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**Towards a Holistic Approach  
to Language Studies  
- Habilitation Thesis -**

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## Abstract

The present thesis is conceived as a report presenting the directions of my research, the queries, the theoretical principles, the projects in progress and the accomplishments during a long and rewarding academic career, as well as a description of ways in which I can still place myself at the service of younger generations of prospective scholars.

Being equally attracted by rigorous patterns of reasoning which I found reflected in linguistic studies and by the ineffable qualities of poetic language<sup>1</sup>, I intended to approach the poetry of Yeats from the perspective of a grammar of style, but I completed my PhD programme in 1992 with the thesis *Folk and Myth Elements in the Poetry of W.B. Yeats*, while hoping to find ways of propagating Romanian poetic values across the borders of my country (and secretly translating Romanian poetry into English). Because of circumstances independent of my will, the final public defence took place in spring 1998, when I also had the book *Myth and Folk Elements in the Poetry of W. B. Yeats* published.

The study of the poetry of the Anglo-Irish writer opened for me further directions of research. (1) I was invited to contribute the Romanian part to a project<sup>2</sup> devoted to the reception of Yeats in Europe, which meant both doing extensive and disciplined library work in the philological tradition and elaborating a written analysis and interpretation of the collected data accompanied by the complete bibliography. (See Rodica Albu – List of publications I, 2006a). (2) I specialised in Irish studies, had an “Irish column” in *Convorbiri literare*, taught a class of *Irish Studies in English* for which

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<sup>1</sup> I graduated with Honours Diploma (English language and literature and Romanian language and literature) in 1972 and have worked at the English Department of Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi since. For several years I also taught Romanian as a foreign language.

<sup>2</sup> Continuum Publishing House in collaboration with the University of London; project director and volume editor: K.P.S. Jochum, Germany.

I prepared a complex *Irish Studies Reader* and supervised graduation papers on Irish matters for several years. (3) As several articles and public speeches of mine suggested possible parallels between Blaga and Yeats, I was requested to contribute the English version to a series of deluxe multilingual Blaga volumes that come out every year to celebrate Blaga's Day on May 9. (See Rodica Albu – List of publications III. Translations.)

Meanwhile I continued to pursue my career as a linguist in several ways.

(1) I was a member of the group of lexicographers that elaborated the several versions of the *Dictionary of English Synonyms* (1989, 2006, 2008), conducted a few personal lexicographic projects and trained myself by participating in international summer schools of computational linguistics and computerised lexicography (EuroLAN '97, '99, '2001, 2005 and 2007, LEXICOM 2002). With my background in lexicography and semantics, and two completed terminology projects (related to the language of insurance and the multidisciplinary terminology of varieties studies) I was compelled to teach terminology as well, first to undergraduates and then to MA students. This, together with my experience as interpreter for international events of complementary therapies and alternative medicine(s) led to another (completed) project: the elaboration of a dictionary of complementary therapies in Romania.

(2) Two RSS/HESP research grants (1995-6 and 1997-8) and the Oxford Colleges Hospitality Scheme (1995) enabled me to travel, explore bibliographic sources, participate in academic events and found a course of study and research in the direction of variationist approaches to language. After years of observing the speech of my department colleagues from the United Kingdom and from the USA and particularly with the help of the resources (reference books, audio tapes and computer corpora) that my colleagues at the English Department of the University of Freiburg, Germany, put at my disposal, I managed to elaborate an introduction to the study of varieties of Present-day English, which served as the theoretical frame for my "English Varieties" course of lectures (an introduction to geopolitical,

demographic, sociolinguistic, ethnolinguistic and functional-stylistic approaches to language in general and the English language in particular)<sup>3</sup>. It was also the theoretical base for further projects.

(3) The first sociolinguistic project, which was an application of (2) and which brought me a postdoctoral grant from ICCS and the Canadian Government in 2000-2001 (ICCS File Number 632-2-96), was entitled *English in Canada. Focus on Representations of Language and Identity among English-speaking Canadians* and enabled me to conduct a sample survey by administering the questionnaire “English in Canada. Language and Identity” to individuals and communities located in the two main urban areas in Ontario: Toronto and Ottawa. The data was statistically processed using SPSS, analysed and interpreted. The results were published in several articles and finally in a volume (2006b) (accompanied by an introductory study of the celebrated Canadian sociolinguist J.K. Chambers) that discussed the speakers’ options regarding elements of spelling, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and usage, as well as the respondents’ subjective evaluation of their options.

(4) My next Canadian project, whose director I was, involved the participation of researchers from eight ex-Communist Central European countries – Bulgaria, Hungary, Croatia, The Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia – and represented half of a broader project, the so-called “CEACS Diaspora Project” (2008-2010). The other half was represented by a team of literary critics and historians led by Vesna Lopcič, Serbia, who collected and selected for publication literary products of the Canadians originating in the eight countries. The whole project resulted in the twin volumes *Migrating Memories. Central Europe in Canada: Vol. I – Literary Anthology; Vol. 2 – Oral Histories*. The second, which reflects the work of the team I directed and whose editor I am, consists of a selection of the interviews we conducted following

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<sup>3</sup> For several years I taught my “Varieties” class at the University of Suceava as well. I have also taught “Varieties” classes in several foreign universities within the ERASMUS programme (Rennes 2, Paris III, Volda University College, Nottingham Trent, Yeditepe University of Istanbul).

the principles of oral history and of introductory studies for each of the eight diasporic groups investigated.

(5) While studying in Oxford and in some German university libraries, I collected the necessary bibliographic resources for another volume I compiled, edited and translated with the support of several enthusiasts (mainly former students). *Inklings. Litera și spiritul* (2004) is a volume by and about the four most prominent members of the informal Oxonian group of literati known as the Inklings, namely, C. S. Lewis, J.R.R.Tolkien, Charles Williams and Owen Barfield. The volume was received as an event. It is still the only Romanian documentary source about the four writers. If so far I have particularly dealt with C.S. Lewis's work, in the near future I plan to devote my attention to Owen Barfield's works, with a special focus on his philosophy of language and speech.

The vast experience I have accumulated in the direction of (1) the empirical research of a language in its historical, geo-political, socio-cultural and functional/pragmastic dimensions, including literary products and other discourse types (genres); (2) the theoretical frame of this type of approach and the reflection on the specific terminology; (3) the results of supervising student research at undergraduate and master level; and (4) the successful conclusion of an international project of the complexity of the "diaspora project" reinforce my confidence in my capability of supervising future PhD projects.