The Study of Linguistic Variation at the "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology

Florin-Teodor Olariu*

Keywords: *linguistic tradition*; *diatopic variation*; *diastratic variation*; *research continuity*

0. On March 1, 1934, the new head of the Institute (1932), Iorgu Iordan, outlined the directions which, he believed, were to guide the linguistic research of the academic center in Iaşi: "as we shall strive to embrace the life of the Romanian language, so shall we seek to study all its features. These features evolve horizontally and vertically. In the first case, to use a concrete and common word, we deal with what we call *geographical features*, the spatial distribution of the language, with all variation inevitably begot by this geographical spreading. [...] *Vertical linguistic research* means to say that we record all the nuances which differ from one social class to another and from one cultural area to another" (BIFR, I, 1934, p. 4–5)[1]. Titled *Programul nostru* ['*Our Program*'], the speech was held at the inaugural conference of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, opening the Courses on Romanian Philology, and published in the first issue of *The "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology Bulletin*. The following is a brief outline of how the two directions of research mentioned by Iordan and which meant, in current terminology, the convergent study of *diatopic* and *diastratic* variation, are shaped and developed at Iaşi[2],

* The "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology – The Iasi Branch of the Romanian Academy, Iasi, Romania.

1 "După cum ne vom sili să îmbrăţişăm întreaga viaţă a limbii româneşti, tot aşa, în ce priveşte aspectele ei actuale, vom căuta să le studiem iarăşi pe toate. Aceste aspecte se pot urmări în două direcţii: orizontal şi vertical. În primul caz este vorba de ceea ce, cu un termen mai concret şi mai obişnuit astăzi, se cheamă *aspecte geografice*, răspândirea în spaţiu a limbii noastre, cu toate variantele cărora fatal le dă naştere această extindere geografică. [...] *Cercetarea lingvistică verticală* înseamnează luarea în consideraţie a tuturor nuanţelor deosebitoare de la o clasă socială la alta şi de la o categorie culturală la alta".

2 We should mention that Iordan himself, as one of the first important Romanian linguists to promote synchronic research ("Noi vom da preferinţă aspectelor lingvistice actuale, conform tendinţei unei bune părţi din savanţii contemporani, care se lasă conduşi de adevărul incontestabil că observarea prezentului înlesneşte înţelegerea trecutului: modul cum se produc fenomenele lingvistice supt ochii noştri trebuie să fi fost şi altădată acelaşi" ["We shall prefer the current linguistic aspects, following the tendency of a large part of contemporary scholars who are led by the incontestable truth that knowledge of the present facilitates the understanding of the past: the way in which linguistic phenomena take place under our eyes

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

mainly within the institutional frame provided by the local Branch of the Romanian Academy.

1. The beginnings of the Department of Dialectology and Sociolinguistics of the "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology go back directly to the post-war era, when, in 1949, a subsidiary of the Romanian Academy was created in Iaşi and, subordinated to it, an Institute of History and Philology, whose department of Philology oriented its research "towards the history of the Romanian literary language, *dialectology* [emphasis ours], history and literary theory"[3]. In the 1950s, Professor Gavril Istrate initiated and coordinated field research on dialects and, as Dean of the Faculty of Philology (1949), with the help of mixed teams of researchers at the University and Academy, he carried out surveys on the language spoken at the east of the Carpathians, especially in areas situated on Bistriţa, Moldova and Suceava Valleys[4].

These formative beginnings are in Iaşi complemented by a new stage in the research on dialectology, carried out indirectly by elaborating and issuing two *Dialectal Questionnaires* (I, 1958–1959; II, 1969). The results, derived from responses to questionnaires, were included in articles published at the time by researchers in Iaşi, two of whom (Ion Nuţă, Ion A. Florea) grounded their doctoral dissertations on the linguistic material collected.

2. In Iaşi, restructuring the Centre of Linguistics, Literary History and Folklore (created in 1963) at the end of the 1960s became essential for the development of research on variation. Five Departments of the Institute took shape then, under the directorate of N.A. Ursu; also, the newly created Department of Dialectology, managed by professor Gavril Istrate, carried out research for the *New Romanian Linguistic Atlas by Regions. Moldavia and Bukovina.* In charge with outlining and coordinating the test-surveys were, successively, Vasile Arvinte (until 1968) and Stelian Dumistrăcel. As Head of the Department, the latter closely supervised, for decades, the writing and publishing of the atlas volumes and dialectal texts which focus on areas in Moldavia and Bukovina. The surveys for the Atlas were carried out between

must have been the same as of old"], BIFR, I, 1934, p. 4), carried out research on diatopic variation of the Romanian language (*Lexicul graiului din sudul Moldovei*, 1921; *Graiul putnean*, 1941), as well as on diastratic variation (especially studies on slang, a topic he promoted including while a head of BIFR, where, between 1936–1938, a series of related articles were published).

[3] „către teme de istorie a limbii române literare, *dialectologie* [s.n.], istorie şi teorie literară", Mircea Ciubotaru, *O nouă retrospectivă aniversară*, in Ofelia Ichim (coord.), *Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide". 1927–2017*, Iaşi, Academia Română, 2017, p. 16.

[4] A detailed presentation of the activity of the Department, which includes the period since it was constituted and developed up till the middle of the year 2000, is found in the article *Orientări în cercetarea dialectologică din centrul universitar Iaşi* („Philologica Jassyensia", III, 1/2007, p. 307–326), signed by university professor Stelian Dumistrăcel, PhD, coordinator of the Department until 2009. Information on the evolution of the department in this period was largely excluded from this article.

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

1967–1974, while recordings for ethno- and socio-texts continued until 1982. So far the papers containing the linguistic material archived as a result of this field research have been published in four atlas volumes (I, 1987; II, 1997; III, 2007; IV, 2014) and three dialectal texts (I/1, 1993; I/2, 1995; II/1, 2002). The latters cover the area from southern Moldavia to the south of Iaşi county.

In order to best meet the challenges of elaborating two types of works (atlases and texts) and to publish simultaneously the linguistic material gathered during the two surveys, two teams of researchers were formed: Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ to edit the atlases and Doina Hreapcă, Ion-Horia Bîrleanu and Cecilia Zoler (the latter until 1986) to publish the dialectal texts; Areta Macovei and Eugenia Achiţei joined them to map the linguistic material, and Elvira Bîrleanu joined as research assistant.

3. The year 2000 is a new landmark in the development of research in dialectology at the academic centre in Iaşi: first, the team was rejuvenated by the joining of three young researchers (Florin-Teodor Olariu, 2000; Luminiţa Botoşineanu, 2002; Veronica Olariu, 2003); second, this was the beginning of interdisciplinary cooperation between dialectologists and computer scientists from the Institute of Computer Science, Iaşi, whose main purpose was to develop a software to digitalize the atlases and dialectal texts. The application became functional in 2005, after five years of research and for the first time at national level, and in 2006 was awarded the "Octav Mayer" Award from the Iaşi Branch of the Romanian Academy. Besides, the third and fourth volumes of *NALR. Moldavia and Bukovina*, published with this computer program (which, for instance, uses polychrome images in publishing synthetic maps, or, in digitized format, performs specialized searches through the entire atlas database – extremely useful for syntheses), received positive feedback from dialectologists in Romania and abroad, and, in 2006, the fourth volume in the series[5] received the "Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu" Award of the Romanian Academy.

In Romania, pioneering research in digitizing linguistic cartography has continued in the past years with new research topics being approached, such as semiautomatic phonetic transcriptions of the acoustic signal (2015–2016), the use of GIS technology ('Geographic Information System') in geolinguistics (2016–2017) etc., all resulted from collaborative efforts of dialecticians and computer scientists. The most important outcome of this collaboration is the *Audiovisual Linguistic Atlas of Bukovina* (ALAB) (http://www.philippide.ro/alab/), a pilot project of pluridimensional geolinguistics on the Romanian language in multimedia format. Research in this direction started in 2010, coordinated by CS I Florin-Teodor Olariu, and was carried out with two

[5] The Department received two collective academic awards but also, in 1978, an individual Award for Stelian Dumistrăcel: "Timotei Cipariu" Award of the Romanian Academy, for the volume *Influenţa limbii literare asupra graiurilor dacoromâne*.

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

UEFISCDI grants obtained in national project competitions for 2010–2013 and 2015–2017. This project tried to meet two challenges: on one hand, to save, in interactive multimedia form, and using digital technology, the dialectal diversity of Bukovina as ethnocultural area, a region known to be a mosaic from a dialectal point of view, with a rich tradition in the field of linguistic contact and intercultural relationships. On the other hand, it is a result of the responsible decision to compile, a first at national level, an audiovisual atlas which, using results in this field obtained in Europe, would develop this technology in Romania.

4. The sociolinguistic component of the research was constantly taken into account by dialectologists in Iaşi, since, as is well known, at least in Europe (and Romanian linguistics is no exception), diastratic variation has been directly derived from the researchers' interest in the languages' diatopic variation[6].

Until 2000, the members' interest in sociolinguistics went mainly towards analysing aspects of regulating and cultivating the language (Stelian Dumistrăcel: *Limbă literară şi dialect în mediul şcolar*, 1981, *Cercetarea dialectologică şi analiza stilistică în procesul de învăţământ*, 1988; *Lupta în jurul literei* **â** *şi demnitatea Academiei Române*, 1993) or the broad issue of linguistic contact (Ion-Horia Bârleanu, *Emigrări ardeleneşti la est de Carpaţi. Consecinţe lingvistice*, 1998). After 2000, the interest in diastratic analysis diversifies. Works are published which range from sociostylistics and pragmatics (Stelian Dumistrăcel: *Limbajul publicistic românesc din perspectiva stilurilor funcţionale*, 2006; *Dialectologie şi pragmalingvistică*, 2014; Florin-Teodor Olariu, *Dimensiunea ludic-agonală a limbajului. Prolegomene la o abordare interacţionistă a structurilor conversaţionale*, 2007) to the area of interest of sociolinguistics (Luminiţa Botoşineanu, *Graiul de pe valea superioară a Someşului Mare*, 2007, with a chapter titled *Aspecte sociolingvistice*; Alexandru Laurenţiu Cohal, *Mutamenti nel romeno di imigrati in Italia*, 2014; Florin-Teodor Olariu, *Variaţie şi varietăţi în limba română. Studii de dialectologie şi sociolingvistică*, 2017). The sociolinguistic topics touched upon by researchers at the academic centre in Iaşi concern, at this new stage, the subjective dialectal areas, the historiography of Romanian sociolinguistics and, especially, the sociolinguistics of migration, as a relatively new field of interest for Romanian sociolinguistics.

Within the Department, interest for sociolinguistics went beyond the publication of studies and research results in the field, and included writing and/or participating in sociolinguistic research projects, like: *Limba română vorbită în Moldova istorică* (1997–2002) (member: Luminiţa Botoşineanu);

[6] For an overview on the evolution of sociolinguistic research in Romania, with emphasis on its features in the larger frame of European sociolinguistics, see Florin-Teodor Olariu's work, *Variaţie şi varietăţi în limba română. Studii de dialectologie şi sociolingvistică*, Iaşi, Institutul European, 2017, p. 89–120.

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

Emigranţi din România la Torino (1989–2006). O abordare cultural-antropologică (2007–2008) (member: Florin-Teodor Olariu); *Diaspora românească din Budapesta. O analiză socio-culturală* (2009–2010) (member: Florin-Teodor Olariu); *Repertori, lingue e usi linguistici di alunni immigrati in Provincia di Pavia e nel Piemonte* (2014–2015) (member: Alexandru Laurenţiu Cohal). Moreover, the *Audiovisual Linguistic Atlas of Bukovina*, in which all members of the Department are involved, has strong sociolinguistic features, as it adds two diastratic variation to the diatopic variation typical to linguistic cartography: the *diasexual variation*, which means questioning, in each locality, two male and two female respondents, and the *diagenerational* variation, which means recording, in each area, two up to 35-year-old respondents, and two over 65-year-old respondents. As a result, ALAB permits research of horizontal linguistic variation, in terms of geographical area, as well as vertical linguistic variation, at the level of social stratification.

Finally, in this context we should mention that recently (2015) the sociolinguistic component of the Department was consolidated by receiving, after open competition, a new member, Alexandru Laurenţiu Cohal, specialized in both linguistics and sociology.

5. In response to these internal scientific and organizational dynamics at the Department of Dialectology of the "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology, this scientific structure was renamed the *Department of Dialectology and Sociolinguistics*, confirming the researchers' scientific interest, the *de jure* completion of a *de facto* reality. Further on, as any institutional reorganisation means (re)defining its objectives, these still follow the department's two lines of research, while the members try to consolidate them within the bounds of the institutional frame characteristic to academic research (especially in reference to the dynamics of financing). Thus, the objectives in dialectology are: a) to finish the publication of all *NALR. Moldavia and Bukovina* atlases; b) to publish more dialectal texts, and, subsequently, to write this area's dialectal glossary; c) to continue research on digitalizing Romanian geolinguistics works. As far as sociolinguistic research is concerned, this aims a) to continue research on the sociolinguistics of migration, already carried out by members of the department; b) to open new lines of sociolinguistic research, relevant and impacting the current stage of research in the field, such as the sociolinguistics of minorities, in which the team is already experienced after from field investigations carried out through ALAB on ethnic minorities in Bukovina (Hutsuls, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians).

To round up this short presentation of the activity of the Department of Dialectology and Sociolinguistics at the "A. Philippide" Institute of Romanian Philology, let us say, supported by the data so far presented, that the program outlined in 1934 by the first head of the Institute, Iorgu Iordan, has developed

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

organically at the academic centre in Iaşi, and the theoretical framework has proved its epistemic reliability and relevance for Romanian linguistic research.

Bibliography

Noul Atlas lingvistic al României. Moldova şi Bucovina. Date despre localităţi şi informatori, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1987, 420 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic al României. Moldova şi Bucovina, vol. I, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 1987, XXXIV + 284 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina, vol. II, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ, Iaşi, Editura Academiei Române, 1997, XXXVI + 306 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina, vol. III, *Prospect*, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ; colaboratori, de la Institutul de Filologie Română „A. Philippide": Luminiţa Botoşineanu, Doina Hreapcă, Florin-Teodor Olariu, Veronica Olariu, Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2005, XX + 46 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina, vol. III, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Ion A. Florea, Ion Nuţă, Adrian Turculeţ şi Luminiţa Botoşineanu, Doina Hreapcă, Florin-Teodor Olariu, Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2007, LXVIII + 388 p.; (cu un *Supliment*, cuprinzând material din punctele cu anchete privitoare la graiurile huţule..., de Adrian Turculeţ).

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina, vol. IV, de Vasile Arvinte, Stelian Dumistrăcel, Adrian Turculeţ şi Luminiţa Botoşineanu, Doina Hreapcă, Florin-Teodor Olariu, Veronica Olariu, Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2014, LXX + 366 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina, Texte dialectale, vol. I, partea 1, culese de Stelian Dumistrăcel şi publicate de Doina Hreapcă şi Ion-Horia Bîrleanu, Iaşi, Editura Academiei Române, 1993, XCI + 347 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina. Texte dialectale, vol. I, partea a 2-a, culese de Stelian Dumistrăcel şi publicate de Doina Hreapcă şi Ion-Horia Bîrleanu, Iaşi, Editura Academiei Române, 1995, LXVIII + 350 p.

Noul Atlas lingvistic român, pe regiuni. Moldova şi Bucovina. Texte dialectale, vol. II, partea 1, culese de Ion-Horia Bîrleanu şi publicate de Doina Hreapcă şi Ion-Horia Bîrleanu, cu o prefaţă de Stelian Dumistrăcel, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei Române, 2002, 340 p.

Ancheta dialectală ca formă de comunicare, de Stelian Dumistrăcel, în colaborare cu Doina Hreapcă şi Ion-Horia Bîrleanu, Iaşi, Editura Academiei Române, 1997, 453 p.

Atlasul lingvistic audiovizual al Bucovinei (ALAB), de Florin-Teodor Olariu (coord.), Veronica Olariu, Luminiţa Botoşineanu, Ramona Luca; disponibil la adresa electronică: http://www.philippide.ro/alab/

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universităţii „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)

Abstract

The research of linguistic variation in the Iasi academic center has a long tradition. In 1934 Iorgu Iordan suggested as general research directions of the "A. Philippide" Romanian Institute of Philology the study of "the whole life of the Romanian language", both in terms of geographical variation and of sociolinguistic variation. The research on linguistic geography developed starting with the creation of the Department of Dialecology in the late 1960s, when the field investigations for the *New Romanian Linguistic Atlas, by Regions. Moldova and Bukovina* started. Besides the study of diatopic variation, the members of the Department have accumulated a rich experience also in the field of diastratic variation, especially after the 2000s. In 2015 the department was renamed the *Department of Dialectology and Sociolinguistics*, an aspect that confirmed *de jure* a reality that already existed *de facto*.

BDD-V4886 © 2018 Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza"
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 18:01:12 UTC)