EXAMPLES OF LOAN TRANSLATIONS FROM SERBIAN INTO THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE IN VOIVODINA

Laura SPĂRIOSU
University of Novi Sad

Abstract

We have divided this paper into three parts: the first part discusses the character of the Romanian language spoken in Voivodina, influenced both by the subdialect spoken in Banat and by the Serbian language. This issue causes the deviation from the norms applied to standard Romanian and creates loan translations. The second part is concerned with these deviations and loan translations, containing examples to illustrate the issue. In the third part we discuss the dilemma of approving of the creation of loan translations from Serbian into the Romanian language spoken in Voivodina.

Key words: *the Romanian language, the Serbian language, Voivodina, loan translation, meaning*

Résumé

Nous avons divisé cet article en trois parties: la première partie traite du caractère du roumain parlé en Voïvodine, influencé à la fois par le sous-dialecte parlé au Banat et par le serbe. Ce problème provoque la déviation des normes appliquées à la langue roumaine standard et crée des emprunts lexicaux (calques). La deuxième partie traite de ces déviations et des emprunts lexicaux (calques), contenant des exemples pour illustrer ce problème. Dans la troisième partie, nous nous occupons du dilemme de l'approbation de la création des emprunts lexicaux (calques) de la langue serbe dans la langue roumaine parlée en Voïvodine.

Mots-clés: *la langue roumaine, la langue serbe, Voïvodine, emprunts lexicaux* (*calques*), *sens*

1. Preliminary considerations

Within the Autonomous Socialist Province of Voivodina, the Romanian language is treated as being of equal rank with the languages of the other peoples which inhabit the region. Its standard variant is used in the media, school text books and the literary writings. The particular

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circumstances of language development, different from those in Romania, have made the Romanian language in Voivodina acquire a distinct character, shaped both by internal and external factors.

Among the internal factors, we enumerate the distinct dialectal basis and the permanent confrontation with the dialect spoken in Banat. The dialectal basis of the standard Romanian language used in Voivodina is negatively influenced by the numerous local and regional linguistic peculiarities and also by the dialect spoken in Banat. Both factors hinder the natural development and spreading of the Voivodina standard Romanian all over the region.

In the process of word formation and lexical development, Romanian, as many other languages, has made use of borrowings. This has involved either direct borrowing or the loan translation (calque) at formal or semantic level. The process of loan translation is preferred by some writers, since they consider that this way the national character of a language is preserved to a larger extent than in the case of using neologisms.

In Romanian the administrative register of the language has always contained a large number of loan translations and borrowings from the languages that Romanian had contact with in various stages of its development.[1] This register is determined by the norms and regulations of state institutions, by the organisational structure of the entire society[2].

The Serbian influence is a natural phenomenon, explainable by the permanent, direct and close contact between the two cultures and languages. The same situation holds true for the languages of the other ethnic groups living in Voivodina. In their turn, elements of the languages of these groups enter the Serbian language.

Our purpose is to evince certain aspects regarding the relations between the two languages and to explain the phenomena resulted from the Serbian influence on Romanian. Acknowledging that this influence is felt at the level of all registers and domains of the Romanian language, we must

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[1] Gheorghe Bulgăr, *Evoluţia stilului administrativ în prima jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea*, in *Studii de istoria limbii române literare în secoul al XIX-lea*, Bucureşti, Editura pentru Literatură, 1969, p. 169.

[2] Lia Magdu, *Aspecte ale cultivării limbii române în Voivodina*, Panciova, Libertatea, 1980, p. 85.

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nevertheless emphasize that it is stronger in case of the administrative and legal registers, which, under the given circumstances, supposes a transposition of texts from one language into another. All the other components of the vocabulary undergo a superficial, unessential influence. For this reason, we have focused our attention on the language of translations.

2. Examples of deviations and calques

An example of deviation from the norms specific to standard Romanian is represented by the usage of the polite pronoun. Thus, instead of *dumneavoastră*, the personal pronoun *voi* is used, by analogy with the Serbian *vi*[3]. This form, generalised in the dialect spoken in Banat, also entered the vocabulary of students in schools, where they address teachers by using the pronoun *voi*, instead of *dumneavoastră*.

If the Serbian influence is minimal at the morphological and syntactic levels, the most stable compartments as far as inovations are involved, it becomes visible at the lexical level, especially in the journalese and business registers, where the necessity for translations often leads to calques, to creating inappropriate terms and phrases. Some examples are given below.

The adverbial phrase *cu success*, *uspešno* in Serbian overused, can be replaced by other terms – *fructuos*, *avantajos*, *foarte bine*, depending on the context; nevertheless, one can notice the preference for the syntagm *cu succes*, translated from Serbian.

Another category of mistakes consists in translating or adapting expressions specific to Serbian, usually untranslatable and without any correspondence with the Romanian grammatical structure. For instance, it is said that an enterprise *stă pe picioare de sticlă*, structure which calques the Serbian *staklene noge*; the expression *izaći u susret* is translated by *a ieşi în întâmpinare* (*cuiva*); *pozvati na odgovornost* led to the creation of *a chema la răspundere*; the expression *snaći se* is translated by *regăseşte-te*; one says about somebody who suffered a loss that *a rămas cu mânecile scurte*, a structure calqued from the Serbian *ostao kratkih rukava*. Such inappropriate

[3] The form *vi/voi* is the second person personal pronoun plural in Serbian, being also used as a politeness pronoun.

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translations should be replaced by Romanian expressions, adequate for each context. In the case of the examples above given, one can find Romanian equivalents which render the meaning and do not require a literal translation. Thus, the meaning of the expression *stă pe picioare de sticlă* can be rendered by *a ajuns în impas* or *se găseşte într-o situaţie critică*; *izaći u susret* means *a veni cuiva în ajutor*; *pozvati na odgovornost* can be translated by *a trage la răspundere*; the expression *snađi se* corresponds to the imperative *descurcă-te*!; *ostao je kratkih rukava* might be replaced by *a rămas cu buzele umflate*, though the Romanian expression connotes a tinge of irony, inexistent in case of the Serbian expression. The interrogative expression *cum eşti*? used in Voivodina is equally inappropriate when it substitutes *ce mai faci*? It is not hard to notice the influence of the Serbian *kako si*?

The constructions calqued from Serbian make the Romanian language spoken in Voivodina acquire specific characteristics. The presence of calques, especially lexical ones, should be regarded as a necessity motivated both by social-political factors and by historical tradition[4].

Beginning the discussion with *semantic calques*, we should emphasize that a new meaning is borrowed or added to the other meanings already defining a term in a language. It is important that the two words in contact partly overlap semantically. Although this type of calque is neither the most characteristic nor the most frequent, we shall give some examples: among other meanings, dictionaries asign the verb *a scrie* the meanings "a-şi înscrie numele într-un catalog", "a (se) înregistra", "a (se) înmatricula". Following the Serbian pattern *upisati fakultet*, the Romanian verb is also used with the corresponding noun: *a înscrie o facultate*. The verb *a se reţine*[5] also represents a calque, being used in Voivodina with the meaning "a se opri", "a poposi", having as model the Serbian expression *zadržavati se*. It appears in contexts such as: "domiciliu provizoriu este localitatea în care cetăţenii *se reţin* provizoriu"; "cetăţenii sunt obligaţi să-şi anunţe *reţinerea* în fiecare localitate"; "după o scurtă *reţinere* în salonul hotelului,

[4] Lia Magdu, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[5] DEX asigns it the meaning "a-şi înfrâna pornirile", "a se stăpâni", "a se controla", "a se domina".

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oaspeții au plecat". We also consider the verb *a elibera*[6] a semantic calque, used with the meaning *a scuti* (*pe cineva de o obligație sau de plătirea unei taxe*), the calqued Serbian expression being *osloboditi nekoga obaveze*. The adjective *trainic*, explained in dictionaries as "solid, rezistent, durabil", is used in syntagms such as: *interdicție trainică a ziarului*, originating in the Serbian *trajna zabrana lista*, or *trainic neangajat* having as origin *trajno nezaposlen*. Though fairly frequent, these calques are not likely to be accepted in language, being competed by their pure Romanian parallel forms: *a se înscrie la facultate, a poposi, suprimare*.

Another type of lexical calque is *the structural* calque, which consists in copying or borrowing the internal form of a foreign word[7]. We must differentiate between *total* and *partial calques*, and also between calques from derivatives formed by *suffixation, prefixation, parasynthetic derivatives* and *compounds formed by loan translation*[8]. These categories are well represented in the Romanian spoken in Voivodina.

The first example is the usage of the term *ajuritate*, from the Serbian *ažurnost*[9], "promptitudine, punctualitate", borrowed in Serbian from French. In the case of *dezanunț* and *dezanunțare*, the Serbian models *odjava* şi *odjaviti* were copied. We must mention that the prefix *dez-* is productive in Romanian, contributing to the creation of a series of derivatives: *a dezmoşteni, a dezonora, a dezarma*, etc.

Another case of structural calque made up by suffixation is represented by the adjectives *marfar* in *decontări marfare*, copying the Serbian *robni otpis* and *nemarfar* in *decontări nemarfare*, copying the Serbian *nerobni otpis*. The adjective *marfar* is also used as a modifier of the noun *tren*.

A calque made up by prefixation is the derivative *neangajare*, meaning "a se găsi în afara câmpului muncii", from the Serbian *nezaposlen*,

[6] In DEX it appears with the meaning "a da libertate", "a salva", "a scoate", "a dezrobi", "a descătușa".
[7] Hristea, 1968, p. 159.
[8] Hristea, 1968, p. 163.
[9] From the French *à jour* "pe zi".

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found in the expression *neangajare provizorie*. The term *neangajare* is not currently found in any Romanian dictionary[10] with this meaning.

Among the compounds made up by loan translation with the combining element *auto-* we mention the compound *autocontribuţie* having as model the Serbian *samodoprinos*.

Though less frequent, the morphological calque is not less significant. The verb *a felicita* falls into this category, when followed by a noun in the dative case instead of the accusative, copying the Serbian morphological pattern: "XY *le-a felicitat femelilor* 8 Martie", the correct variant being "XY *le-a felicitat pe femei* de 8 Martie", or *a cunoaşte* in a context of the type "Maria *m-a cunoscut* cu sora sa", from the Serbian "Marija *me upoznala* sa svojom sestrom". We must add that this structure is mainly encountered in the spoken language and much less in the written register. To express such relations, Romanian uses the expression *a face cunoştinţă cu* or *a prezenta pe cineva cuiva*.

Obviously, the largest class is represented by the *phraseological calque*. Whereas structural lexical calques imitate the structure of a single word, phraseological calques copy the structure of a group of words which function together semantically, thus forming a phraseological unit[11]. Most units which enter the structure of such a calque already exist in the language as independent elements, these calques representing lexical combinations unknown in Romanian.

A few decades ago, most phraseological calques belonged to the administrative field and designated forms of organisation characteristic to the socialist society[12], such as: *convenţie autoconducătoare*, from the Serbian *samoupravni sporazum*; *sistem delegaţional*, in Serbian *delegatski sistem*; *învăţământ orientat*, in Serbian *usmereno obrazovanje*. Some expressions seem to be calqued from Serbian, even if they have an independent status in Romanian. They are the so called set phrases, *expresii consacrate*. For instance: *troškovi života/cheltuieli de viaţă*; *prekid toka*

[10] DEX asigns it the meaning "nealiniere", "neutralitate activă", "atitudine liberă faţă de orice alianţă sau convenţie militară sau politică".

[11] Hristea, 1968, p. 178.

[12] Lia Magdu, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

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trudnoće/întreruperea cursului gravidității; *visoka školska sprema/pregătire şcolară înaltă*; *visoko razvijene zemlje/țări înalt dezvoltate*. Heavy and inadequate, these syntagms failed to enter the general use, losing ground in favor of similar typical Romanian expressions: *costul vieții*, *întreruperea sarcinii*, *pregătire universitară*, *țări dezvoltate*. The next examples should also be included in this category: *medicinski centar/centru de medicină*; *zubna nega/îngrijire dentară*; *lekarsko uverenje/adeverință de stare medicală*; *zdravstvena zaštita/ocrotire sanitară*; *stanarsko pravo/drept locativ*; *obrtna sredstva/mijloace rulente*, etc. These calques are also replaced by Romanian forms: *centru medical*, *îngrijirea dinților*, *certificat medical*, *ocrotirea sănătății*, *drept de locatar*, *mijloace circulante*.

These calques appeared as a result of translating from Serbian into Romanian administrative and legal texts which require a new terminology. They fill in a gap in the spoken and written registers of the Romanian language from Voivodina. Felt as being extremely necessary, they are, to a greater or lesser extent, accepted by the large mass of speakers, gradually entering the general circulation.

3. Calques – pro et contra

The question to be asked is if the calque usage is motivated in spoken and written Romanian in Voivodina. The answer could be affirmative because, if all languages constantly borrow foreign words, it is only natural for Romanian to behave in a similar way, especially in an environment where Serbian is the closest source that the mass of speakers appeals to both in speech and in writing. All populations have borrowed words from other populations, and this is a positive thing. Whether any loan word is useful or not[13] remains debatable.

Resuming the topic of our paper, we can say that, since the organisational forms of the society have evolved in time, it is natural for the words designating them to change, too. The notions from Serbian must be rendered into Romanian in such a way as to preserve the ideas expressed in the original text. It is obvious that such an effort is often accompanied by

[13] Graur, 1963, p. 22.

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omissions and awkward structures. At the same time, bilingualism is a reality in Voivodina and it facilitates the spontaneous creation of calques.

Under these circumstances, the standard Romanian used in Voivodina, with its spoken and written variants, is less defined by its divergent character, determined firstly by the permanent confrontation with the Banat dialect and the Serbian language. What remains representative for it is its general development within the larger frame of Romania's standard language, as an instrument of communication available to all speakers, irrespective of geographical differences[14].

A thorough study and a correct usage of the norms specific to standard Romanian spoken in Romania is one of the major factors that determine the leveling of the linguistic differences in Voivodina. Those differences resulted both from the isolated, closed character of the local dialect and from distinct social and political reports that the registers specific to administration and newspapers must reflect.

We end our considerations here, although the phenomenon under study offers wealth of material, requiring a detailed analysis. Our intention was to give some examples, without claiming to cover all the cases. We are convinced that grammatical and idiomatic calques are equally interesting, the latter being extremely frequent in the Romanian language spoken in Voivodina.

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[14] Lia Magdu, *op.cit*., p. 126.

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