RUMANIAN INTONATION STEREOTYPES

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ABSTRACT
Relying on the criterion of intonation-text relation, the author proposes a classification of intonation stereotypes (ISs) into three categories: (1) ISs depending on a grammatical structure, e.g. Verb+Indefinite Article+Noum etc; (2) ISs representing a higher degree of connection between intonation and text; e.g. intonations specific to some idiomatic phrases; (3) ISs occurring in the absence of any text, i.e. the intonations of "hummed messages" used to express "Yes", "No" etc.

0. PRESENTATION
The term "intonation stereotype" (IS) as used here is meant to be more comprehensive than "stylized tones" or "clichés mélodiques"; it refers to a more or less fixed pattern which is constantly associated with the same semantic and/or pragmatic content.

We propose the classification of ISs into three categories:

1. INTONATION STEREOTYPES DEPENDING ON A GRAMMATICAL STRUCTURE
1.1. The exclamative structures
ce "what" + noun

cît "how many" + noun
may have two intonational variants:
- a one-peaked pattern: an upskip to the accented syllable of the noun is followed by a downskip; e.g.:

$$Ce\ bog\breve{a}\acute{t}^i\ _{e!}$$ "What abundance!";
- a two-peaked pattern, with the first peak on the exclamative word and the second one on the accented syllable of the noun; e.g.:

$$c\overset{i}{}te\ _{tab}l^o u_{ri!}$$ "How many pictures!"

1.2. The structure ce + noun can be also used with a somewhat opposite attitude, i.e. that of rejecting the partner's statement. In most cases, this rejective exclamation is pronounced in the low part of the voice, with a slightly falling intonation and therefore a narrow pitch range. Since in Rumanian the main function of ce is the interrogative one, the rejecting IS may be contrasted to the "homonymous" interrogative pattern; compare:

Speaker A: Speaker A:
Vrea să plece   Am găsit o i-
in Himalaia.   dee pentru
"He wants to   film. "I've

leave for Hi-   got an idea
malayas."   for the movie.
   Speaker B: Speaker B:

$$Ce\ i_{dee!}$$ $$C\overset{e}{}_e\ i_{dee}?$$

What an idea! What's the idea?

1.3. A high degree in terms of quality (superlative) may be expressed in Rumanian, beside other devices, by using the structure
verb + indefinite article + noun
e.g.: Era un frig! "It was terribly cold!" (literally: "It was a cold!"). This "superlative" IS consists of a two-peaked pattern generally ending with a suspended high pitch: the two peaks correspond to the verb and the noun, respectively, the indefinite article being constantly pronounced on a low pitch. The last peak is usually followed by the lengthening of the last vowel on a high sustained pitch:

$$E\ _{o}\ _{mi}z^{e}riee!$$ "What a mess!" (Lit.: It's a mess!).

1.4. Another "superlative" Rumanian structure, this time in terms of quantity, implies the same IS:
verb + preposition la "at" + noun
e.g.: Au venit la oameni! "There came hosts of people!" (Lit.: There came at people!), where the emphatic effect is the result of an ensemble of factors: the necessarily undefinite form of the noun, the unusual word order, the special suspensive intonation pattern, the extra duration of the last syllable vowel:

$$Au\ ve^{nit}\ _{la}\ _{o}\ ^a meeni!$$

2. INTONATION STEREOTYPES REPRESENTING A HIGHER DEGREE OF CONNECTION BETWEEN INTONATION AND TEXT
This is the case of many phrases specific to any language, where a set sequence of concrete words implies a certain IS, or, as Bolinger says: "What we find is either a set intonation or a very restricted range of intonations as part of the set meaning" [2, 98].

Certainly, "there is no string of words that has one necessary intonation" [7, 57] and no intonation represents exclusively a certain text [6, 180]. In fact, to the enormous number of idioms of a given language there corresponds a rather limited number of intonations.

2.1. Most of the idioms have resulted from an ellipsis, accompanied by their semantic reduction. This often creates homonymous utterances with the original ones (with "full" meaning). Perhaps many languages have a number of such "expressions à deux lectures" of which one is idiomatic. In these cases, the intonation represents the only element, (beside the context), which determines the meaning, so that it has a distinctive function.

Actually, a great many of the Rumanian idioms may be regarded as "minimal pairs" of some utterances with the same wording and syntax, which are pronounced generally with a different intonation; compare:

Speaker A: Speaker A:
Am nevoie de   Care dintre a-
tot salariul   ceste două
tău.   cărți îți tre-
           buie?
"I need all   "Which of the-
your wages."   se two books
           is of use to
           you?"

Speaker B: Speaker B:

$A^s{}_{ta-i}\, {}^{bu}n\check{a}!$ $^{As}{}_{ta-i}\, bu_{n\check{a}?}$

"That'a good   "This one will
joke!" (Lit.:   do".
This is good).
Therefore the ISs attached
to the phrases function as
such only in their specific
linguistic and situational
context [5, 4]. We have
dealt with some of Rumanian
examples in other papers
[3; 4]: *Nu mai spune!* "You
don't say so!", *De unde!*
"Not at all!", *Ce folos!*
"What's the use of it!",
De ce nu! "Why not!", *Nici
vorbă!* "Nothig of the kind".

2.2. It seems necessary to
make a distinction between
the expressions with a mea-
ning by themselves and the
ones which resort to the in-
tonation [1, 276-277].

Some idioms have become
"frozen" in an odd, ungram-
matical form, so that they
have no homonymous free pair.
Rumanian has many such e-
xamples: *Ce mai!*, *Nici vor-
bă!*, *Ce dacă!*, *Cum să nu!*,
Ce-are a face!, *Ce dracu!*,
La ce bun!, *Vezi să nu!* etc.
Generally they have a speci-
fic intonation, but not a
distinctive one; e.g.:
       Speaker A:
O să-mi dai și cărțile tale.
"You'll give me your books
too."
       Speaker B:

$v^{e}{}^{zi}\, {}^{s\check{a}}\, n_{u!}$ "By no means!"

(Lit.: "See to not").

3. INTONATION STEREOTYPES OCCURRING IN THE ABSENCE OF ANY TEXT

Some of these "intonation
carriers" [2, 97] are utte-
red without opening the
mouth; most of them function
as different types of repli-
es and probably it is this
"sequential" position in the
dialogue which makes possi-
ble their capacity of being
wordless.

According to Fónagy [5,
104], these "tonal gestures"
are not less conventionali-
zed than other equivalent
responses, like "Yes", "No"
etc. Revealing their full
and strict meaning, Karcev-
skij [8, 222] calls them
"real algebraic symbols of
sentences". Let us see one
example:

The hummed message used
in Rumanian as an affirma-
tive answer consists of two
syllables formed by two syl-
labic [m]s separated by a
"pure nasal aspiration which
is generally voiced" [9, 81]
Its specific IS represents
a rise on a pretty fixed
interval of a major second
(a slightly greater rising
interval implies more inte-
rest or participation).

In other languages the
rising interval is different;
for instance, Fónagy des-
cribes the French equivalent
as a labial nasal [m] accom-
panied by an abrupt rise of
a seventh, whereas in Hunga-
rian it is characterized by
a slower and smaller rise, a
"bisyllabic sixth", with two
peaks of intensity, one at
the beginning, the other at
the end of hum [5, 104].

In other languages still,
it seems that the same IS
may be used with a different
pragmatic value, e.g. in
United States it is heard as
a gentle and shorter answer
to "Thank you".

4. COMMENTS

All types of ISs we have
dealt with are used in the
colloquial, informal langua-
ge, most of them being affec-
tively or attitudinally
marked.

In the case of the first
type, a somewhat set pattern
expresses a peculiar sense
(such as "superlative" or
"rejective" etc). In the
second case, a definite pat-
tern is assigned to a con-
crete verbal formula, the
ensemble having its own mea-
ning in a given language;
that is why the ISs associ-
ated with idioms are to be
"learned as part of the
whole", as pointed out by
Bolinger [2, 101].

The functional efficien-
cy of our ISs is obviously
decreasing from type 1 to
type 3.

Our first type of ISs
are known in other langua-
ges too, similarly to the
so-called "intonation mor-
phemes", whereas the second
type represents ISs speci-
fic to every language, the
same as their corresponding
idiomatic text. As for the
third type, the use of
hummed messages is probably
universal; what differs
from one language to ano-
ther is their phonetic as-
pect and/or meaning.

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