



ORIGINAL PAPER

Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language

Ramona Șendrescu¹⁾

Abstract:

The article provides an extensive exploration of the significance, utilization, and cultural implications of greetings in the Romanian language, particularly in the context of teaching Romanian to foreign students. It delineates the theoretical underpinnings of greetings, emphasizing their dual nature as linguistic constructs and social behaviors embedded within cultural norms. Furthermore, it examines the practical considerations involved in teaching greetings, advocating for a structured instructional approach that integrates theoretical concepts with experiential learning opportunities. The article also delves into examples of iconic greetings in Romanian culture and explores the nuances of ironic greetings. Overall, it serves as a valuable resource for language educators, students, and researchers seeking to understand the multifaceted nature of greetings and their role in communication, social interaction, and cultural identity within the Romanian context.

Keywords: *greeting in Romanian, teaching techniques, specific vocabular*

¹⁾ Assistant Professor, Ph.D, University of Craiova, Department of Applied Modern Languages, Craiova, Romania, Phone: 0040251411552, Email: ramona.sendrescu@edu.ucv.ro. OCRID ID: 0000-0002-7256-330X.

1. Preliminary Considerations:

This article can serve as a tool for teachers instructing foreign students the various types of greetings in the Romanian language. Our concern was to explore tools and techniques for designing course material for the learning of greetings. The study encompasses several guiding principles in the development of a course material, particularly from the perspective of how greetings should be approached, along with practical examples of how course activities should be designed to ensure specific ways of mastering greetings in the Romanian language.

I also attempted to make an analysis of greetings in the Romanian language, considering a dual aspect of the language: language as a system of signs with its own structure, both grammatical and semantic (greeting formulas representing a corpus of linguistic data of the Romanian language), and the second aspect - language as a constituent part of social behavior, specific to native or non-native speakers of the Romanian language.

Language as a quintessentially social phenomenon, is grounded in social relationships and interactions, whereas language, as a system of communication through words, serves as an integrated tool within the culture of people.

One of the potential challenges that a teacher may encounter in the act of teaching is to clarify the significance of greetings in the Romanian language, as an integrated part of our culture and social life, where greetings represent a form of respect by which interest is shown towards a person or group.

The diversity of greeting formulas in the Romanian language necessitates a nuanced understanding of the norms of politeness and the dynamics of social relationships. Greetings in the Romanian culture are deeply embedded in a framework of social norms that reflect attitudes of kindness, hospitality, and friendship. These norms serve as guiding principles for individuals as they navigate various social contexts, shaping how greetings are expressed and received. Moreover, the intricate nature of Romanian greetings mirrors aspects of the national psychology, based on the values and priorities held by the Romanian people. It is within the realm of greetings that one can discern the subtle nuances of interpersonal dynamics, as individuals negotiate the delicate balance between tradition and innovation in their interactions.

Furthermore, the formulas of salutation in Romanian culture offer insights into the unique manner in which relationships are established and maintained. Romanian greetings often transcend mere formality, embodying genuine expressions of warmth and camaraderie. This characteristic of Romanian greetings underscores the importance of sincerity and authenticity in interpersonal communication. Additionally, Romanian society exhibits a propensity for both preserving traditional norms and challenging conventional boundaries, a dynamic reflected in the way greetings are exchanged. Thus, an examination of Romanian greeting customs provides not only linguistic insights but also deeper cultural and sociological understandings of the complexities inherent in human interaction.

The purpose of greeting formulas is to initiate a discussion or conversation: "In most cases, if not all, greeting formulas serve as a means to initiate conversation, while farewell greetings may indicate its conclusion. Moreover, speakers are often keenly aware of the role played by these greeting formulas in conversation dynamics." (G. Caragață, op.cit.:73).

The rules of politeness are deeply rooted in the unique conception of humanity held by each society, serving as a manifestation of its cultural ethos and ethical

Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language

principles. These rules reflect the values and norms upheld by the community. Through the application of politeness norms, individuals demonstrate their respect for societal conventions and their acknowledgment of others' dignity and autonomy. Moreover, politeness rules serve as a mechanism for maintaining social harmony and cohesion by regulating interpersonal relations and minimizing conflict. As such, they play a fundamental role in shaping social interactions and facilitating smooth communication within a society. Additionally, the adherence to politeness norms not only reflects the cultural identity of a people but also reinforces and perpetuates shared ethical standards, contributing to the preservation of social order and stability.

Greetings, as a mode of expressing politeness, exhibit various cultural particularities across different societies, which are elucidated by socio-cultural factors and entrenched traditions. Politeness is influenced by both objective and subjective factors, which intersect to varying degrees. While factors such as the level of intimacy, age, gender, social status, mental state, and level of education influence polite address in any language, there are also factors specific to the traditions and customs of a particular people that dictate certain conventions in respectful addressing within that language community. The ways in which people greet each other upon meeting or parting reveal much about their relationship dynamics and the type of society in which they reside. In Romanian culture as well, politeness entails the obligation of individuals to greet one another.

2. Theoretical Considerations:

"Greetings are communicative behaviors, whether gestural, verbal, or both, with a known significance within a micro or macro social group, through which an expression of attention, respect, or politeness is conveyed to an individual or a group." (Pietreanu, 1984: 29)

Undoubtedly, greetings constitute a form of communication grounded in specific behaviors exhibited by both the message sender (the emitter) and the message receiver (the recipient). Greetings are often mundane, especially in the case of individuals who are unfamiliar with each other or know each other only superficially, yet personalized in the case of individuals who have known each other for an extended period.

Social functions of language are fulfilled through greetings, including:

- *In the communicative function of language*, neutral formulas known to speakers are utilized: *Bună dimineața!*; *Bună ziua!*; *Bună seara!*;
- *In the phatic function of language*, both verbal and nonverbal or paraverbal language (through intonation, facial expressions, and gestures) are utilized;
- *In the conative function of language*, the aim is to engage and attract the recipient(s) of the message. This function is primarily utilized in greeting/addressing formulas used by radio or TV presenters, especially in interactive shows. (Pietreanu, 1984: 28)

These examples are commonly used in everyday interactions to establish rapport, acknowledge others, and create a sense of social connection. They often serve to facilitate communication rather than convey specific content or information.

Two main types of greetings can be distinguished:

– *Conventional greetings*: These are formal greetings, for example, official or traditional greetings in written communication such as diplomatic or business correspondence, predominantly serving communicative functions. They are

characterized by a higher degree of respect and politeness. (example: *Bună ziua!*, *Sărut mâna!*, *O seară bună!*, etc.);

– *Nonconventional greetings*, also known as informal greetings, are utilized with the aim of capturing attention and making an impression. The tendency to use this type of greeting is persuasive, sometimes ironic, fulfilling the conative function. They are characterized by a more relaxed tone and may include phrases such as: *Ciao!*, *Hi!*, *Hai noroc!*, *Pa!*, etc.

In the Romanian language, there are numerous forms of greetings used by speakers based on several selection criteria:

- Depending on time: *Bună dimineața!*; *Bună ziua!*; *Bună seara!*; *Noapte bună!*, etc.

- Depending on space: *Servus!* (a greeting formula commonly used in Banat and Transylvania)

- In relation to the participants' relationship:

a) Discursive equality: *Baftă!*; *Hai noroc!*; *Hai pa!*; *Pa!*; *Salut!*; *Salutare!*, etc.

b) Discursive inequality: *Să trăiești!*/*Să trăiți!*; *Te salut!*/*Vă salut!*, etc.

- Depending on age or gender: *Sărut mâna!* (for greeting a lady:); *Bună!* (for greeting a girl), *Noroc!*; *Salut!* (used to greet a boy).

- Depending on the moment of the conversation:

a) Opening a conversation: *Bună!*, *Salut!* – greeting formulas that can be used at any time of the day;

b) Closing a conversation: *La revedere!*, *Cu bine!*, *Pa!*, *Pe curând!*, *Pe mâine!* – as well as the opening formulas can be used at any time of the day.

Greetings formulas must respect various sentiments and interpersonal relationships. "Within this communication context, messages of sincerity, openness, trust, friendship, hostility, power, safety, fear, dominance, submission, irony, flattery, and many others can be conveyed." (Constantinovic 2014: 57)

Greeting formulas are considered "linguistic clichés" (Pietreanu 1984:29), and Maricica Pietreanu groups the greeting formulas into categories:

1) *Daily greetings* (morning, daytime, evening greetings);

2) *Annual greetings* - related to traditional holidays - are organized according to the model: *Sărbători ferice!*; *La mulți ani!*; *An Nou fericit!* (New Year), *Paște fericit!* /*Christos a înviat!* (Easter), *Crăciun fericit!* (Christmas);

3) *Occasional greetings* - related to family events, such as: *Casă de piatră!* (the wedding), *Condoleanțe!*, *Sincere condoleanțe!*, *Condoleanțele mele/noastre!*; *Dumnezeu să-l ierte!* (the death), *Să crească mare!*; *Să vă trăiască!*; *Să fie sănătos!* (the baptism);

4) greetings addressed to those who perform a certain work: *Mai bun lucrul!*; *Spor!* (Pietreanu 1984:105)

3. Practical considerations

The lesson on greetings is taught to foreign students in the early stages of learning the Romanian language and should be associated with concepts of Romanian culture and civilization so that students understand the contexts in which different greeting formulas are used.

The students need predictability, and greeting formulas are learned according to the time of day (*Bună dimineața!*; *Bună ziua!*; *Bună seara!*; *Noapte bună!*), age or gender (*Sărut mâna!* - for greeting a lady; *Bună!* - for greeting a girl; *Noroc!*; *Salut!* -

Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language

used to greet a boy) to create a routine for the students. This means that the response to the greeting is also - predictable.

Acquiring a set of predetermined greeting formulas often proves effective in teaching Romanian to foreign students. By familiarizing students with standardized responses to various greetings, teachers provide them with a structured framework for engaging in everyday interactions. This approach not only facilitates language acquisition, but also instills a sense of confidence and predictability in students as they navigate social encounters in Romanian-language contexts. In addition, the use of predetermined responses reinforces the cultural norms and conventions associated with greetings, thereby enhancing students' understanding of the wider socio-cultural landscape in which language use occurs. In general, the integration of predetermined response patterns in foreign language teaching contributes to the development of students' communicative competence and cultural competence in the Romanian language.

For Romanians, especially, greetings represent the first sign of good manners. Therefore, it is important for foreign students coming into contact with Romanian civilization to understand that based on the way we greet those around us, they can form an opinion about us. In Romania, politeness dictates that we greet unknown individuals when entering an institution, an office, a train compartment, an elevator, or a small shop. Unknown individuals use greetings especially when seeking to establish social contact.

Learning with the greatest impact occurs through imitation. Therefore, the teacher must ensure that students practice greeting formulas in a manner that reflects how real people use them. To consolidate the learning of greeting formulas, after the first week's familiarization with new classmates and Romanian language preparatory year teachers, a university tour is organized. During this tour, preparatory year students interact with personnel from various departments and structures (the Faculty of Letters Secretariat, the Department of Applied Modern Languages Secretariat, the University Central Library, and the university cafeteria). The students are required to fulfill the task of greeting when entering or exiting spaces with specific functions (office/secretariat, lecture hall, cafeteria, canteen, entrance gate, etc.).

The initial contacts with university staff, with whom students will interact throughout an academic year, serve the purpose of establishing visual connections. These early interactions play a significant role in facilitating communication and fostering a sense of familiarity and belonging within the university community. By greeting and engaging with university personnel in various departments and facilities, students begin to establish rapport and build relationships that are essential for navigating academic and administrative processes effectively. Moreover, these visual connections contribute to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where students feel valued and supported in their academic endeavors. Thus, the emphasis on establishing visual connections underscores the importance of interpersonal communication and relationship-building in the university setting.

I consistently advocate for students to initiate their interactions by greeting familiar figures such as teachers, secretaries, and cleaning staff, prioritizing adults initially, given the predictability of their responses. However, as students progress towards independence, their social engagement will broaden to encompass interactions with other university staff members within the campus environment, as well as with fellow Romanian students.

Ramona Șendrescu

Greeting exercises will be conducted during the morning meeting with colleagues, as well as upon arrival and departure. Additionally, specific scenarios may be arranged where students communicate messages to individuals within the building. By actively participating in these exercises, students not only refine their linguistic skills but also develop their social competence, contributing to their overall integration into the university community.

Among Romanians, greetings serve as the initial indicator of etiquette and social decorum. Consequently, it becomes imperative for foreign students encountering Romanian culture to comprehend that their manner of greeting others provides an opinion about them.

In the pedagogical framework of teaching foreign students, the sequential acquisition of greeting customs emerges as a pivotal component. This process entails a structured approach, where learners progress through distinct stages of proficiency. Initially, students are tasked with mastering the art of responding to greetings, which serves as a foundational step in their linguistic and cultural assimilation. This phase enables learners to familiarize themselves with the nuances of appropriate responses, thereby establishing a solid groundwork for further development. Subsequently, as students advance to the second stage, they are encouraged to take on a more active role by initiating greetings themselves. This transition signifies a deeper level of integration into the socio-cultural fabric of the target language, empowering learners to engage confidently in social interactions within the linguistic community.

To facilitate the successful attainment of these learning objectives, a comprehensive instructional approach is essential. Teachers play a crucial role in guiding students through each phase of the learning process, providing structured guidance and feedback to promote gradual skill acquisition. Integral to this approach is the provision of theoretical knowledge as a precursor to practical application. By equipping students with a solid theoretical understanding of greeting customs, instructors lay the groundwork for effective learning outcomes. Through a combination of theoretical instruction and practical exercises, students are equipped with the necessary linguistic and cultural competencies to navigate real-world social interactions with confidence and proficiency.

To understand the use of greetings, I provide examples of less-known greetings to foreign students:

- Andreea Esca became famous through her signature greeting: *Bună seara România, buna seara București!* (Good evening Romania, good evening Bucharest!). Esca established a strong connection with viewers across the nation. This iconic salutation, delivered with poise and professionalism, served as the opening refrain of the evening news broadcast, setting the tone for the program and signaling the commencement of important updates and events. Esca's articulate delivery and warm demeanor endeared her to audiences, making her a familiar and trusted presence in Romanian households.
- Traian Băsescu, a prominent figure in Romanian politics who served as the country's president, notably garnered public recognition through his distinctive and personalized greeting: *Să trăiți bine!* This salutation, which translates to "Live well!" in English, became closely associated with Băsescu's public persona and communication style. This personalized

Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language

greeting played a significant role in shaping Bănescu's public image and contributed to his widespread popularity among Romanian citizens.

In Romanian culture, sometimes ironic greeting is used to express certain negative feelings towards someone. Most often, such formulas are said at parting: *La revedere și să ne vedem când mi-oi vedea ceafa!*; *Drum bun cale bătuță!*; *La revedere poate te grăbești!* and an ironic Oltenian greeting: *Adio și-un praz verde!* – the expression is composed, as can easily be observed, of an innovative combination of a neologism "adio" with the typical Oltenian "green onion" - the traditional symbol of Oltenia made famous by the Oltenian actor Amza Pellea.

All these farewell greetings express displeasure at meeting someone or the desire not to see a person again soon. Speakers deliberately exaggerate, jest, and of course, use irony when addressing the farewell formula, aiming to convey an impolite, unkind attitude when they wish to mock someone. From the linguistic expression, the speaker's behavior towards a certain circumstance is reflected.

Drum bun, cale bătuță!, typically means "safe journey," and it is uttered when a person's departure is not of particular interest or is welcomed, with the irony stemming from the context of the situation rather than being literal.

These examples of humorous greetings and the explanation of their context lead students to realize that all these constructions have an ironic connotation, some of them expressing the categorical desire not to see someone again or even the dismissal of the interlocutor. Although they include authentic farewell formulas such as "*La revedere!*", "*Drum bun!*", "*Adio!*", "*Te salut!*", they are actually non-greetings. Thus, they acquire a different significance than the inherently positive nuance contained in proper farewell greetings uttered at parting.

In the last part of this article, I want to present some examples of exercises for students where the teacher puts them in various communication situations or contexts to appropriately use greeting formulas:

- Role-Playing Scenarios: Students are assigned different roles (examples: customer and cashier, interviewer and interviewee) and must greet each other appropriately based on the scenario.
- Dialogues: Students work in pairs or small groups to create dialogues set in different contexts (examples: at a restaurant, in a classroom) and practice using greeting formulas naturally within the conversation.
- Flashcards: The teacher provides flashcards with different situations or contexts written on them (examples: meeting a friend, meeting a stranger) and students must match appropriate greeting formulas to each scenario.
- Situational Discussions: The teacher leads discussions about various social situations (examples: attending a party, or meeting a colleague for the first time) and prompts students to suggest appropriate greeting formulas for each scenario.
- Cultural Comparisons: Students compare greeting customs and formulas in different cultures and discuss when and how they are used, helping them understand appropriate greetings in various contexts.
- Video Analysis: Students watch videos depicting different social interactions and analyze the greetings used, discussing their appropriateness and effectiveness in each situation.

- Writing Exercises: Students write short paragraphs or dialogues using greeting formulas in different contexts, focusing on incorporating appropriate language and tone for each situation.

These exercises provide students with practical opportunities to practice and apply greeting formulas in various communication contexts, helping them develop their language skills and cultural awareness.

4. Conclusions

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the significance, usage, and cultural implications of greetings in the Romanian language, particularly within the context of language instruction for foreign students. Through a thorough examination of the linguistic, sociocultural, and practical dimensions of greetings, the article offers valuable insights into the role of greetings as a fundamental aspect of communication and social interaction.

From a theoretical perspective, the article underscores the dual nature of greetings, both as linguistic constructs and as social behaviors embedded within cultural norms and conventions. By delineating the communicative functions of greetings and exploring their diverse forms and cultural particularities, the article elucidates the intricate interplay between language, culture, and social behavior. Moreover, the article highlights the role of greetings in establishing rapport, conveying respect, and fostering interpersonal connections, underscoring their significance in shaping social dynamics and relationships.

Practical considerations outlined in the article emphasize the pedagogical strategies and instructional approaches employed in teaching greetings to foreign students. By integrating theoretical concepts with practical exercises and real-world scenarios, teachers facilitate the acquisition of linguistic and cultural competencies necessary for effective communication in Romanian-language contexts. The article advocates for a structured approach to teaching greetings, encompassing sequential learning stages and experiential learning opportunities to reinforce understanding and application.

Furthermore, the article examines examples of iconic greetings in Romanian culture, such as those used by prominent figures like Andreea Esca and Traian Băsescu, illustrating the cultural significance and symbolic value of greetings in shaping public discourse and identity. Additionally, the article explores the nuances of ironic greetings and their role in expressing subtle social dynamics and attitudes.

Therefore, it is important for foreign students to know how to use greeting formulas in Romanian for different contexts and settings because it prepares them to avoid awkward situations and helps establish a framework for clear and efficient communication. The learning of formal and informal greeting formulas by students facilitates easier integration into the community. Therefore:

- Greeting remains a form of good manners and an expression of politeness.
- Often, greeting is seen as a mechanized, learned act aimed at socializing, and societal changes have sometimes rendered it an impersonal act with few emotional implications.
- For Romanians, greeting represents a means of expressing politeness and simultaneously a tool for sociolinguistic integration.
- Greeting is subject to dynamics and reflects the way people think, behave, and interact at a given moment in society.

Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language

In conclusion, this article serves as a valuable resource for language teachers, students, and researchers interested in the multifaceted nature of greetings in the Romanian language. By elucidating the linguistic, cultural, and practical dimensions of greetings, the article deepens our understanding of their role in communication, social interaction, and cultural identity.

References:

- Caragață, G. (1973). *Formulele de salutare în limba română*, BPH, IV.
- David, D. (1980). *Limba și cultură*. Timișoara: Editura Facla.
- Dumistrăcel, Stelian. (1980). *Lexic românesc, Cuvinte, metafore și expresii*. București: Editura Științifică și Pedagogică.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoartă Cărașu L. (2005). *Corpus de limba română vorbită actuală*, Iași: Editura Tehnică și Didactică.
- Herseni, T. (1975). *Sociologia limbii*. București: Editura Științifică.
- Hobjilă, A. (2008). Comunicare și contextualizare – repere pragmatice, *Limba română*, Nr. 7-8.
- Iordan I. (1977). *Limba literară. Studii și articole*. Craiova, Editura Scrisul românesc.
- Lee, J. J. (2011) A Genre Analysis of Second Language Classroom Discourse: Exploring the Rhetorical, Linguistic, and Contextual Dimensions of Language Lessons, Dissertation, Georgia State University. <http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/alesl-diss/20>
- Pietreanu, M. (1984). *Salutul în limba română*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Pietreanu M. (1970). *De ce și cum se salută oamenii?* în Almanahul civilizației, vol. II, București: Editura Științifică.
- Wright, T. (2005) *Classroom Management in Language Education*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Article Info

Received: March 18 2024

Accepted: April 04 2024

How to cite this article:

Șendrescu, R. (2024). Teaching Greetings to Foreign Students in the Preparatory Year of the Romanian Language. *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques*, no. 81, pp. 191 – 199.