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The culture of efficient intertextualization in the Romanian election discourse

The authors make a difference between inter- and transtextuality[1], on the one hand, and inter- and transtextualization, on the other hand, by associating these abstract concepts with the world of sports (table tennis game and billiards). We are of the opinion that there cannot be made a clear-cut distinction between these four concepts. This is the reason why we will explain them using the syntagm "levels of interference" where the implicit act of hindering within the concept "interference" could be solved through an understanding of the suffixes "-ity", linked to situations of text combinations, and   "-zation", linked to processes which could generate quasi-infinite complexities.

I. Towards a possible culture of transtextualization

Generally, all human (inter)relations generate different situations, with various meanings, effects or results.
In modern thinking (featured by the classic logic applied to the "mechanical" relations of the industrial society) we may speak about a culture of intertextuality and intertextualization because the links between senders and receivers were linear, less complex, more direct and predictable. From the perspective of communication theories (text, context, sender, receiver, information, message, meaning, codes) we do consider that *intertextuality* is the simple situation of putting two or more texts in contact, whereas *intertextualization* is the linear dynamic process, which implies a reciprocal influence which takes place in two different time instances (at t_1 – A influences B, at t_2 – B influences A). For example, the using of a motto[2], placed in front of a text, seems to guide our way of reading the respective text and we have an instance of *intertextuality*; whereas after having read the text, we might realize that the meaning of the motto is even clearer than at

first reading, which circumscribes an instance of *intertextualization.* A comparison with the world of sports (one formed of real competitors) could be taken into conssideration, namely, these two instances seem to remind us of a table tennis game:

-        *intertextuality* could be the first change of ball hits between the two players:

-        *intertextualization* could be the repetition of the players' quick reactions in different temporal contexts. In this process of playing, each competitor may draw a defense and attack strategy, but, at the same time, (s)he can predict the other player's hits.

In postmodern thinking (featured by the logic of the included third applied to "automatic/cybernetic" relations of the postindustrial society) we may speak about the culture of *transtextuality* and *transtextualization.* The transmodern logic of the included third and the abductive logic offer a better explanation to the very complex new realities. For example, while reading a text composed of verbal and iconic elements, we realize that their perpetual interference creates a new mental reality and a special understanding of the verbal text. After re-reading the text we extract new possible links created among words themselves and among icons themselves, on the one hand, and between words and icons, on the other hand. This kind of continuous and permanent interinfluences is a way of persuading the reader by providing a meaning that is hidden at first instance. Obtained as a result of a transfer rule (Domenach, 2004: 83) specific to indirect self-persuasion, the new achieved meaning is stronger and more incisive, and at the same time, more persistent through time. To refer again to the world of sports, we consider that billiards is the best example of transtextuality, having players that obtain a final result by many inter- and trans-mediated hits/ shots. We could make an association between the political scene and the billiards game.

We will provide below some correspondences between these two (target and source) domains (Lakoff, 1987: 386-387):

Billiards		Political scene	
Possible structures	Concrete and abstract game elements	Concrete and abstract political election elements	Possible structures
Substance	Table	Election campaign	Substance
	Players (competence, personal motivation, volition, sense of duty)	Politicians (*pouvoir, savoir, vouloir, devoir*)	Substance
	Game instruments: cues, balls, holes, chalk	Political election instruments: election message, meaningful words, goals, the discursive tone/ voice pitch	Information
	Edges	Time and space limits within the election law	Information
	External environment: light, temperature, spectators	External environment: shining image/ look; moral context; (non)voters, the other politicians	Substance + Information
Information	Knowledge of the game rules and techniques of spinning the balls	A large area of knowledge; the ability of addressing difficult questions to the opponent, emotional appeal	Information
Energy	The force of the shot, attitude, ambience	(Moral and physical) aggressivity, the overwhelming power of words, fireworks simulating victory, financial power	Energy

Choosing the proper denotative words and "spinning and hitting" them skillfully into the right situational and social contexts, politicians seem to generate into the audience's mind(s) new connotative meanings that could create a system of superelevations (Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1977), otherwise difficult to be grasped. This

metaphorical picture of an election campaign is a very good suggestion of what transtextualization is.

II. Idiomatic expressions as political conceptual instances of transtextualization

In the 2004 election campaign in Romania, the Justice and Truth Alliance came up with a very surprising and, at the same time, a bold political discourse built on symbolical cultural meanings hidden within words that stirred the Romanian voters' memory and imagination, thus, having as a result, the moulding of a new mental reality. The short text[3] that our analysis is based on refer to a disastrous extralinguistic reality for which the political opponent party (The Social Democratic Party = SDP) is responsible. Although the aggressive highlighting of the opponent's weak points is actually a very common strategy in negative election campaigns, we consider that the craft of any politician (and/ or of his team) lies in the semiotic production of this new reality. Traian Băsescu's discourse is built on two verbal paradigms "to swindle" (the agent being the SDP) and "to punish" (the agent being the Romanian voters) which are achieved linguistically through different elements and, conceptually, through the process of transtextualization that is, actually, a more complex interference of levels:

-            *Intertextuality*.   The   Romanian   idiomatic expression (A) "a da țeapă"/ *to impale* has in its linguistic plane (Permyakov, 1979: 32-51) the explicit word (*stake – țeapă* = signifier) which sends to an object-image plane, namely an instrument of torture with the semantic feature [+ pain]. The functional value of a *stake/ țeapă* can be better understood if we consider the motivational link (Lakoff, 1987: 448) based on historical intertextuality obtained through the implicit image of Vlad Țepeş/ Vlad Dracul/ Vlad the Impaler.

-            *Intertextualization*. But beyond this functional value of a *stake*, there is another motivational link which correlates the Romanian signifier (A – *a da țeapă - to give the shaft*) to a second colloquial signified, namely *to swindle*, which is focused on the rational agent's action (Năstase + the SDP) upon the pacient (Romanian voters), the latter being actually the victim, without having any apparent possibility of choice.

-                    *Transtextuality.* The unethical methods implied in the concept *to swindle* lie within a crafted interweaving of different discursive registers: legal language (the Emergency Ordinance, no. 101/ 16.11.2004) and rhetorical devices (a play upon words: the change of the acronym RAFO/ REFTO into JAFO/ THEFTO).

These linguistic indices of intertextuality, intertextualization and transtextuality, as complex levels of transtextualization, implicitly form three levels of reality:

-                    Năstase and the Social Democratic Party's reality. A new crisis (a chaos within the value system of the SDP) rendered through the emphasis placed on the qualifying syntagm ("overwhelmed by a sheer despair of losing the power"). Being in a state of political decay, Năstase did a desperate action by stipulating an illegal emergency ordinance which Băsescu used against his opponent (the Emergency Ordinance – an argument based on the structure of reality, acquiring the power of facts);

-                    The country's reality. Năstase's illegal action has as consequence the shaping of the Romanian citizens' social image of future poverty, that is amplified by the persuasive power of figures ("a 21 thousand billion lei debt", "4 million lei").

-                    Traian Băsescu's reality. After having appealed to the voters' emotions, The Justice and Truth Alliance candidate becomes the discursive inciter to a brutal way of indirect punishing those who committed misdeeds. The first signified *to impale* could be interpreted as a social means of asking not to vote for a respective candidate (Năstase and the Social Democratic Party).

The efficiency of Băsescu's discourse was explained in terms of a culture of transtextualization implied in a "to and fro" permanent and continuous movement between the Romanian citizens' memory (past: historical intertextuality) and their imagination (present: idiomatic expression and future: the mental image of Băsescu as an implicit modern Impaler).

ENDNOTES:

[1] Gérard Genette (*apud* Allen, 2000: 101) considers *intertextuality* (a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts) as a subcategory of *transtextuality* along with four others: paratextuality, metatextuality, architextuality and hypertextuality. Julia Kristeva (*apud* Mcaffe, 2003: 26) considers that "the term

inter-textuality denotes the transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another." We consider that Kristeva's concept of *transposition* could be linked to M. M. Bahktin's concept of a chronotope (Bahktin, 1981: 250) which governs the horizontal narrative axis (space-time of the represented world of some characters) and the vertical narrative axis (space-time of writer and reader). We, as readers/ spectators placed together with the author/ creator on the vertical narrative axis, will decode "the signifying practice" of the (non)verbal text which is in a permanent dialogue with literary, social, and historical intertexts.

[2] There are many other instances of intertextuality and intertextualization, namely in a text we could have quotations, allusions or dedications which send us to different texts in order to create new mental images.

The Romanian researcher Stelian Dumistrăcel (*Limbajul publicistic din perspectiva stilurilor funcționale*, Iași, Ed. Institutul European, 2006) considers that *intertextuality* is "a repetitive discourse". He actually takes over Eugeniu Coșeriu's definition of "a repetitive discourse" which is considered to include "everything that is repeated within the language of a community in a more or less fixed form, as a long or short text of what had already been uttered". (our translation)

[3] This short fragment is from "the Shafts" (*Tepele* - http://www.basescu.ro/?sec=82), the title of the negative campaign directed against the Social Democratic Party in Romania. "Overwhelmed by a sheer despair of losing the power, Nastase + the Social Democratic Party gave the worst shaft ever: by the Emergency Ordinance, no. 101/ 16.11.2004, he erased a 21 thousand billion lei debt from the RAFO (REFTO*) private oil refinery company. We will call this maneuver "THEFTO" Onesti. Every Romanian employee is, thus, blind robbed off 4 million lei. This is the biggest and worst swindle ever done against the Romanians by Năstase and the SDP before saying "bye-bye" to power. Let it be the last shaft, let justice win. Use the hottest shaft to impale them to death!" (our translation)

* In order to render the change of the initial letter in the Romanian acronym (RAFO) into a "J", thus obtaining the Romanian word (JAFO = theft, swindle), we made a little change of the name of the

oil refinery in order to preserve the sound pattern (REFTO - THEFTO)

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