English Discourse Markers in Romanian Discourse on TikTok Social Platform

Georgiana-Anamaria Sălăgean

Doctoral School of Linguistic and Literary Studies
Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj, Romania

Abstract-   Romanian language has been continuously influenced by English through the past decades, especially with the help of new technologies. One major facilitator at the moment is the social platform TikTok which allows the users to create content in any language but to address to different types of people and cultures all over the world. Hence, the content creators might feel the need to become a part of a greater community through specific behavior or words, expressions etc. In this study I will provide a relevant corpus that will bring attention on the English discourse markers used in Romanian discourse on TikTok and I will analyze it mostly from a pragmatic point of view.

Keywords – social media, English discourse markers, colloquial language, online discourse, Romanian on TikTok

I. INTRODUCTION

Regarding the influence of English on Romanian language, there is a concern that need to be answered such as whether social media influences the using of English discourse markers in Romanian discourse. Through the corpus that I have collected, I intend to build a quantitative analysis of the occurrence of English discourse markers in Romanian. I am motivated to study this topic because the language itself represents an unlimited source of interesting data that influences not only the vocabulary, but the speakers' behavior as well.

The influence of English on the Romanian language has increased during the past decades, especially after the Revolution in 1989, mostly through technology. I believe that it is of great interest to study how different words, expressions, discourse markers and meanings are being acquired and adapted by Romanian speakers, mainly in a colloquial environment. The online discourse identifies with the colloquial language since it does not find itself under some specific sets of rules but it concomitantly requires that the users of social networks are being initiated. That would mean that the participants in any online discourse should be aware of the fact that grammar rules are often omitted, borrowings are easily used, emojis are a great way to disclose feelings and abbreviations are time-savers.

I consider that as a consequence of Romanian speakers having English as a foreign language and using it on social media, there may interfere code-switching in their discourse. This phenomenon occurs even at the level of discourse markers. Even though they are not a necessity in Romanian, meaning that they already have a correspondent, they are still being used, especially in familiar environments. This problem could also occur because people focus on becoming a part of a greater community, be that online or offline, and English as a lingua franca allows them to have a sense of belonging. Moreover, English offers a wide range of discourse markers that are maybe shorter or more "on point", hence they become time and effort-savers.

Through this study I will discuss the theoretical background (II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND) and I will analyze the corpus that I have gathered (III. ANALYSIS OF THE CORPUS), focusing on the using of English discourse markers in Romanian discourse on TikTok and the purpose behind it.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the discussion regarding English as a global language, David Crystal states that a language "achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country". (Crystal 2003: 3) This phenomenon has grown to be more and more obvious in Romanian, especially if it is taken into consideration the fact that the Internet provides an easy way to achieve skills in English. The influence of English is very prominent

nowadays on social media, mass-media, IT departments and so on. This can lead to overgeneralization of terms, to mistakenly used words, but also to the development of political or economic relations and to the facilitation of spreading information and social content.

Anabella-Gloria Niculescu-Gorpin and Monica Vasileanu capture in their article, "Romanian anglicisms: from fully fledged lexical items to discourse markers", the importance of studying the borrowings from English, especially the anglicisms. They emphasize the fact that it is important to discover how the anglicisms were adapted to the Romanian language from an orthographic, morphologic or phonetic point of view. Some of the means through which English words emerged into Romanian are IT, mass media, economy and, the most important and updated one, social media. (Niculescu-Gorpin, Vasileanu 2020: 1)

English constantly influences Romanian language nowadays and that is proved by the great number of words that speakers use in their discourses, such as vaccine (with an English pronunciation), anti-vaxxers, Covid-19 (with an English pronunciation), live, share, scroll, download, trend, flex or discourse markers, such as come on, you know, you bet, damn, no way, like, you get it ,I see, WOW, OK, please, you see, oh my God and so on, that can be also used as discourse markers. All these words can be heard or read on social media very often and it becomes clear that online platforms foster the update of language.

In respect of discourse markers, they are a type of pragmatic markers that signal the relationship "of the basic message to the foregoing discourse", as Fraser states. They do not bring any contribution to the sentence meaning, instead they provide additional information to the interlocutor on how the utterance should be interpreted. (Fraser 1996: 339) The author also categorizes the discourse markers into four types: topic change markers, contrastive markers, elaborative markers and inferential markers. Topic change markers imply that the speaker believes that he or she detaches from the current topic and changes it (ex. by the way, speaking of etc.). Contrastive markers signal that the following utterance represents a contrast to what has been said before in the discourse (anyway, however, still, yet etc.). The elaborative markers signal that the speaker wants to clarify his or her idea or to add information to it (ex. besides, also etc.). Inferential markers signal that the preceding discourse has a conclusion (so, then, thus etc.) (Fraser 1996: 339-341) Thus, discourse markers only have a procedural meaning and are used in order to provide connections between ideas, to mark a conclusion or, of course, to change a topic or to add some information to it. In the case of using English discourse markers in Romanian, there might be other "hidden" reasons such as wanting to comply to the rules of a greater community (the Western one) or to start new trends (foreign ones) in the Romanian community, without growing apart from the model.

In her article, "English discourse markers in spoken Romanian: pragmatic borrowings or a code-switching phenomenon?", Valentina Cojocaru defines the discourse markers as a "dynamic and heterogeneous functional category". This category may include adverbs (anyway), conjunctions, both coordinating and subordinating (so, and), interjections (damn) or even clauses (you know). (Cojocaru 2020: 264) From a syntactical point of view, they are optional being mostly outside the syntactic structure. Semantically, they barely have any propositional meaning and are meant to keep the attention of the hearer, to make transitions or to give the speaker enough time to formulate the next idea.

Discourse markers are a category of pragmatic connectors. According to Aurelia Nicoleta Pavel's research on the topic it is stated that the discourse markers can, on one hand, indicate a relation between the sentence that is being introduced and another sentence from the same speaker. This relation can be logical, argumentative or affective. On the other hand, it can indicate a relation between one speaker's reply to another's sentence. (Pavel 2013: 216-217)

In a speech, discourse markers are not optional, since they are meant to fulfil a great number of pragmatic roles. As Valentina Cojocaru states in her article, these types of markers are used by the speaker as connectors, different types of signals, turn-takers, hesitation markers, attitude markers, repair or return to an idea markers and so on. (Cojocaru 2020: 265) Through the usage of discourse markers, the speaker reassures the fact that his / her speech is not seen as violent, unfriendly or even boring. Once again, especially in a colloquial environment, it is very important to exploit the affective part of the discourse in order to become closer to the hearer.

All the discourse markers mentioned above appear, as I will present next, in a colloquial environment, since TikTok cannot be classified as a formal mean of creating and disseminating content. In the case of colloquial language, the rules regarding spelling are not as strong as they are in written discourse or in the academic one. It is also remarkable how a speaker can embed powerful emotions in a colloquial discourse, since there are no restraints to what content and implications should be appropriate or not. Both the message and its underlayers can be highlighted by accent, tone, gestures and discourse markers. Speakers may feel the need to enforce the fact that their message should be understood depending on the words they choose to use. In other words, if a speaker consciously or unconsciously uses discourse markers from English in a Romanian speech, it may imply that the speaker seeks to get the attention of the hearer, or to emphasize that he has got some skills regarding that foreign language.

The influence of English on Romanian is and will continue to be a relevant topic. However, another element can be added, and that is technology. As it will be clear from the corpus, social platforms developed an important role in assuring the vocabulary's enrichment. For example, some Romanian TikTok-ers (influencers) choose to use English discourse markers when they create a new content for their profile and this can influence hundreds and thousands of other users who follow them, resulting in a greater number of speakers who code-switch.

III. ANALYSIS OF THE CORPUS

A. Corpus gathering and methodology

The corpus was collected after establishing various criteria. It is of great significance to mention the fact that the corpus is composed of Romanian spoken material. For the time being, I have gathered videos from TikTok, which is one of the most known and commonly used social media apps. Since the Internet contains a tremendous amount of information, I was compelled to narrow down the topic of interest. Consequently, I only selected content creators that are aged between 14 to 30 years old, be they male or female. After locating them, I verified their accounts in terms of privacy, since no accounts and videos that are private are going to be taken into consideration for this survey.

TikTok offers a large amount of spoken material that can be relevant for the present study. The gathered corpus is rich enough to contain large transcriptions. Nonetheless, I will focus on certain discourse markers that occur in the influencers' speech on the above-mentioned social platform. As far as I am concerned, I am searching for English discourse markers, namely: you know, so (even an elongated one sooooo / so:), damn, ok, you see, no way, you get it, I see, WOW, OK, anyway, like, please (ironically), oh my God etc. that might occur in a Romanian discourse. As it might be expected, I will notice other discourse markers with an English influence that we will add to our survey.

I will search for materials that include code-switching, informal announces/posts, comments or videos in which people share experiences or opinions of any kind to their public. These contents will be only from Romania/posted in Romania and will contain colloquial language. This type of material is important for our study because it can easily provide specific discourse markers from English that are integrated in the Romanian language, through speech acts.

From the methodological perspective, I will analyze the corpus from a linguistic and pragmatic point of view and I expect to conclude that people aged between 14 to 30 who are experiencing more exposure to English (due to education level, job or time spent on social media) are also more likely to use English discourse markers even if they address to a Romanian community/public/hearer. I will continuously drag attention to the connection between the theoretical background and the corpus in order to have a complex view of the phenomenon. I will use fragments from oral discourses for analyzing the context of occurrence of the English discourse markers. This action will emphasize the actual power of the Internet in the development of the Romanian language and will provide resources for further studies.

B. Transcription conventions

Noting down the difficulties of listening

x   misunderstood sylable

xxx   misunderstood sylables or entire words

Beginning of a word or apheresis:

c- (cui)   interrupted word

capu'   unfinished word

Long or accentuated pronunciation of sounds:

:   basic lenght

::   important lenght Fe::l

CAPITAL LETTERS indicate accentuated sounds:

gOd

Pauses: (…)   important pause

Parentheses:

( )   approximately transcribed segment

(laugh)   laugh or other paraverbal manifestations

[…]   omitted segments

Spelling convention: spelling sunt… şi â from a.

Intonation:	ascending	↑
	descending	↓
	continuous	→
	ascending then descending	/ ↓

The speakers are written with their initials:

Ex. M. = Mara Ognean

C. The corpus and its analysis

"Make up ROUTINE"

Source: TikTok (@mara__stanciu)

M.: bună prieteni → astăzi facem un **make**↑ **up routine**: **get ready with me** → ţineţi-vă bine am un nou membru al familiei↓ e un pisoi foarte mic pe care l-a găsit mama pE mijlocul drumului↑ **anyway**↓ A să vă arăt parfumul meu preferat **At the moment**↑ gucci rush → dOAmne este superb → e divin miroase splendid **seventEes** dacă vreţi să luaţi → **you get it**↓ începem cu laminarea sprâncenelor cum îmi place să le numesc CHIAR acum↓ pentru că-mi place foarte mult cum arată aşa dar trebuie să le umplu **Oh my gOd**↑ mă priveA apoi continuăm cu un Fe::l de **foundation** dar e **conce:aler**↓ **Oh my GOd**↑ îmi place să-l folosesc → e mult mai **light** sIncer ApOi trecem la un **concealer** cu adevărat → după care umplem sprâncenele o s-Arate destul de ciudat dar **trust the process**. […]

The topic of this video is interesting because it involves guidance/instruction. The content creator wants to show the audience the steps in her make-up routine. But, at the same time, the video can involve promoting brands and products. Nevertheless, the speaker is supposed to become a model for the followers. The words and phrases that I find relevant are *anyway*, *you get it* and *oh my God*. All of them are discourse markers but they are used differently. The first one, *anyway*, is used here to change the topic of discussion and to show contrast.The transition from speaking about a cat to speaking about a perfume is very sudden, hence using the discourse marker helps smoothing it. The second one, *you get it*, has multiple purposes. First of all, it is used once again to smoothen the transition from one point to another but it is also used to maintain a certain "connection" between the locutor and the so-said interlocutor (who is absent/invisible). The last one, *oh my God*, is used to emphasize a feeling and, as we shall see, it occurs very often in the influencers' vocabulary.

"Haul de la Shein"

Source: TikTok (@mara__stanciu)

M.: hello prieteni↓ Astăzi: desfacem împreună un pAche:t de la (...) ați ghicit↑ (...) Shein↓ sau Shein↓ sau (...) cum vreți să-i spuneți↓ […] **GIRLS**↓ știți foarte bine că mai trebuia să-mi iau o pereche de gene↓ (...) pentru că mi-e frică că tOt o să (unintelligible sound) le pierD pe toate și:: mi-am luat mai multe ca să fiu sigură […] avEm un **top** (…) sunt foarte curioasă de calitatea asta: Ale:: lor pentru c-am tot auzit de: **U**:: **she's beaUtiful** (…) […] încă: un **top** → de ăsta sunt foarte **excited** → sunt foarte curioasă cum Arată:: (...) (unintelligible sound) **U**:: **the colour** (...) este superb e- e superb îl ador îl iubesc îmi place foarte mult (laugh) […]

Haul is a cultural phenomenon that became popular lately, especially on TikTok. The content creator usually receives products from different brands and tries to promote it through short videos. Basically, the influencer takes the products out of the box (clothes, make-up, objects of any sort) while talking about their quality or about how easy it is to purchase from that brand. Of course, there are other situations when content creators only buy something online because it's "cool" (for example, now it is cool to purchase from *Shein*).

Regarding the word *girls*, it is taken over from the Western media trend and that is addressing this way to the community (cultural relevance). Thus, it is a discourse marker since its purpose is to catch the attention of the audience and to make the hearer more involved in the "act of communication". The other discourse marker, *u* is pronounced as in English, thus it can be considered as a borrowing here. It is used in order to express a feeling and to connect two related ideas.

"Efectiv nu mă mai întorc niciodată la tuș normal!   "

Source: TikTok (@mara__stanciu)

M.: prieteni↓ (...) mi-a ajuns un colet astăzi și vreau să-l deschid împreună cu voi să vedem cE-i înăuntru […] **OK fUn** (...) deci → vine cu două produse → unul pentru partea dreaptă și unul pentru partea stângă: **that's so:: fUn and I look sO good today oh my gOd** […] forma de tuș **oh:: my go::d**↑ abia aștept să-l înce::rc […] **OK**↓ să vedem↓ (ha:) O: **wOw** […] **OK wOw** […] nu mă mai întorc la tuș norma:l↓ **holy**↑ **fu:ck**

This video was made for promoting an eyeliner brand. The influencer states from the beginning (the title) that she shall never go back to an usual type of product. There are lots of discourse markers and some of them occur repeatedly. *OK* is firstly used to introduce a new idea and then it is used to mark an action. *Fun* and *that's so fun* are used to express feelings and it is possible that they are meant to also emphasize that the product itself should be fun to use. *Oh my God, OK wow* and *holy fuck* are also used to show "strong" emotions, to show pleasure created by the product. In any case, it is not sure if they are used intentionally/consciously or not.

"Haideți cu mine la petrecerea de ziua Lorenei♡   "

Source: TikTok (@louismflr)

L.: mĂ pregătesc pentru ziua lorenei pentru că mâine face 25 de ani și Astăzi o să petrEcem pentru asta: → așa că hAi cu mine ne pregăti:m și: vă iau cu mine la eveniment (...) EVENIMENT pentru că este un evenimEnt↓ […] cu ce ne-mbrăcăm↓ (…) **oh my gOd**↓ **sO bAd** ↓ nu am nici cea mai vagă idee↓ […]

In this case, the influencer only tries to create content while dressing for an occasion. There is no act of promoting something or a tutorial of any sort. The English discourse markers that the speaker uses are *oh my God* and *so bad*. The first one is not necessarily special since I found it at most of the influencers. However, the second one has two roles. One of them might be to signal that the next idea is negative, "bad", and the other one should be to mark the transition between two related ideas. Whatsoever, it is interesting that these markers complete the image of a "Western" type of content creator along with painted nails and purses for men (fashion trends).

IV.CONCLUSION

A partial conclusion can be dragged from these transcriptions. TikTok influencers, be they male or female, aged between 14 and 30 years-old, tend to use English discourse markers in different types of video contents. From make-up tutorials or GRWM to hauls and routines, all of them contain code-switching in the form of foreign discourse markers. It is visible even from the titles that the influencers chosen for this study try to align to specific trends that started either in USA or on the Western side of Europe. Other proofs are using key words, English words, expressions and discourse markers, and immitating the attitude of some other "greater/more important and known" influencers from all over the world.

REFERENCES

[1]   D. Crystal, *English as a second language*, second edition, Cambridge University, New York, 2003.

[2]   V. Cojocaru, , " English discourse markers in spoken Romanian: pragmatic borrowings or a code-switching phenomenon?", in *RRL*, LXV, nr. 3, Editura Academiei, București, pp. 261-271, 2020.

[3]   B. Fraser, "Pragmatic Markers", in *Pragmatics*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Jun., pp. 322-343, 1996, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/43647684_Pragmatic_Markers.

[4]   A. G Niculescu-Gorpin, M. Vasileanu, "Romanian anglicisms: from fully-fledged lexical items to discourse markers", în Revue roumaine de linguistique, LXV (3), Editura Academiei, București, pp. 273-284, 2020.

[5]   A.N. Pavel, "Discoursive markers in romanian. terminological and conceptual aspects", in *The Proceedings of the International Conference Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue. Section: Language and Discourse*, Arhipelag XXI Press, Tîrgu-Mureș, pp. 214-224, 2013.

[6]   A. Ene, "Lexical Imitation and Lexical Creation in Contemporary Romanian", *Diacronia*, Iași, pp. 1-11, , 2019.

[7]   I. Heine, A. Kratzer, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Massachusetts, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, USA, 1998, 2000.

[8]   O. Koeneman, H. Zeijlstra, *Introducing Syntax*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2017.

[9]   N. Obrocea, "Influența limbii engleze asupra limbii române. Studiu de caz: Limbajul gamerilor", *Analele Universității Dunărea de jos*, *Fascicula XXIV, Lexic comun / Lexic specializat*, Vol. 19, no. 1, Nov., Galați, pp. 119-138, 2018.

[10]   M.L. Rus, "Un fapt lingvistic de actualitate: influența engleză asupra limbii române", în *The Proceedings of the* "*European Integration – Between Tradition and Modernity*" *Congres*, Editura Universității Petru Maior, Tîrgu-Mureș, pp. 266-272, 2005.

[11]   E. Severance, M.F. Washburn, "The Loss of Associative Power in Words after Long Fixation", in The American Journal of Psychology, University of Illinois Press, Vol. 18, No. 2, Apr., Illinois, pp. 182-186, 1907.

[12]   A. Stoichițoiu-Ichim, *Vocabularul limbii române actuale: dinamică, influențe, creativitate*, Editura All, București, 2001.