

ROMGLOBISH - THE DYNAMIC CODE OF ROMANIAN YOUTUBERS

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Abstract: Our study provides a multifaceted discourse analysis of young Romanians tackling different topics on YouTube vlogs. As the explicit goal of the vloggers under focus is to raise awareness on social and political problems, on the Romanian music or culture, on travels and leisure time activities, gadgets, technology, sports etc. we will pursue an in-depth analysis of their discourses, focusing on the way their discourse is shaped in order to be catchy and liked by their followers. The dynamics of the Romanian language is manifested today in its most obvious forms in the language of Internet users, especially vloggers. We will analyse the influence of Globish and English in the new created code of Romanian YouTubers. The Romanian language constitutes a matrix in which English and Globish are poured and they become part of a new dynamic code, destined to be changed at all levels: lexical, morphological and syntactical.

Keywords: vlogs, cyberlanguage, computer-mediated discourse, YouTubers, RomGlobish

Introduction

In recent years, the Romanian language has been given a new facet and has suffered several transformations, due to the new means of communication and to the influence of Globish. The speakers have become more aware of their linguistic creativity and of the playful dimension of language. In this context, the relationship with the Romanian language has changed almost radically, the result being a new type of code.

A thorough analysis of the discourse produced by Romanian YouTubers reveals various simplification and replacement strategies which contribute to restructuring reality and to constructing complex linguistic phenomena. Very many Romanian words and expressions are replaced by their English equivalents. Their discourses are mainly in Romanian, but they contain discourse markers in English, and/or there are structures that are simply expressed in English. The result is a permanent code switch between Romanian and English, the so-called Romglish. In the case of the Romanian language one of the most dominant features of cyberlanguage is the presence of Romglish or even Globish elements and the constant code switch between these two idioms. That is why we argue that the new code created by the Romanian YouTubers can be called **RomGlobish**.

As part of a longer and more complex study on cyberlanguage and on the Romanian computer mediated communication (see Radu 2014) we are currently engaged in, we have noticed the changing nature of the Internet discourse and we have selected some aspects that deserve further exploration in this present paper. These aspects could potentially add elements to a complete picture of all the recent changes

occurring in the Romanian spoken and written language, even when communication is not mediated by the computer.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse user-generated content on YouTube that qualifies as vlogging, in order to have a deeper perspective on how we can classify and categorize the language phenomena.

Literature Review

The multilingual digital context of vlogs is the result of the interplay between morphosyntactic frame (the matrix language) which encapsulates other systems, which function as embedded languages or “guest language” (see Myers-Scotton 235). Our present study focuses on the mixture between Romanian, English and Globish and it investigates the role that each language system plays online in the creation of a new code which is contained in the users’ discourses. It also investigates the online textual practices which contribute to a new dynamic code, articulating a range of identities and stories which capture the audience’s attention and keep the users engaged. This code constitutes a new glocal (global and local) variety of language created online and expands offline as well, acting like a boomerang between the online and the offline discursive spaces. This code constructs online representations and stories which “contain signs of globalization, but also preserve their idiosyncrasies” (see Cotoc 229).

We assume that for the Romanian users as for many others, “English is functional and fashionable, and well suited to the witty reductions of the keypad. The average English word has only five letters, [...]. English has few inflections and almost no diacritical marks. As the language of the world’s popular culture, English will be the default position for the younger generation for decades to come” (McCrum 259). For the Romanian users, English has become not only the language for texting and blogging, but also the preferred code for vlogging.

The term *Globish* was created by Paul Nerrière and defined in his book *Decouvrez le globish (2005)*. He conceptualises *Globish* in an idiosyncratic manner, describing the term both as playful and serious and highlighting that it constitutes an efficient tool in global communication. Moreover, he stresses out that the aim of using this tool is not accuracy, but efficiency and immediacy, adding that *Globish* has a purely pragmatic function of ensuring that its users manage to achieve their linguistic goals “everywhere on the surface of the globe” (13). We could argue that Romanian vloggers have a very good sense of what it means to communicate globally, as they tend to mix Romanian and *Globish* quite often. In this way, the code used by the Romanian vloggers is strikingly dynamic and reflects a case of translanguaging, being constituted “as one linguistic repertoire with features that have been societally constructed as belonging to two separate languages” (García & Wei 2).

To paraphrase Robert McCrum, the freedom of cyberspace has certainly “poured ‘gasoline on the human imagination’ (that is a linguistic revolution), but rhyming ‘ecstasy’ with ‘texting me’ is strictly a *Globish* phenomenon” (260), very much present in the discourses we will analyse.

Research Methodology and Hypothesis

There are many types of vlogs, as well as blogs, they are different in terms of content, purpose and style. Hence, we can visit vlogs like: personal channels, corporate and organisational channels (with business purposes, marketing, branding and public relations purposes), travel/ political/ fashion/ education/ art/ music/ literature vlogs etc. (see also Cotoc and Radu 98). A plethora of vlogs and YouTube channels could be selected, but our purpose is to analyse the ones that are created by Romanian YouTubers who, although they speak Romanian, use Globish in their discourses.

We selected personal vlogs where vloggers talk mainly about themselves, but also about subjects of general interest (food, travel, gadgets, technology, sports, politics, social problems, etc.). This type of vlogs gives the users the freedom to be themselves, to be spontaneous and authentic and their narrative identities can manifest themselves in a space where cultural diversity has become a must in order to gain followers and likes/thumbs up or comments.

We focused on different young Romanian Youtubers, 20 to 40 years old, as this newly created code is prevalent in their discourses. A total of 10 vlogs (they can be found at the end of our paper in section **Corpus**) were analysed and accessed in October and November 2020. We followed the activity of the Romanian vloggers on these YouTube channels: **Daria Jane (139k subscribers)**, **Viața bate Vlogul (529k subscribers)**, **Emil Rengle (370k subscribers)**, **Eea Ikeda (55k subscribers)** and **EPIC (125K subscribers)**.

Given the fact that we have an intricate mixture of Romanian, English and Globish, we started this study from two hypotheses:

1. Regardless of the mixtures of codes and digital practices involved, the vlogging discourses are coherent and cohesive both for the producer and for the recipient.
2. In this particular case of online global context, the Romanian language (still) functions as the matrix language and the embedded languages are English and Globish.

Corpus analysis

McCrum highlights that the extraordinary IT revolution of the new millennium has accelerated time, globalised information, dissolved traditional frontiers and liberated the workplace. It has also begun to influence textual language, such as written and oral communication. Any visit to Facebook or YouTube confirms this observation (McCrum 262). For any Romanian linguist, a visit on these Romanian YouTube channels would confirm McCrum's observation.

Having provided a detailed classification for the different Romanian language structures in a previous study (Radu 2019, 7) in this study the aim is to analyse a selection of sequences of authentic discourse and to provide suitable linguistic categories for them in order to accurately describe and explain the function of the emergent dynamic code used by the vloggers. As such, we identified several categories that overlap to a greater or lesser extent as they represent sequences of morphosyntactic transfer that overlaps perfectly with both languages (Romanian and Globish).

Selection of categories and examples

There are plenty of code-switching and code-mixing examples in the discourses we scrutinized. One of the most important features of these examples is that they make perfect sense in Romanian, no matter which morphosyntactic category is substituted with English equivalents. Moreover, the discourse is understandable both for the producer and for the recipient.

What is more important, is the fact that we encountered several common aspects that can be put in grammatical categories, as it will be detailed in the sections below.

Verbs and Phrasal Verbs

Very many verbs and phrasal verbs are used in English, but they always get Romanian grammatical morphemes and they can be conjugated as a typical Romanian verb. They can even be used in different tenses and moods, so they adapt perfectly to the Romanian language.

We selected some relevant examples: *S-a viralizat o poză foarte mult.* (In English: *A photo went viral.* - the verb *s-a viralizat* does not exist in Romanian, but the vlogger adapts it very easily and in the context it makes sense); *Femeile se shame-uiesc alte femei.* (In English: *Women that shame other women.* - the verb *shame-uiesc* does not exist in Romanian, but the vlogger finds a precise verb, that in Romanian would be expressed by a more complicated expression); *Mulți că mă follow-ești.* (In English: *Thanks for following me.* - the verb *follow-ești* does not exist in Romanian, it could be replaced by *urmărești*, probably the verb *to follow* serves the purpose of the vlogger better than the Romanian equivalent); *În vrei să mă bully-uești?* (In English: *Do you want to bully me again?* - the verb *bully-ești* does not exist in Romanian, in any case the reference to the act of bullying would be way more difficult to express in the vlogger's mother tongue); *Eu am damage-uit corzile vocale.* (In English: *I damaged my vocal cords.* - the verb *am damage-uit* does not exist in Romanian, but the vlogger considers it more catchy and uses it instead of its Romanian equivalent); *Videoclipul e triggeruit de voi.* (In English: *The video is triggered by you.* - the verb *triggered* does not exist in Romanian, but the Romanian verb *declanșat* sounds too common for the young generation); *Dacă a văzut că ăla a-njurat și a luat 10 like-uri, zice: hai să hate-uiesc și eu.* (In English: *If (s)he saw someone else was vulgar and got 10 likes, (s)he told himself/herself: let me also hate = spread hate.* - the verb *să hate-uiesc* does not exist in Romanian, but this concept is so popular among the vloggers community that it would be inconceivable to use a Romanian verb or a phrasal verb); *Eu am avut curaj să face it efectiv.* (In English: *I simply did not have the courage to face it.* - the phrasal verb *să face it* does not exist in Romanian, but the vlogger adapts it very easily and in the context it makes perfect sense).

Nouns and Noun phrases

Even more common is replacing nouns and noun phrases with English words. Since, in Romanian, cases and declination of nouns is not so difficult, it is very easy for

the speakers to make the switch. Since only the Genitive and the Dative cases get grammatical morphemes, it is very uncomplicated to adapt them and to use them naturally. There are plenty examples representing this phenomenon: *Am ales să fac walk of shame în sufragerie.* (In English: *I chose to do a walk of shame in the living room.* - the Noun Phrase *walk of shame* does not exist in Romanian, still it is extremely glamorous and fits the context); *Știi foarte bine că sunt regina cringe-ului.* (In English: *You know very well that I am the queen of cringe.* - the Noun *cringe* does not exist in Romanian, and in the context it is declined and it gets the Romanian Genitive morpheme); *scriis: The best vocal coach, problema este că nu am scris vocal coach, am scris vocal couch, deci cadoul meu s-a transformat din cea mai bună profă de canto, în cea mai bună canapea vocală.* (In English: *I know I wrote: The best vocal coach, the problem is I did not write vocal coach, I wrote vocal couch, so my present turned from being addressed to the best canto teacher, to the best vocal sofa.* - the vlogger explains the mistakes s(he) made years ago when their level of English was not so high. This example is interesting by itself because the vlogger makes comments that raise self-reflexion and it is a proof of their metadiscursive realization)

Most of the examples that contain nouns or noun phrases replacements are proof of the vloggers' reasons to use English. The English words comprise better and more precise the reality they refer to, as opposed to the Romanian version which would probably take longer to express and would be less precise. Here are some relevant examples: *Nu cred că vreți să pierdeți contentul meu, just in case.* (In English: *I don't think you would like to miss my content.*); *Ăsta este statementul meu atunci când părul meu nu stă bine by default.* (In English: *This is my statement when my hair doesn't look good by default.*); *Mi se pare că e de datoria mea să fac acest crowdfund.* (In English: *It seems it is my duty to do this crowdfund.*); *Mie îmi dai un vibe de geisha.* (In English: *It gives me a geisha vibe.*); *Eu de obicei spun asta: să nu le pese de hate, să aibă încredere în ei.* (In English: *I usually say this: don't take hate into consideration, trust yourselves*). *Am vrut să fac un statement.* (In English: *I wanted to make a statement.*) *Și asta e tricky part, tu crezi despre tine că ești mega puternic și chiar ești și citești și faci coaching și mergi la sesiuni de terapie.* (In English: *And this is the tricky part, you think about yourself that you are strong and you really are and you read and you do coaching and you go to therapy sessions.*); *Primind această hate și nemaleușind să mă focusez pe oamenii care chiar mă iubesc...* (In English: *Getting this hate and not being able to focus on people that really love me...*); *Mi sa dus focusul* (In English: *My focus is not working.*).

Adjectives/Adverbs

In our previous study, we offered a longer list of adjectives and adverbs in English, that are usually combined with the *Ave (to be)*- *Ești cool! (You are cool!); Ești fancy! (You are fancy!); E safe! (It is safe!); E trendy! (It is trendy!); Sunt cute! (I am cute!)* and many more. (See Radu, 401). This list is constantly growing, as users find infinite possibilities to combine these forms. Even though Romanian is rich enough in adjectives and synonyms denoting different subtle nuances in different contexts, YouTube users and even young people in face to face interaction chose these English

equivalents. Examples *Clujul e un loc **instagramabil***. (In English: *Cluj is an **instagrammable** place*. - the Adjective **instagramabil** does not exist in Romanian, it is formed from the proper Noun Instagram and gets a morpheme typical for adverbs and adjectives, following the pattern of the English language); *un nou vlog cu momente **funny***. (In English: *I am filming a new vlog with **funny** moments*. - the Adjective **funny** does not exist in Romanian, but it is so common that almost anybody under 40 years old does not use the Romanian equivalent **amuzant**, even in face to face interactions); *Mereu îmi amintesc o chestie **gen și mai cringe, și mai cringe***. (In English: *I always remember a thing **like cringier and cringier***. - the Noun **cringe** is used as an adjective, which is curious and shows that the vlogger even plays with the meanings and with the grammar in order to make the discourse more interesting); *Stay **chill**, că nu-i nicio problemă*. (In English: *Stay **chill**, it's no problem*. - the Adjective **chill** represents another type of word that became even more common in spoken interaction than the Romanian word calm/relaxat that would work perfectly in the context); *Mă simțit eu super **entitled** să intru în conversație*. (In English: *I felt very **entitled** to enter the conversation*. - the Adjective **entitled** could be replaced with **îndreptățită**); *Ea era super **awkward***. (In English: *She was super **awkward***. - the Adjective **awkward** could be replaced with **stânjenită/stângace**); *Numai mie mi se putea întâmpla să mă comport atât de **random***. (In English: *To act so **random** could only happen to me*. - the Adverb **random** could be replaced with **haotic**, probably the Romanian words would not be as precise as the English word **random**); *Fața lui a fost **priceless***. (In English: *His face was **priceless***. - the Adjective **priceless** could be replaced with the equivalent **teegalat** - but the meaning would be more vague); *Sunt sută la sută **down for it***. (In English: *I am one hundred percent **down for it***. - the expression **down for it** could be replaced with **de acord** - but the English expression is more typical for spoken, informal interaction, more appropriate if one wants to convey familiarity in a given context); *Eu sunt slabă, that's it, I'm just **skinny***. (In English: *I am thin, that's it, I'm just **skinny***. - the Adjective **skinny** could be replaced with **hăbănoagă**); *Nu sunt **judgemental***. (In English: *I am not **judgemental***. - the Adjective **judgemental** could not be replaced in Romanian, the speaker would have to use the word **avudeca**); *Vocea mea nu era any big of a deal, ca tehnică clar **average***. (In English: *My voice was not any big of a deal, clearly an **average one as technique***. - the Adjective **average** could be replaced with **medie/normală**, represents another type of word that became even more common in spoken interaction than the Romanian equivalent **de ce am fost așa de touched? (In English: *Why was I so **touched?*** - the Adjective **touched** could be replaced with **înduioșată/senzibilizată/emoționată**). As previously mentioned, Romanian does not lack nuances and synonyms, but in these contexts, this new code for expressing ideas is created and the English words represent both the context and the users' world.**

Discourse markers

More than a common linguistic behaviour, English discourse markers are almost verbal tics for most of the young Romanians: *haha; You know; Amazing!; By the way!; Some thoughts?; Of course!; Feel free!; Maybe; Some kind of...; Anyway; Whatever; A bit*

of...; Still and so on, represent just a few examples of the most common ones. We selected some typical examples from the vloggers' discourses, without these discourse markers their way of talking would sound unnatural to their followers. *Finalmente și s-a aprins beculețu!*. (In English: *Finally you understood!*); *Și by the way sunt multe persoane care...* (In English: *And by the way there are many people that... .*); *Nu știu, do you even know what I mean? E ciudat.* (In English: *I don't know, do you even know what I mean? It's strange.*); *Ei sunt niște fani ascunși, dar totuși se descarcă pe mine, anyways.* (In English: *They are hidden fans, but still they are trying to make me feel responsible, anyways.*); *Deci, no, thank you!* (In English: *So, no, thank you!*); *Este o voce normală more or less.* (In English: *It's a normal voice, more or less.*); *However, ăsta nu e motivul.* (In English: *However, that's not the reason.*).

Code-switching

Most of the situations previously presented and analysed are cases of code switching, but there are situations in which the speakers express half of the sentence in English and the other in Romanian, or the other way around. Such cases are represented in the examples below. *Keep in mind, eu eram copil.* (In English: *Keep in mind, I was a kid.*); *Pur și simplu, that's it.* (In English: *As simple as that, that's it!*); *O să mă întorc la muzică one day.* (In English: *I am going to go back to music one day.*); *Tu ai ajuns până aici, mission accomplished.* (In English: *You have not reached this level yet, mission accomplished.*); *Am zis io: watch me! I'm gonna do it.* (In English: *I said: watch me! I'm gonna do it!*); *Indiferent de cum o fi, let's do this all together.* (In English: *Regardless of how it is going to be, let's do this all together.*); *Nu știu de ce vreau să mă umilesc, but it is all for the sake of fun.* (In English: *I don't know why I want to humiliate myself, but it is all for the sake of fun.*).

Code-mixing structures

More rare, but very interesting and creative are examples of code-mixing. Besides the communicative dimensions, they have great expressive effects and they reveal in the best way the speaker's creativity. *La opt ani mai cunoști câte una alta-ish.* (In English: *When you are eight you start knowing some things from these and those-ish.* - here the speaker combines the pronoun *alta* with the English suffix *ish*, wanting to express the idea that when you are so young you do not know so many things, but you start discovering a lot. It is a brilliant way of showing inexactness and approximation of things or states that are not full, not completely reached.) *Sunteți youtuberitele mele preferate!* (In English: *You are my favorite female youtubers.* Another great example of mixing two codes very naturally, the speaker simply adds feminine morphemes in order to give the noun the feminine form.) *Cluj e un loc instagramabil.* (In English: *Cluj is an instagrammable place.* - an adjective that is clearly going to gain popularity and become a pattern for creating new words.)

False friends

We also noticed that there are more and more words that are used by the younger generation with a meaning which is different from the one than they are actually registered in the dictionary. Currently they could be considered false friends, but as language changes in accordance to how its speakers use it, it is very likely that in a very short time these words will be noted and their meaning in the current Romanian dictionary will be brought up to date, and the old meanings might become secondary. We have selected some examples: *Poza s-a viralizat, a devenit internațional virală.* (In English: *The picture went viral, it became internationally viral.* - the word *viral* is used in Romanian only in connection to viruses or germs, so it used to be more a medical term, still this new meaning is gaining in popularity) *Fii mai gentil, pentru că it's not cool.* (In English: *Be more gentle, because it is not cool.* There is the word *gentil/gentilă* in Romanian, but it means polite or kind, and here the speaker wanted to use it as a synonym for *tender*, she is expressing her opinion about some gynecologists, who are not gentle enough) *Merită mult mai multă recunoștință.* (In English *They deserve more recognition.* - native speakers use the word *recunoștință*, not *recunoștie*, but this might soon become the norm).

Depending on their purpose, the vloggers integrate elements of Globish English or not, but most importantly, they are of their own discourses and they sometimes make metadiscursive comments: *Și toată aștept să mă înjure lumea că iar mixez româna cu engleza - Aaaaaa - romgleză. În momentu' în care știi engleză nu are cum să te deranjeze că cineva vorbește și engleză pe lângă română.* (In English: *I can't wait for people to curse me for mixing Romanian and English - Uuuuummm - Romglish. If you speak English you should not be bothered that someone speaks English in addition to Romanian.*).

For obvious reasons, all the vloggers and bloggers are very preoccupied with the audience of their channel and with the feedback they get. There are content creators who post multimodal content keeping in mind their audience, their identity being triggered and influenced by what they think the audience wants to hear or by the audience's interest. Nevertheless, there are young YouTubers who seldom use Globish/English elements, because they want to reach a more diverse audience and they usually also address people over 40, their main purpose being to preserve the local dimension of their discourses.

According to the definition of Globish, its goal would be to reach a common ground, a level where everyone understands everyone else, and that is also true for the entire community of Romanian vloggers between 20 and 40 years. They use this common ground successfully, they reshape Romanian and Romglish to such an extent that it preserves both the global and glocal features and it makes perfect sense for bilingual speakers (that is speakers of Romanian and English). They want to be in trend, they need the prestige offered by English and Globish, and they have to be up to date in order to be an active part of this community.

Conclusions

The analysis of the corpus confirmed our two hypotheses.

Regardless of the intricate nature of the dynamic code created by the vloggers, the discourse remains intelligible for everyone because it is a language variety familiar to vloggers and users alike.

The new code created by the vloggers has a dynamic nature being subjected to constant change. It contains universal and global elements embedded in a matrix language. In the case of the Romanian vlogs, the words used by the vloggers are based on the morphosyntactic features of the Romanian language (the matrix) while English and Globish are embedded in the matrix and shaped by the matrix. Hence, in the global context, the mixed nature of the cyberlanguage can be noticed in the Romanian space through global and glocal elements. This mixture entitles us to use the term *Globish* (knowing how to communicate in the virtual space) to describe the discourse of the Romanian-speaking Internet users. Adding English as the third element of the puzzle, leads to the use of *RomGlobish* - a well-articulated morphosyntactic and pragmatic discourse which has meaning for the vloggers.

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Corpus

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMikIJrWCrs&t=3s>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ITdM19QspBA>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZNBoG7W788&t=3s>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBV8Cg4bR_o8Fs
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfkkKcxYc>
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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IRxSdR3ucE>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LTzFfzWmjMo>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWbhQRAm>