DIALOGUES ON THE ROMANIAN DOMESTIC UNIVERSE IN ALECSANDRI'S GRAMMAR

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Abstract: *In the XIXth century, on the background of the Romanian intellectuals' openness to Western cultural values and France's longtime interest in the Eastern world, in general, and in Eastern Europe, in particular, the political agenda of a diplomat-poet like Vasile Alecsandri corresponded to an urgent patriotic responsibility and to a linguistic consciousness specific to the intellectuals of the time, as observed by V.D. Ţâra (2001: 125), but also G. Ibrăileanu (1905), Al. Iordan (1933; 1940), Mioara Avram (1983) and others.*

This article focuses on a series of features specific to the Romanian literary language in one of its ample stage of enrichment during its modernization period, features that can be encountered in the dialogical structures proposed by Alecsandri as support for teaching Romanian to French students. It also mentions instances when parallelisms could be drawn between the two linguistic codes.

Keywords: *dialogic competence, adjacency pair, negation, politeness strategies, modernization of the Romanian literary language.*

I. Introduction

A modern feature in Alecsandri's grammar lies in a balanced distribution of sequences intended to develop each component of the communication competence and the linguistic competence in general. To this end, discursive modalities on different topics are inserted in the textbook in the form of a dialogue - a pedagogical formula that was already well known in foreign and Romanian grammars. This is also how S. Micu and Gh. Şincai had written their chapter *Forms of speaking about the things that come most often into disscusion*, Ioan Piuariu-Molnar – *Some dialogues, to talk about many types of interactions*, and other authors (Doncev, 1865) wrote their grammars which were published after 1863. Yet the writing of some of texts, although of a conventional nature, thus characterised by a rather high degree of artificiality specific to conversation guides and language learning textbooks allowed V.

Alecsandri to exercise a a certain discursive freedom, which had not been possible in the other sections of his grammar. Here, the convivial spirit, the inclination towards polemic and dramatization, humor, the moralizing tone doubled by bonhomie blend in the succession of statements meant to reconstruct daily situations of oral or written communication, which become high facilitators of the didactic approach. Approaching more themes than Micu-Şincai's book, organized in 13 sections (*To thank and to compliment, To state and deny, About the weather, About the time, About waking up and getting out of bed, About breakfast (zacuscă), About lunch, About walking, Going down the Danube, On the road, To consult, To ask for news, To leave and return, To hear, to understand and to know*) and ending with *Dialogues between a foreigner and a Romanian*, Alecsandri's grammar familiarizes the student with the political atmosphere specific to Romania. By means of short and long examples it is indicative of the local mentalities and morals set against the historical and geographical framework of the time. Intuitively, the cultural competence is built by Alecsandri through the insertion of texts that aim at building a common discursive universe, insofar as the elementary level of knowledge of the language allows it, in order to ensure a minimum documentary value required in the case of such textbooks. Equally, the dialogue exchanges (even if simulated) can contribute to the construction of the learner's dialogic competency, as forms of manifestation of communication management through discourse, cooperation between dialogue partners, adaptive strategies and ritualised politeness formulas are aimed at.

II. The dialogic text

On the one hand, the dialogic conversational text was the subject of pragmatic research, of conversational analysis more precisely, which focused the research on the oral level of language (more or less ignored by textual theories) as well, and, on the other hand, it brought to the fore the relationship between the real conversation, as an empirical process and its imitation, its representation in artistic form at the level of a genre (dramatic) or of a subgenre (a novel in which dialogic exchanges are inserted).

It is generally acknowledged that a dialogic text is "a prototypical form of language functioning in society" (GALR, 2005: 779), a hierarchical structure of sequences currently called exchanges, of phatic sequences opening or closing a text and transactional sequences, constituting the body of the interaction in which, from the content viewpoint, there are no thematic restrictions, but to the meaning of which the non-verbal means contribute decisively. In addition, it can be noticed that in the case of the written text, continuity is the dominant semantic structure, while at the level of the oral text, the structural discontinuity (the anacoluthon) and even the semantic one become a specific norm. The sociologizing perspective favors the pursuit of conversational strategies, as ways of social action and interaction, in order to prescribe rules to improve communication. In this sense, the American philosopher John R. Searle considers that uttering a sentence means, in principle, performing three types of acts: utterance acts (uttering words – morphemes, sentences), propositional acts (referring and predicating) and an illocutionary act (stating, questioning, commanding, promising, etc.), the last two types of acts being related to the linguistic form (Searle, 1972: 24). In addition to these, there is a fourth type, but with an optional character: perlocutionary acts (persuasion, warning, etc.). From the perspective of discourse analysis, the utterances are segmentable into units corresponding to (at least) a speech act (which can also be a conversational turn, a monological sequence within a dialogue).

As discourse unit, the speech act has, according to J. Moeschler, three main features: 1) it is a minimal functional unit, 2) it has an interactive function (being involved

in a main-subordinate relationship) and 3) it can transfer its illocutionary potential to the higher-ranking constituent (usually in turn-taking). The written dialogic texts that simulate situations of oral communication can also be analyzed in order to illustrate the theory of speech acts (Austin, 1962, Searle, 1972, Vanderveken, 1992, Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2008, etc.), insofar as it confirms the hypothesis that the use of language (oral, authentic, and written, as an imperfect reproduction) naturally allows for the "practice of speech" (Vanderveken, 1999: 62). Therefore, depending on the illocutionary purpose, in the dialogues that imitate real communication situations, several types of utterances can also be identified, such as: descriptive (describing the world), deliberative (involving future actions, negotiations, commitments), declarative (change the reality in accord with the proposition of the declaration) expressive (express the speaker's attitudes and emotions towards the proposition) (Vanderveken, 1999: 75), partially illustrating the real interaction through "exchanges, pauses between utterances in an exchange, overlaps and interruptions suggested by punctuation marks, ellipses (GALR, 2005: 793) etc.

III. The ritual of specific verbal interaction in the familiar context of lunch

Focusing on the *Dialogues*, in general, and on the dialogues from the sections *About breakfas* and *About lunch*, in particular, we shall present a few features of the phrases used by the author in order to establish a model of dialogue, which simulates the ritual of specific verbal interaction in the familiar context of breakfast. By resorting to bilingual structures, the author aims to attain at least two objectives in the teaching of the Romanian language: the learning of specific vocabulary[1], which includes names of foods, dishes, ingredients, containers, etc., on the one hand, and, the student's familiarization with the structures specific to the direct exhortative or interrogative discourse, with all the entailing morphosyntactic and pragmatic consequences, on the other hand:

A) From the point of view of the communication purpose, the series of utterances located in "adjacency pairs", with a structural function, enables the learning of the structuring mechanisms specific to the following types of senteces, whose form observes the current norms:

- polar interrogative sentences, through which information is requested; from a pragmatic point of view, they represent speech acts belonging to the subclass of questions, to which an answer is expected from the interlocutor:

  (1)   *Ai dejunat ? Ai făcut zacuscă?* (A. 125)
  Have you had lunch? Have you made zacusca?
  Ba încă nu. (A., 125)
  Not yet.
  (2)   *Îți plac mezelicurile* ? (A., 126)
  Do you like appetisers?

- partial interrogative sentences, with markers expressed by interrogative adverbs *cum (how)*, interrogative pronouns and pronominal adjectives *cine, care, ce, cît (who, which, what, how many)*:

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[1] The lexical inventory specific to food will be the subject of another approach, from the perspective of the evolution of the Romanian literary language.

(3)   Ce vînat se găseşte în pădure? (A., 156)
What game can we have from the forest?
(4)   Ce vrei să iei ? (A. 125)
What would you like to have?
(5)   Ce ţi-a plăcea ; mi-e totuna. (A. 125)
Whatever you like; it's all the same to me.

Such structures show the standard word order with the subject placed after the predicate, a common syntactic pattern shared with the French language, easily recognizable by a French speaker which aims to learn Romanian.

(6)   Unde-s tasele, teasurile, ceştile? (A. 125)
Where are the trays, cuppas, cups?

- assertive with a syntactic status of clause, containing pronominal anaphoric elements, whose reference can be recovered only referring to the previous interrogative sentence:

(7)   Le-am cumpărat la Sevra, în anul trecut.
I bought them at Sevra, last year.

- assertive consisting of compound sentences (8) and / or complex sentences (9):

(8)   Cafeaua are prea bun gust, însă este cam fierbinte. (A., 155)
The coffee tastes too good, but it is a bit hot.
(9)   Ca străin, aş dori să gust bucatele din ţara dumitale. (A., 161)
As a foreigner, I would like to taste the dishes of your country.

- sentences consisting of assertive clauses coordinated with elliptical interrogative clauses (10):

(10) Sînt Român, dar Domnia ta (domnia voastră)?(A., 152)
I am Romanian, and Your lordship (Your exxcellency)?

- assertive / directive / interrogative / commissive / expressive structures, either sentences or clauses (exclamations / elliptical interrogatives, whose meaning can be restored by turning to the immediately preceding sequence:

(11) Ce doreşti ? ce preferi ?
What do you want? what do you prefer?
(12) Supă cu legume ? supă cu verdeţuri? (A. 125)
Vegetable soup? Greens soup?
(13) Masa e pusă, Domnul meu (cocoane). (A. 128)
The table is set, my lord (master)
(14) Cum ! sîntem doi şi masa e de şase persoane ? Aştepţi pe cineva ? (A. 129)
How so! we are two and the table is for six people? Are you waiting for someone?

- elliptical interrogatives, included in adjacency pairs, whose turns follow each other thematically:

(15) Și astealalte ? Orez cu raci.
And these? Rice with crayfish.

- rhetorical interrogative sentences; an example below in which the rhetorical clause is part of the sentence, being lexically and morphosyntactically modalized, by means of the predicate composed of the modal operator (semi-auxiliary) *a trebui (must)* with the meaning of "probability", followed by the main verb *să fi făcînd* (to be doing):

(16) Mi-ați spus, Domnule, că aveți mari cîrduri de boi și mari turme de oi; trebuie dar să fi făcînd mare comerț de lîne și piei? (A., 158)
You told me, Sir, that you have great flocks and oxen herds, therefore you must be doing trade with wool and hides ?

- alternative interrogative sentences, consisting of disjunctively coordinated clauses, with the predicates expressed by antonymic verbs:

(17) Cîștigat-ai ori ai pierdut? (A., 123)
Did you win or lose?

- assertive, modalized in the conditional mood:

(18) Domnule, aș vrea să merg în țara dumitale. (A., 159)
Sir, I would like to go to your country. (A., 159)

- imperative structures, which transmit directive acts expressed in main sentences, with the predicate expressed by verbs in (1). the imperative mode (most frequent in the investigated texts), (2) the indicative mood, future tense, (3) in the conjunctive mood, with imperative value, (4) by interjections:

(19) Las-o să se mai răcească. (A. 126) ;
Let it cool a little.
(20) pregătește-ți stomacul cu un păhăruț de rachiu.(A. 128) ;
Prepare your stomach with a glass of brandy.
(21) Fecior, pune masa. (A. 128)
Boy, set the table.
(22) Dă-mi o felie de mușchi (A. 132)*;*
Give me a slice of meat
(23) Ia mai bine piept de curcan. (A. 132)
Better help yourself to turkey breast.
(24) Gustă pelinul ist roș. (A. 132) Trece-mi azima.(A. 132);
Taste this red wormwood. (A. 132) Pass me the unleavened bread.(A. 132);
(25) Binevoiește a-mi da de băut. (A. 132)
Please, give me a drink.
(26) Îi mînca și un pic de friptură. (A., 132)
You will also eat some steak
(27) Dar, să tăiem un harbuz roș. (A., 134)
So, let's cut a water melon.

(28) Poftim la masă! Hai la birt, la locandă (la restaurant), ca să mîncăm! (A., 128)
I'm inviting you to dine! Let's go to the bar, to the local (to the restaurant), to eat!

- exclamatory structures in intensive patterns constructed with the pronominal adjective *ce* (what) followed by the preposition *de* (of) and the adverb *mai* (more)(1) or with the adverbs *ce* (what)(2), *cît* (how much) (3):

(29) Ce de mai lume! (A., 137)
What a crowd !
(30) Ce bun lucru de a răsufla aer proaspăt! (A., 137)
What a good thing to breathe fresh air!
(31) Cît e de verde! (A., 138)
How green it is!

Sometimes sentences with distinct communicative meanings are correlated: 1) imperative and exclamative, 2) imperative and assertive, 3) exclamatory, assertive and interrogative:

(32) Privește cel lan de ovăz, cît e de verde! (A., 138)
Look at the field of oats, how green it is!
(33) Taci, aud o privighetoare. (A., 137)
Shut up, I hear a nightingale
(34) Slavă Domnului, sînt bine, dar dumneata? (A., 117)
Thank God, I'm fine, and you?

Indirect speech is illustrated in sentences containing subordinate clauses derived from exclamative or assertive acts, introduced by the conjunction *că* (that), as in the following examples:

(35) Cînd l-ei vedea, spune-i că-mi pare rău că nu l-am înîlnit. (A., 118)
When you see him, tell him that I'm sorry I didn't meet him.
(36) Zic că da, zic că nu. (A., 119)
I'm saying it is, I'm saying it isn't.

IV. Affirmation and Negation Mechanisms in Romanian

As a sentence or a complex-compound sentence, the discourse belongs to the apophantic logos, because it states or denies something, and in this case, the value of truth specific to logic, involved in most discursive structures, operates in its turn, the dialogue revealing this aspect in the most obvious way. We note, in this sense, Alecsandri's interest in illustrating the mechanisms of stating something in the affirmative and in the negative form in Romanian, with discursive organization features that can create difficulties for a French speaker. The various forms of negation in Romanian are rendered in sentences.

- with the adverb *nu* (no), mark of the general or constituent negation:

(37) Nu mănînci pîine? Nu, prefer mămăligă. (A. 130)
Aren't you eating bread? No, I prefer polenta.

- with the adverb *nu* (no) and with the negative pronouns:

> *(38) N-am aflat nimică, dar să te stîngă nimic nu poate.*[2]
> *I did not find anything, but nothing can calm you.*

- the adverb *nu* (no) also marks the negation of a structure made in French with a lexical mark:

> *(39) C'est impossible./Nu se poate.*
> *It's impossible.*

- in other cases, the correspondence between the lexical structures with negative prefixes is maintained in the two languages*:*

> *(40) Elle doit être inconsolable./Ttrebuie să fie nemîngîiată.*
> *She must be inconsolable.*

Some situations in which the affirmative and negative meanings can be intensified by means specific to the oral code can be added:

- the adverb *ba* from the phrase *ba nu*:

> *(41) Ai dejunat? Ai făcut zacuscă? Ba încă nu.* (A. 125) ;
> *Have you had lunch? Have you made zacusca? Not yet.*
> *(42) Hai la birt, la locandă (la restaurant) ca să mîncăm bucate franceze. Ba nu, vom merge în altă zi.* (A. 128)

Let's go to the pub, to the restaurant to have French food. No, we'll go some other time.

> *(43) Aștepți pe cineva? Ba nu, dar poate să vină vreun oaspe.* (A. 129),
> *Are you waiting for someone? No, but a guest might come.*

- the substitute adverb negreşit *(certainly)*, the mark of intensification of the affirmative meaning:

> *(44) Fără invitare (poftire)? Negreşit.* (A. 129)
> *Without an invitation? Certainly.*

- the interjection *zău (really)*:

> *(45) Zău! îmi e greu să mă încred în vorbele dumitale.* (A. 119)
> *Really! It's hard for me to trust your words.*

- interjectional phrases upon my honor, honest. (A. 118)

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[2] The double expression of negation was already a stabilized norm of modern literary language, which Alecsandri records as such.

- parenthetical clauses that contain directive verbs in the imperative or present tense, indicative mood:

> *(46) Crede-mă, te asigur, te încredințez.* (A. 119)
> *Trust me, I assure you, I guarantee it.*

Alecsandri also illustrates a process of using negation, common to the two Romance languages, consisting of reversed polarity, materialized in negative particle structures that have an affirmative meaning:

> *(47) N'est-ce pas à Braila que nous abordons ? Nu cumva abordăm Brăila?* (A. 140)
> *Isn't that Braila that we are approaching?*
> *(48) Da, Domnule ; de aici nu te afli decât la o distanță de cinci poște.* (A. 140)
> *Yes, sir; here you are only 100 kilometers away.*
> *(49) Le lac de Tchichmegi est peu limpide./Lacul Cișmigiului u-i prea limpede.* (A. 137)
> *Lake Cismigiu is not very clear.*

The affirmative adverb *da (yes)* is used in free variation with the obsolete form *dar*, (*Îți plac mezelicurile? Dar, îmi plac mult,* Do you like appetiserz? Yes, I adore them), homonymous with the adversative conjunction *dar* (but) (fr. mais) and with the concluding adverb *așadar (therefore)*.

(*Nu mă mir dar că te găsești încă în pat la amiază* - Therefore, I'm not surprised you're still in bed at noon)

V. The expression of reverence

In Alecsandri's textbook there are several ways of organizing the ritualized discourse when expressing reverence, in accordance with the norms of the time of writing. A footnote from page 150 specifies for the French reader that the pronoun of reverence *vous* corresponds indistinctly in Romanian both to the form of the second person singular *tu (you)* and the plural form *voi (you)*. In this sense, Kerbrat Orecchioni's observation "when several forms are deictically equivalent - such as *tu* (you) and *vous* (you) used to designate a single speaker - they also serve to establish a particular type of social connection." (1994: 15) refers to the situation of the two pronouns in both Romance languages.

But in the parallel sequences that illustrate these disparities, it is observed that the second person singular of the pronoun (and verb) is most often dominant, the pronoun *tu* being sometimes in free variation with the pronoun of reverence *dumneata (you)*:

> *(50) Avez-vous déjeuné ? Ai dejunat? Ai făcut zacuscă?*
> *Have you had lunch? Have you made zacusca?*
> *(51) Voulez-vous déjeuner avec moi? Vrei să dejuni cu mine?*
> *Would you like to have lunch with me?*
> *(52) Comment se porte votre famille? Cum se află familia dtale?*
> *How is your family?*

> *Comme étranger, je voudrais goûter les plats de votre pays. Ca străin, aș dori să gust bucatele din țara dumitale.*
> *As a foreigner, I would like to taste the dishes of your country.*

The French sentences do not use the direct address in the second-person singular of the verb, in accordance with the strictly ritualized rules of the nineteenth-century French, not even in the case when the power imbalance specific to the relationship of the speakers could favor such an expressive attitude

> (53) (*Garçon, allez dire à la femme de charge de nous envoyer des confitures. Fecior, du-te de zi jupînesei să ne trimită dulcețuri.*)
> *Garçon, go to the lady of the house to send us sweets.*

for the Romanian version, Alecsandri prefers the correspondents that maintain familiar conviviality:

> (54) *Te îndemn să iei alivenci. Je vous engage à prendre des pâtés au fromage.*
> *I invite you to take cheese pies.*

Sometimes there is concordance between the sentences:

> (55) *Que vous semble-t-il?/Ce vi se pare?*
> *What do you think?*
> (56) *Vous m'avez dit, monsieur./Mi-ați spus, Domnul meu.*
> *You told me, sir.*

we also observe the reverence marked by the pronoun *dumneavoastră (you)*, but only in contexts in which it does not fulfill the syntactic function of subject, which would have imposed by agreement the predicate verb to the second person plural:

> (57) *Comment se nomme vottre pays? Cum se numește țara dumneavoastră?*
> *What is the name of your country?*
> (58) *Pămîntul e foarte mănos la Dumneavoastră?*
> *Is the soil from where you come very fertile?*

Conclusion

Our observations on the pragma-syntax of the texts proposed by Alecsandri as samples of Romanian language lead us to the conclusion that both at the level of the clause and at that of the sentence, this grammar preserves a series of influences of the regional language and patterns of the old language; yet, in general, these aspects have a lower frequency than in his poetic texts, as can be seen by comparison with the results obtained from the analysis undertaken by Florin D. Popescu (1980). We also consider important to note that an obvious didacticism is present in Alecsandri's work. Lacking teaching experience, the writer daws ad hoc parallels between phrases specific to the two languages, accommodating either the French language facts to the Romanian ones or the Romanian turns to the French ones.

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