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A practical Approach on the Disappearance of the Romanian Diacritical Signs from the Electronic Written Dialogue

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Abstract

On the principle of adapting the communication to the general evolution of the society, the present study advances a practical approach on the written electronic dialogued communication in Romanian: the recognition of a state of fact regarding the lack of the Romanian diacritical signs from the electronic dialogue, on the condition of respecting all the other orthographical rules of the language. In this regard, we encounter disadvantages such as a major concession made to the Romanian academic standards of writing, as well as advantages such as adapting the educational discourse to the growing social impact of the virtual environment.

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1. Introduction

The present written electronic dialogue in Romanian communication faces a contradiction between the theory and the practice of this type of communication. On one side, the theoretical perspective sets the criteria for the correct usage of the Romanian language in the written electronic dialogue. On the other side, in practice, most users of the new means of written electronic dialogued communication (e-mail, Messenger, Facebook, WhatsApp etc.) contradict these criteria, using what we might call an “own Romanian language”, characterized by

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abbreviations, invented words and the elimination of the specific Romanian diacritical signs.

The main influence for this phenomenon is attributed to the English language and culture, intensively penetrating Romanian especially by neological structures, in the same way that French highly influenced Romanian during the XIXth century. Therefore, the panic reaction determined by this phenomenon among the specialists could be related to a certain linguistic “fashion” of the present time and should be treated as a normal evolution, encountered previously, and to which Romanian responds by its own selective resorts, underlines G. Gruică (2011).

The risks of the electronic dialogued communication for the Romanian language, visible especially among the young, represents a permanent theme of analysis for pedagogy and for the communication specialists, since in this environment of the electronic communication the linguistic correctness is affected by the usage of inexistent words and abbreviations, as well as by the elimination of the Romanian diacritical signs.

The investigation of the particularities in this communication environment, which takes over more and more of the young’s daily experiences, represents a concern for the present pedagogy, faced with the omnipresence of the new means of communications in the students’ lives, determining the development of another reality, if not parallel, then alternative, imitative: “From a technical perspective, the virtual reality designates a different kind of reality from the human being perspective, different from our natural environment, a reality shaped and emulated according to the natural one, a virtual simulation.” (Miron Ionescu, Muşata Bocoş, 2009, p. 208)

The present analysis focuses on the last of these distorting elements, the gradual disappearance of the diacritical signs from the electronic dialogued communication in Romanian, carried out through instruments and applications such as e-mail, Messenger, Facebook, WhatsApp etc. and mediated by the channels represented by the new electronic means of communication (computer, smartphone, tablet etc.).

Our approach targets the category of users who choose this communicative behaviour for the purpose of enhancing the rhythm of message transmission, and not because of being ignorant in respect to the correct Romanian writing. In this last situation, in which the lack of the diacritical signs comes along with other orthographical errors, our approach is not applicable, because in these cases the elimination of the diacritical signs cannot be considered a conscious option.

For this category of the users who dialogue electronically by consciously eliminating the Romanian diacritical signs in order to increase the rhythm of communication, the present approach advances the acceptance of this practice, on the condition of respecting all the other orthographical principles.

An explanation for this approach relies in the natural evolution of the language, by gradual adaptations operated by each generation, as explained by Al. Graur: ”A language is a signs system, generally verbal, by which a person communicates his thoughts to the others. This system is already established when the individuals start to speak, so they only have to acknowledge it. It does not mean that the system is not changing. On the contrary, it is constantly changing and each speaker, by his own usage of the language, contributes to its permanent transformation. It’s true that the changes happen unconsciously, through imperceptible phases, and that from time to time, when there’s a big quantity of small changes, significant transformations happen suddenly. Unlike the spoken language, the writing is often consciously and intentionally modified by the users. Here as well, unintended and unconscious changes can happen, at least in hand writing, but often, a person or a collective introduce intentioned changes to the writing, motivated by convenience or other reasons.”

In what concerns the other categories of messages belonging to the electronic communication, the acceptance of the writing without diacritical signs is not applicable or acceptable in the case of other types of texts existing in the electronic environment, because their informative and formative purpose imposes keeping all the present linguistic rules (on-line media, websites, blogs, e-learning etc.).

1. Practical approach

The alphabet of the Romanian language has 31 letters. 5 of them resemble other basic graphemes, from which they differ by the presence of a diacritical sign, above or below them:

- *The breve* above “a” → ă [ə]
- *The circumflex* above “a” and “i” → â, î [i]
- *The comma accent* under “s” and “t” → ș [ʃ], ț [ts]. (The Romanian Orthographic, orthoepic and morphologic dictionary – DOOM, 2005 – underlines the difference between this diacritical sign and the cedilla used in other languages under the letter “c” → ç.)

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