaccesibilă din punct de vedere al genului pentru că nu-și schimbă cuvintele, cele mai multe. Are câteva care sunt la feminin și masculin, dar în general este o limbă destul de OK….(Gender Talk, Episode 2)

Maria:…English…a **super-accessible language** from the point of view of gender because **it doesn't change its words**, **most** of them. It has some in the feminine and masculine, but **generally** it is a **pretty okay language**. *My translation, my emphasis*

- Maria: referring to **Romance languages,** "limbile astea supergenizate" [**these super-gendered languages**] (Gender Talk, Episode 2)
- Dea:… limba romana e atat de genizata, incat, okay, trebuie sa mergi la radacina cuvantului si după aia cuvantul se schimba total și să văd unde-l pun.
- **Dea: Romanian is so gendered, that, okay, you have to go to the root of the word and after that the word changes totally and I need to see where to put it.** *My translation, my emphasis* (Gender Talk, Episode 4)

"GRAMMATICALLY CORRECT?"

Dea: E o explorare unde și când pui x-ul ca să fie corect gramatical. Și până la urmă ce înseamnă corect gramatical? Nu e ca și cum ar fi o regulă și cel puțin nu acuma. Poate pe viitor vom dezvolta în comunitate ceva care să ne fie și nouă mai ușor și persoanelor din jur. Ce mă bucură și ce mă face să mă simt bine este atunci când persoanele din jurul meu îl folosesc, x-ul. Adică e o validare și o înțelegere că sunt persoanele atente. Și-mi dau seama că mai sunt momente când se corectează pe parcurs.

(Gender Talk, Episode 4)

Dea: It is an exploration where and when to place the x for it to be grammatically correct. And after all what does grammatically correct mean? It's not as if there was a rule, or at least not now. Maybe in the future we'll develop within the community something which would be easier both for us and for the people around us. What makes me glad and what makes me feel good is when the people around me use it, the x. That is there is a validation and a sense of understanding that people pay attention. And I realize there are moments when they correct themselves as they go. *My translation, my emphasis*

Dea: "It is my choice"; "I don't want to change Romanian grammar"

Dea: De aicea pornim, și de unde să ajungem la un limbaj ca să răspundem la toate întrebările. Cred că și-asta. N-aș vrea să fie o provocare pentru noi acuma. N-aș vrea să fie o provocare pentru noi acuma mai ales persoanele care nu studiază limba română, gramatica română în niciun fel să spună, okay, hai să vă zic eu care e răspunsul și unde punem x-ul și de ce-l punem acolo. Că e clar că n-avem răspunsurile. Că da, este deschiderea mea, alegerea mea, să vorbesc cu persoanele. Să spun de -x cât știu eu, cum este pentru mine, dar în același timp nu mă aștept sau nici nu vreau să fac educație sau să schimb gramatica limbii române astfel încât să fie acel x, să devină o parte integrată și atât de logică.

My emphasis   (Gender Talk, Episode 4)

Dea: That's where we start from, and where to get to a language to answer all the questions. I also think that. I wouldn't want it to be a challenge for us now, especially for the persons who do not study Romanian, Romanian grammar in any to say, okay, I'll tell you what the answer is and where we put the x and why we put it there. Because it's clear we don't have the answers. Because yes, it's my wish, my choice, to talk to people. To tell them what I myself know about the –x, how it is for me, but at the same time I don't expect and I don't want to educate them, or to change the grammar of the Romanian language, so that the x should be there, to become an inclusive, very logical part of it.

My translation, my emphasis

Dani: "It's a work in progress"

Dani: Dacă printre oamenii care ne ascultă sunt cumva niște lingviști, niște oameni care-s pasionați de a dezvolta noi forme de limba română, **do reach out**, adică cred că este un proiect de viitor super-de-lungă durată. Așa că dați-ne un semn, scrieți-ne, spuneți-ne (...) Dar da, **it's a work in progress**, un experiment, o joacă, o ce vrei tu. Adică să o luăm așa ușor ușor și ce vrei tu. Și vedem unde ajungem.

(Gender Talk, Episode 4) *My emphasis*

Dea: If there are linguists among the people who are listening to us, people who are passionate to develop new forms in Romanian, do reach out, that is, I think it is a super-long-term future project. So do reach out, write to us, tell us (...) But yes, it's a work in progress, an experiment, a game, it's whatever you want. That is, we take it bit by bit and it's whatever you want. And we'll see where we get.

My translation, my emphasis

Maria: "It's a workshop(...)"/ non-inclusive language choices as "has-been flags"

When asked about what should be done to make language more gender-inclusive:

Maria: "…limbajul…sunt straturi peste straturi care s-au sedimentat și cu astea lucrăm. La unele chestii renunțăm, pe altele le mai bricolăm un pic. Mai facem un pic de atelier cu ele."

Language…there are strata all over, which have become sedimented and that's what we work with. We'll have a bit of a workshop with them.

When asked about motivating non-LBTQI+ people to use a gender-inclusive language

Maria: Pe criterii politice vom reuși sa-i convingem și dacă vom putea să convingem o parte atunci ar putea sa devina **trendy**, **fashion** ceva și să pară **has-been** cineva care n-a înțeles… Adică, limbajul funcționează și ca un fel de stegulet, practic, când folosim anumite cuvinte…Practic eu, hi, hi, hi, sunt de partea voastră, îmi arăt puțin etichetele. Și la un moment dat unele stegulete devin de **has-been**, si încerci să te pui și tu în rândul lumii că altfel râde lumea de tine. (Gender Talk, Episode 2) *My emphasis*

We need to persuade them on political criteria and if we can persuade a part of them, then it could become trendy, fashion, or something, and those who didn't understand will look as has-beens…That is, language also works like a little flag, when we use certain words…Basically I, ha, I'm on your side and I display my labels a little bit. And at a certain moment, certain little flags become has-been flags and you try to become like the others because otherwise people will laugh at you. *My translation, my emphasis*

STANDARD LANGUAGE IDEOLOGY, COEXISTING DISCOURSES & THE HOMOGENEITY/HETEROGENITY PARADOX

The homogeneity/heterogeneity paradox: There is an in-bulit heterogeneity in all human language (...) The language myths constructed cognitively to explain, justify and ratify the concept Language A are based on notions of perfection, purity and homogeneity (Watts 2011: 302)

Non-standardizing discourse: Gender-neutral language as a personal choice, "in progress" [Code-mixing, English as a source of "heterogeneity"] FLUID, DYNAMIC [However Maria describes this as a "preliminary stage"] LANGUAGE AS HETEROGENEOUS

Discourse underlying standard language ideology: Gender-neutral language as a feasible project = a model of an idealized language = "developing" (myth of the perfect language) "a super-accessible language from the point of view of gender" FIXED, STATIC ["Romanian grammar", "grammatical correctness"/ English - as points of reference] LANGUAGE AS HOMOGENEOUS [> Myth of homogeneity]

"Developing" Romanian, Romanian is "unlike English"

[Pronumele de gen neutru va fi recunoscut oficial în Norvegia. Interviu cu o persoană non-binară agender despre situaţia din România (mediafax.ro)](#)

Intervievatoare: Limba noastra-i o comoara, sau... trebuie slefuita/imbunatatita?

Andre: Limba romana codifica norme binare de gen. De exemplu, pronumele romanesti la persoana a 3-a ("el", "ea") au un gen si implica faptul ca referentul este fie barbat, fie femeie: spre deosebire de exemplu de engleza, unde nu exista un echivalent stabilit (pluralul "they"). Substantivele si adjectivele in limba romana sunt genizate si fac ca noi, persoanele non-binare, sa fim invizibile.

Avem formulari deja existente in limba romana, care nu implica in mod direct ca referentul sa fie fie barbat, fie femeie - avem pronumele posesive la persoana a treia "sau, sa, sai sale". Prin includerea si altor pronume si alternative cu alt sufix care nu este genizat pentru substantive si adjective, nu facem decat sa (ne) educam si sa dezvoltam limba romana astfel incat toate persoanele sa se simta reprezentate, si vazute.

(February 4, 2022)

The gender-neutral pronoun will be officially recognized in Norway. Interview with a non-binary agender person on the situation in Romania

Interviewer: Our language is a treasure or...does it need **polishing/improving**?

Andre: Romanian codifies binary gender norms. For example, third person Romanian pronouns ("he", "she") have a grammatical gender and imply the referent is either a man or a woman**, unlike for example in English, where there is an established equivalent** (the plural "they"). Nouns and adjectives are gendered in Romanian and make us, non-binary persons, invisible.

We already have existing words in Romanian, which do not involve a male or female referent – possessive pronouns in the third persons "sau, sa, sai, sale". By also including other alternative pronouns with another non-gendered suffix for nouns and adjectives, **we only educate (ourselves) and develop the Romanian language** so all persons are represented, and seen.

My translation, my emphasis.

THE ENGLISH MODEL/SOURCE: "A LOGICAL LANGUAGE" & THE MYTH OF LINGUISTIC SUPERIORITY

ON A GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE (2022)

Ovidiu Anemțoaicei : "Eu vreau să creez un limbaj nou."

ON TRANSLATING QUEER TEXTS/CONCEPTS FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN (2022)

ON: "Eu fiind obișnuit mai degrabă cu engleza și cu engleza academică și cu o anumită linearitate logică...Nu te lungești prea mult, n-o faci aroberescentă cum e-n română sau nu știu ce..."

ON: "Eu cred că limba română nu este atât de conceptuală de fapt."

ON: "...conceptele cu care o bună parte din generația noastră ne-am simțit mai confortabili în limba engleză pentru că acolo ne-am găsit locul poate de conștiință politică, de discurs, ne-am simțit mai acasă în limba engleză pentru că aveam limbajul cu care puteam să ne vorbim nouă. Pe când în română, neavând același tip de limbaj care are și o încărcătură conceptuală, de-aici asta mă face să spun că e mai puțin conceptuală..." *My emphasis*

March 25, 2022, A discussion on translation, Contrary to Expectations – A Queer Literature Festival ([DAY 1 | CONTRAR AȘTEPTĂRILOR // AGAINST EXPECTATIONS – YouTube](#))

ON A GENDER-INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE (2022)

Ovidiu Anemțoaicei : "I want to create a new language."

ON TRANSLATING QUEER TEXTS/CONCEPTS FROM ENGLISH INTO ROMANIAN (2022)

ON: "Being used to English, rather, and to academic English and to a certain logically linear discourse...You do not take too long, as in Romanian or something like that..."

ON: "I believe Romanian is not so conceptual in fact."

ON: "...many in our generation felt more comfortable with these concepts in English because there maybe we found the place of our political consciousness, our discourse, we felt more at home in English because we had the language in which we could speak to ourselves. While in Romanian, since we don't have the same type of language which also has a conceptual load, that's what makes me say it's less conceptual..."

My translation, my emphasis

CONCLUSION

❑Standard language ideology has become a strong component of the discussion of gender-inclusive language in Romania, while coexisting with the alternative, non-standardizing discourse.

❑English as a common point of reference in these discourses

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