THE SUFFIX -BIL IN ROMANIAN

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Abstract

Our paper focuses on the foreign influences exerted on the Romanian vocabulary in point of the adjectives derived with the suffix -bil and also on the words formed by internal means. The suffix -bil is a highly productive suffix, penetrating the Romanian language through French, English, Italian and Latin. In most cases it expresses possibility, having a passive meaning. The adjectives derived with the suffix -bil, be they loan words or words formed by internal means, are characteristic both to general language and to specialised registers.

Key words: productive, suffix, derivative, borrowing, specialised registers

Résumé

Cette recherche s'arrête sur les influences étrangères qui ont marquées le lexique de la langue roumaine en ce qui concerne les adjectifs dérivés avec le suffixe -bil et les créations internes. Le suffixe -bil est un suffixe productif, qui est venue en roumain par filière française, anglaise, italienne et latine. Dans la plupart des cas il exprime la possibilité, ayant un sens passif. Les adjectifs formés avec le suffixe -bil, emprunts et créations internes, s'utilisent aussi bien dans la langue commune que dans les langages spécialisés.

Mots-clés: productif, suffixe, dérivé, emprunt, langage spécialisé

The productive suffix -bil penetrated the Romanian language through French, English, Italian and Latin. It expresses a possibility, having a passive meaning, it renders the possible achievement of an action, a possible quality or flaw, thus marking the uncertainty regarding the 'existence' of some attributes. The penetration of this suffix into Romanian is of interest since it confirms the kinship among Romance languages and also the 'paternity' of Latin, sometimes questioned. The research on the history of Romance languages proves that the Latin suffix -bilis, attached to the present tense radical of verbs forms adjectives: ama-bilis, fle-bilis, audi-bilis (cf. Goicu, 2002: 143). In spite of its productivity in the late stages of Latin

and in the other Romance languages, "the suffix *-bilis* was not preserved in Romanian" (Iliescu, 1959: 99). It entered the Romanian language through French, Italian and Latin in the nineteenth century. Its adaptation brought about some changes. Together with the loan words which renewed the language there occurred a 'resuscitation' of the interest for specialised vocabularies, a domain containing a multitude of adjectives derived with the suffix under discussion.

Our research focuses on the foreign influences on the Romanian vocabulary in point of the adjectives derived with the suffix *-bil*, and also on the words formed by using internal means. The analysis is based on the lexicographic information provided by DEX and MDN.

The French Influence

The French influence has had an important role in innovating Romanian. The insertion of the neologic terms ending in the suffix -bil was operated at conceptual level, regarding the various areas of specialised language. For instance, the French etymon was the main source of the Romanian legalese. Out of the necessity of better defining the correlation between the notions and the realities represented by them, a series of adjectival terms have been introduced: alienabil- "care poate fi înstrăinat/which can be transferred to another's ownership" < Fr. aliénable, exigibil "care trebuie îndeplinit în orice caz/which must be fulfilled under any circumstances" < Fr. exigible, coercibil "care poate fi comprimat/which can be reduced" < Fr. coercible. They appear in contexts such as: "titlurile specifice de proprietate alienabile" (http://webcache. sunt googleusercontent. com), exigibil" "dreptul de creantă este (http://webcache.googleuesrcontent.com), "tratamentul coercibil" (www.humanrights.md)

In French the adjectival suffix *-able* is attached to transitive verbs and expresses possibility ("care oferă/which offers"). The words formed in this way are numerous, and we selected the following examples: *antrenabil* < Fr. *entraînable*; *blamabil* < Fr. *blâmable*; *constatabil* < Fr. *constatable*; *clasabil* < Fr. *classable*; *fezabil* < Fr. *faisable*; *forjabil* < Fr. *forgeable*; *justificabil* < Fr. *justifiable*; *lavabil* < Fr. *lavable*; *rabatabil* < Fr. *rabattable*. When the

speaker is not aware of the meaning, possibility' associated to the adjective, there often appear pleonasms both in spoken and in written language¹.

The suffix derives adjectives from nouns: *definisabil* < Fr. *Définissable* < *définisseur*; *rezonabil* < Fr. *Raisonnable* < *raison*; *veritabil* < Fr. *Veritable* < *vérité*.

The Italian Influence

The Italian influence is obvious through the existence of terms such as: administrabil < It. amministrabile; comerciabil < It. commerciabile; conceptibil < It. conceptibile; consemnabil < It. consegnabile; detonabil < It. detonabile; filabil < It. filabile; ideabil < It. ideabile; imergibil < It. immergibile; inapelabil < It. inappellabile: inconceptibil < It. inconceptibile; indenegabile; intraductibil < It. Intraducibile; intratabil < It. intrattabile; inumerabil < It. inumerabile; investigabil < It. investigabile; invidiabil < It. invidibile; irecognoscibil < It. irriconoscibile; maritabil < It. maritabile; moderabil < It. moderabile; negabil < It. negabile; precizabil < It. precisabile; procedibil < It. procedibile; punibil < It. punibile; recognoscibil < It. salvabile; scontabil < It. scontabile; stimabil < It. stimabile; substituibil < It. sostituibile; sugestionabil < It. transponibile; uzabil < It. usabile.

Few of the terms above mentioned enter the domain of specialised language. Adjectives such as *inapelabil*, *procedibil*, *punibil* pertain exclusively to the legal discourse. Their meaning is not known by all speakers and, consequently, they are given a wrong meaning. For instance, the adjective *inapelabil* "în privința căruia nu se poate face apel", "care nu poate fi schimbat, modificat, cu caracter definitiv"/"which cannot be modified, unchangeable" can be found in contexts of the type: "Solicitările de oferte ce conțin date de identificare inconsistente (adresa de e-mail invalidă și număr telefon inapelabil) nu vor fi tarifate" (http://www.cerereoferta.ro)

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¹ In the context "persoane cu potențial *antrenabil*" one identifies a pleonasm, since the meaning of noun *potențial*- "un lucru care există ca posibilitate/a thing which potentially exists" and of the adjective *antrenabil*- "care poate fi antrenat" overlap, in other words, one repeats the idea expressed by the other.

meaning "care nu este valabil, care nu poate fi utilizat"/"which is not valid, which cannot be used".

The adjective *imergibil* signifies "care poate fi cufundat, afundat"/ "which can be submerged", being also used with a technical meaning: "jocul este complet *imergibil*" (http://wapedia.mobi/ro).

The Italian influence generated Romanian calques containing the suffix -bil: intraductibil after the It. intraducibile and irecognoscibil after the It. *irriconoscibile*. For example: "cuvântul este intraductibil" (http://www.cafeneaua.com), "lucrurile s-au schimbat, irecognoscibil" (http://www.observatorcultural.com). In the same way, the adjectives ideabil "care se poate idea, imagina", inconceptibil "de neconceput" and recognoscibil "ușor de recunoscut", which are bookish terms, appear in examples such as: "ar fi ideabil pentru africani" (http://forum.acvarist.ro), "Un Proust autor de SF este inconceptibil" recognoscibil" (http://revistacultura.ro), "factor provocator (http://amosnews.ro). adjective stimabil meaning "demn de The stimă"/"worthy of esteem" is used nowadays in familiar language as a marker of interpersonal closeness, sometimes ironically: "Trahanache: (cătră unde e Popescu) Stimabile, nu-ntrerupeti" (http://www. romanianvoice.com).

The English Influence

The English influence is manifest under the form of few adjectives denoting an attribute. Their number is small compared to those borrowed from French and Italian: definibil < Engl. definible, omisibil < Engl. omisible, regenerabil < Engl. regenerable, menționabil < Engl. mentionable, mascabil < Engl. mascable. There are also some negative adjectives ending in -able and -ible: Engl. ineradicable > ineradicabil, derived from the verb to eradicate "a eradica", Engl. impermissible > impermisibil, derived from the verb to permit, Engl. irresolvable > irezolvabil, derived from the verb to solv "a rezolva".

The neologism *bistabil* from the syntagm "circuite basculante *bistabile*" (http://www.etc.ugal.ro) referring to devices able to have two stable states "capabil să aibă două stări stabile" confirms the statement

referring to the introduction of the English terms linked to technological progress. The adjective *prescriptibil* used in the context "caracterul *prescriptibil* al cererilor" (http://www.dreptonline.ro) belongs to the same category but is subsumed to the legal domain. Terms such as *prescriptibil*-"care se poate prescrie" are meaningless outside the legal discourse domain.

Most English borrowings which have the suffix *-bil* in their structure express possibility, alternative, what can become real in the future: *prezervabil-* "care poate fi prezervat" < Engl. *preservable*, *procurabil-* "care se poate procura uşor", < Engl. *procurable*, *proiectabil-* "care poate fi proiectat" < Engl. *projectable vulcanizabil-* "care poate fi vulcanizat" < Engl. *vulcanizabil, pensionabil-* "care are dreptul de a ieşi la pensie" < Engl. *pensionable*.

The Latin Influence

The Latin influence generated a relatively small number of adjectival terms containing the suffix -bil. We mention some of them: culpabil < Lat. culpabilis; lăudabil < Lat. laudabilis; mensurabil < Lat. mensurabilis; raționabil < Lat. rationabilis; sațiabil < Lat. Satiabilis. The suffix -bilis was preserved in Romance languages under the following forms: Fr. -able, -ible, It. -abile, -ibile, Sp. -ble and Port. -vel. In Latin, the suffix -bilis was attached to the present tense radical of the verbs to form adjectives: cantare+ -bilis > cantabilis; comparare+ -bilis > comparabilis.

After analysing 1024 terms we can draw the conclusion that there are some synonymic series made up of terminologic allomorphs and allographs, morpho-phonetic variants which correspond to the forms taken over from different languages or to the forms which combine borrowings and internally formed words, some obtained in distinct ways: *amortibil* (*amort/iza* + suf. -bil) and *amortizabil* < Fr. *amortisable*; băubil (a bea + suf. -bil) and buvabil < Fr. buvable; definibil < Engl. definible and definisabil < Fr. définissable; punibil < It. punibile and punisabil < Fr. putrescible; interschimbabil < Fr. interchangeable and interşanjabil < Fr. interchangeable (Gallicism).

Most borrowings containing the suffix -bil taken from French and to them we must add multiple-etymology words.

Words formed by internal means

9 % of the total of 1024 terms registered in DILR as having in their structure the suffix -bil are words formed by internal means. They usually derive from a transitive verb²: aclimatizabil, actualizabil, alocabil, amortibil, antologabil, asortabil, băubil, blocabil, captabil, caracterizabil, catapultabil, călibil, circulabil, civilizabil, cocsificabil, codabil, comercializabil, compactibil, completabil, confundabil, construibil. creditabil. decontabil. degradabil, constientizabil, demascabil. democratizabil, derogabil, deşirabil, dezmembrabil, difuzabil, evacuabil, expandabil, expropriabil, expulzabil, iluzionabil, încadrabil, levigabil, locuibil, manipulabil, masticabil, matematizabil, măsurabil, motivabil, numărabil, omologabil, pedepsibil, perfuzabil, pipăibil, plătibil, publicabil, plutibil, predabil, prelucrabil, premiabil, răscumpărabil, refolosibil, reiterabil, remorcabil, reprogramabil, reşapabil, rezolvabil, rezumabil, sancționabil, satirizabil, schimbabil, secționabil, selectabil, selecționabil, semnalabil, sondabil, telecomandabil, uzitabil, validabil, vindecabil, vinificabil.

The suffix -bil aattaches to verbal bases, borrowed from French. For example, the adjective alocabil is derived from the transitive verb a aloca (< Fr. allouer) + suffix -bil; in the same way were formed asortabil < a asorta (< Fr. assortir)+ -bil; blocabil < a bloca (< Fr. bloquer)+ -bil; catapultabil < a catapulta (< Fr. catapulter)+ -bil; decontabil < a deconta (< Fr. décompter)+ -bil; expropriabil < a expropria (< Fr. exproprier)+ -bil; reşapabil < a reşapa (< Fr. rechaper)+ -bil.

Some bases are borrowings from non-Romance languages: Slavic: $c\check{a}libil < a \ c\check{a}li \ (< Sl. \kappa a numu) + -bil, pip\check{a}ibil < a \ pip\check{a}i \ (< Sl. nunamu) + -bil, pl\check{a}tibil < a \ pl\check{a}ti \ (< Sl. nnamumu) + -bil or predabil < a \ preda \ (< Sl. nph∂amu) + -bil; modern Greek: <math>pedepsibil < a \ pedepsi \ (< modern Greek)$

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² There are two exceptions: *amortibil*, the base being *amort/iza* according to MDN and *compactibil*, the base being the adjective *compact*

 $\pi\alpha i\delta \varepsilon \psi \alpha)$ + -bil; German: aclimatizabil < a aclimatiza (< Germ. akklimatisieren), selectabil < a selecta (< Germ. selektieren)+ -bil; English: antologabil < a antologa (< Engl. anthologise)+ -bil, perfuzabil < a perfuza (< Engl. perfuze)+ -bil.

Though well-represented, the number of bases borrowed from Latin is small compared to those borrowed from French: $desirabil < a \ desira (< Lat. \ diserrare) + -bil, publicabil < a \ publica (< Lat. publicare) + -bil, schimbabil < a \ schimba(< Lat. excambiare) + -bil, vindecabil < a \ vindeca (< Lat. vindicare) + -bil.$

As we can notice, in case of the adjectives derived with the suffix -bil the verbal bases borrowed from other languages are more numerous than those formed in Romanian; from the latter category we mention: $r\breve{a}scump\breve{a}rabil < a \ r\breve{a}scump\breve{a}ra$ (pref. $r\breve{a}s-+a \ cump\breve{a}ra$) + -bil and $refolosibil < a \ refolosi$ (pref. re-+folosi)+ -bil.

Some adjectives from this category can attach negative prefixes *im-/in-*, *i-*, *ne-* or iterative prefixes such as *re-*. For example: *impredictibil*, *inclasificabil*, *inconfundabil*, *inderogabil*, *intransformabil*, *irepetabil*, *neabil*, *neabordabil*, *necomestibil*, *republicabil*, *reutilizabil*. The derivatives with the prefix *ne-* represent a high percentage, which means a number of 68 words.

Privative and negative suffixes helped the formation of some series of antonymic adjectives: *şifonabil/ neṣifonabil, impozabil/ neimpozabil, inflamabil/ neinflamabil, predictibil/ impredictibil.*

In isolated cases, the reconversion is made with the help of the prefixes (anti-, ultra-: antifermentescibil "împotriva fermentării/against fermentation", ultraconfortabil "foarte confortabil/very comfortable"), of semi-prefixes (auto-, hiper-, semi-, termo-: autodezagregabil "însuți dezagregabil/ self-decomposing", hiperiritabil "în exces supărăcios/ overirritable", semianalizabil "pe jumătate analizabil/half-analysable", semisubmersibil "pe jumătate adaptat pentru a se scufunda/half adaptable for immersion", termocontractibil "care se contractă la căldură/ contracted on heating", termosolubil "solubil la cald/ soluble on heating", termosudabil "care poate fi sudat prin căldură/ thermoweldable".

The adjectives formed with the suffix -bil, be they borrowings or words created by internal means, are used both in general and in specialised language. The lexical fields of specialised language penetrated by these words are very varied: exact sciences and human sciences, the legal domain being favoured in this respect. The 'migration' of the terms was not opposed to the initial basic meaning, the derivation meant a secondary, more subtle meaning. Getting from general language into specialised language presupposes a semantic extension. Romanian legalese contains the following terms: alienabil, amiabil, amendabil, apelabil, capabil, casabil, consumptibil, exigibil, extingibil, fungibil, inapelabil, inatacabil, incapabil, inderogabil, impozabil, neeligibil, opozabil, prescriptibil, pedepsibil, procedibil, pronunţabil, punibil, punisabil, reversibil.

The domain of chemistry contains terms such as: *absorbabil*, *călibil*, *solubil*, *biodegradabil*, *coercibil*, *maleabil*, *saturabil*, *şarjabil*, *termocontractibil*.

In physics there are used terms such as: *impenetrabil*, *instabil*, *intransportabil*, *ireversibil*, *labil*, *metastabil*, *necompresibil*. Words such as *adresabil*, *compatibil*, *compilabil* make reference to the domain of computer engineering, and *compatibil*, *incomensurabil*, *incompatibil*, *rectificabil*, *variabil* belong to the domain of mathematics.

In medicine there appear terms such as: *irecuperabil*, *nevindecabil*, *resolubil*, and *rezecabil* and *ranversibil*, *transpozabil*, *acordabil* are used in the musical domain.

Linguistics uses the terms *flexibil*, *invariabil*, *nedeclinabil*, *neflexibil*, *reversibil*, *semianalizabil*, *variabil*.

Unlike the terms – borrowed or internally formed – used first in general language and then migrated towards a specialised domain, the terms specific to specialised registers which entered general language with a new meaning are fewer (our research evinced only three cases *instabil*, *maleabil*, *vindecabil*). The reasons of this phenomenon are hard to explain, since the percentage maintains the same regarding the way the words entered the language or regarding their formation means (about 9 % of the analysed words are formed by derivation).

A possible explanation would be that the extension of the term meaning is first adopted by a reduced number of speakers, a stage followed by its acceptance by the other speakers out of necessity. For example the word *maleabil* initially appeared in the language of chemistry and it means "care poate fi întins în foi subțiri la o temperatură inferioară aceluia de topire, care poate fi ușor de modelat"; probably in the beginning the users were workers in factory labs; accustomed to this word, they found it appropriate to use it when referring to people's character. Thus, the word came to mean "adaptable", "adaptabil, mlădios, docil" in ordinary language.

A series of adjectives have not been registered yet in DEX or MDN: amicabil, argumentabil, armonizabil, ascultabil, audiabil, autodezagreabil, autoguvernabil, cocsicabil, combatibil, concurabil, cuplabil, demolabil, depistabil, descalificabil, diagnosticabil, disolubil, impozitabil, indecelabil, inubliabil, mediatizabil, meteosensibil, modulabil, necomensurabil, necuantificabil, necurabil, negestionabil, neidentificabil, nenegociabil, neprofitabil, nepublicabil, nerealizabil, netransmisibil, nonbiodegradabil, preconizabil, privabuil, privatizabil, restructurabil, reutilizabil, revalorificabil, revendicabil, revizuibil, sanctificabil, semidemontabil, soluționabil, spiritualizabil, titrabil, semilavabil, tranzacționabil, tuberculizabil, ultrafavorabil, vacantabil.

The words frequently used in public debates evince a rapid tendency of broadening their meaning and of forming derivatives. The numerous discussions on private and public law represented the nucleus which led to the appearance of these terms. A possible member of the word family of the adjective privat could be the adjective privatizabil. The adjective is not registered in any dictionary but we find it in press articles and on the Internet in contexts of "portofoliul privatizabil" the type: (docs.google.com), "lista societătilor comerciale privatizabile" (www.cnipmmr.ro), "capital social privatizabil" (http://www.ziaruldeiasi.ro), "transferul patrimoniului unor entităti privatizabile" (http://www.ecomagazin.ro). The meaning of the adjective could be "care poate fi privatizat" which suggests that in the sentence "parter, 2 băi... poate fi privatizabil" (http://brailacity.olx.ro) it was not used

very correctly, resulting a pleonasm since the verb reiterates the idea of possibility already expressed by the adjective *privatizabil*.

Another adjective whose Internet attestations are numerous is restructurabil. We encounter it in contexts of the type: "posturi restructurabile" (http://www.realitatea.net), "zone restructurabile si deficitare" (http://www.euroticket.ro), "industria constructoare de mașini românească restructurabilă" (http://docs.google.com). We notice than the adjective can be considered specific to all four functional language registers. journalese the word is often used pejoratively: "Dan Voiculescu a fost nominalizat pentru un post restructurabil" (http://www.presa-zilei.ro) or "conservând cicatricele actualei crize. ca pe matrice stilistice restructurabile" (http://www.topbusiness.ro). As an appropriate definition of the adjective lacks, the meaning could be 'reorganisable', "care poate fi reorganizat".

Imposed lately by the events experienced by companies, the adjective *impozitabil* can be confined to the economic domain: "profit *impozitabil*" (http://www.scritube.com), "declarație de venit *impozitabil*" (http://www.miresici.ro), "persoană *impozitabilă*" (http://opiniijuridice. blogspot. com), "suma *impozitabilă*" (http://cnvmr.ro).

A detailed analysis of the uses of the adjective *demolabil* in various mass-media forms shows that it is used in a restrictive domain, that of real estate ads: "casa *demolabilă*" (www.vindesingur.ro), "imobil ultracentral renovabil-*demolabil*" (www.publicitare.ro), "Avas scoate la licitație nouă construcții *demolabile*" (http://www.wall-street.ro), "vând urgent teren casă *demolabilă*" (http://www.vanzari-terenuri.eu).

The adjective *depistabil*, mainly used in medical language ("infecția HIV – *depistabilă*, Papilloma virus depistabil" (http://www.sexaz.ro), "hipotiroidismul clinic și biologic *depistabil*" (http://www.paginamedicala.ro), "boala nu este *depistabilă*" (http://www.acvariu.ro), is also used in other domains. For instance: "fenomene politice *depistabile*" (http://facultate.regielive.ro), "fenomen *detectabil*, însă relativ greu depistabil" (http://www.observatorcultural.ro, în tehnică).

As we have noticed, most borrowings containing the suffix -bil are taken from French and to them we add some words with a multiple

etymology which includes a French etymon. As far as words formed by internal means are concerned, the suffix *-bil* is attached to verbal bases taken from French, non-Romance languages and Latin. Another conclusion is that if the speaker is not aware of the "possibility" meaning of the suffix, pleonasms appear both in spoken and in written language.

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