ADAPTATION OF LATIN NEOLOGISMS FROM THE ROMANIAN REPRESENTATIVE VOCABULARY IN THE CONTEXT OF RE-LATINISATION OF THE ROMANCE LANGUAGES

Ştefan GĂITĂNARU
University of Piteşti

Abstract: *The study compares the words from scholar Latin coming directly into Romanian with those coming through Roman intermediary and describes the process of their adaptation.*
Keywords: *neologism, adaptation, Roman, etymon, loan-word, representative vocabulary.*

By observing the weight of the Latinisms in the representative vocabulary of the Romance languages, we can speak of a re-Latinisation of some of these languages, especially of those in which the Latin borrowings go beyond 25% (Italian: 27,7%, French: 26,55%, Spanish 26,57%, Portuguese 25,12%)

Being, in a first phase, under the Byzantine-Slavonic, Neo-Greek and German cultural influence, the Romanian language experiences the phenomenon of re-Romanization, because in its representative vocabulary the weight is only of 15,26% (394 elements), out of which 1,47% (38 elements) with Latin as the unique source.

The term of *re-Romanization* is not considered adequate by some specialists: "the term is not suitable, because Romanian has never lost, not even as a literary language, **its essential Roman origin."** Thus, the term of *modernization* is more adequate (URSU, 2004: 264).

The role of Latin in this process was decisive: "In the entire process of development of the literary Romanian language, especially in its modernization stage, the Latin language, known by many Romanian intellectuals, had a distinctively important role (…) lending the literary Romanian language a great number of new words and at the same time it served as a modeler in the phonetic and morphological adaptation of neologisms of different origin (*ibidem*, p. 265)".

Most indirect Latinisms were intermediated by French language (247, namely 69, 5%); Italian was involved as the second or the third source in 52 cases (13, 1%). The non-Romance languages have a smaller share: German as the second and third source – 23 (5, 8%); NeoGreek – 9 (2, 2%), Russian – 5 (1, 26%).

The existence of the Latinisms in the representative vocabulary means their belonging to the Romanian literary language. Their adaptation has, however, constituted the result of a long process, determined not only by linguistic channels, but, in many cases, by the extra-linguistic, social-cultural contexts too.

This process preserved the evolutionary traits of the vocabulary from the old Romanian language: "the characteristic of the researched period: the presence of multiple and oscillating forms. These stand for the real difficulties tied to the various aspects of the formal adaptation, under the conditions of the pressure of the system of the language, which is a proof of stability and solidity yet from the respective époque (*DILR*, 1992: 27-28)".

Given this feature of stability, constituted by the Latin character of the Romanian language, the integration of some lexical elements succeeded from the very outset: "there are often put into circulation terms that have put on a Romanian coat and which we find in the present lexical fund in an identical form (*ibidem*, p. 28)."

BDD-A5673 © 2009 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-29 10:12:05 UTC)

Actually, the stability was established by the formal correspondence between Latin and Italian (in writing and pronunciation) with the written form of French. This was highlighted by researchers: "The words are lent directly from French under their written form which is closer to the original Latin correspondent and are read as if they were Romanian, without nasalization, constriction and with pronouncing the final consonants, which corresponds to the Latin and Italian form (GRAUR, 1968: 280).

It is obvious that scholars who knew well contemporary Romance languages took part in this process of Romanization, because, even if in 1832, in the works of *Al Obicinuitei Obşteşti Adunări* it was demanded that the loan of terms to be made "only in a language established once and for all, as French (apud GHEŢIE, SECHE, 1969: 279-280)", the process of adaptation itself supposed its inclusion into the general Latin-Romance context.

But the basic rule of adaptation, enounced by Al. Graur, has not operated consistently in any of the lexical areas, because the diversity of the extra-linguistic context intervened by the external causes of the diversification of the forms. Thus, in addition to the fact that Romance languages evolved differently from Latin, the involvement of some non-Romance channels appeared

A good example in this aspect is offered by the Latin neologisms of the 3rd imparisyllabic declination, ending in *-io, -ionis* (*natio,-onis; regio,-onis* ...). Passing through an Italian channel (*nazione*), which corresponded with the oblique forms of Latin (Ac. *nationem*), some of them were settled as follows: *acţiune, chestiune, misiune, naţiune, noţiune, pasiune, regiune.* In addition to *naţiune* (it., fr., germ, rus.) and *pasiune* (fr., germ.), all of them, although there are only 7 in *Vocabularul reprezentativ*… are recorded as having Latin etymon (regarding the form) and a French one (involved mostly semantically).

The dominant weight is that of a non-Romance channel (parallel form in Russian); thus, there are recorded in the *Vocabularul reprezentativ*... 36 lexical units of the type: *atenţie, construcţie, creaţie, educaţie, lecţie, ocazie, opinie…*

This proves the existence of a more productive model, generated at an earlier stage in the evolution of language: "The old noun loans in *-ie* (masculine and feminine) of old Slavic and early Neo-Greek origin created quite early a real norm in adaptation of nouns' endings, a norm which will be almost generalized thereafter, in the case of the Latin-Romance loans (*DILR*: 38).

The question is whether there is a Russian channel to adapt these Latinisms in Romanian or if this productive model worked, in parallel with the Romanian, in Russian too.

Formal diversity, which, essentially, reveals great difficulties in the adaptation process, is also found in Latin-Romance and non-Romance channels. Thus, *chestiune*, for example, has the variants: *cvestion* (1832), *chestie* (1852), *cvestiune* (1844), *cestiune* (1846), *cuestie* (1858), *cuestiune* (1859). In a similar way, *atenţie* has adapted with great difficulty: *luare de samă* (1785), *luare de seamă* (1806), *atănciune* (1794), *atenţie* (1846), *atentione* (1847) (the examples are extracted from *DIRL*, 1992 and Ursu, 2006).

The dispute between the two channels has been settled differently outside the representative vocabulary in the second half of the 19th century, when the Latin-Romance model relunches, imposing the forms in *-iune*. When the dispute remained unsolved, imposing both types, it appeared a semantic specialization: *divizie – diviziune, fracţie – fracţiune, porţie – porţiune, raţie – raţiune, staţie - staţiune…*

Some have, with various stylistic connotations, the same meaning: *migraţiune – migraţiune, posesie – posesiune, naţiune – naţiune…*

BDD-A5673 © 2009 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-29 10:12:05 UTC)

When none of the directions imposed, it was resorted to the post-verbal nouns such as: *modificaţie – modificaţiune – modificare; verificaţie – verificaţiune – verificare…*

In many cases for the deverbal derivation the language resorted to the form imposed by the Romance channel: *fracţionare, porţionare, raţionare, staţionare…*

The same variation is not met in the case of Latin neologisms borrowed directly from Latin. A word as, for example, *absolut*, is recorded with 39 forms out of the 45 on the dominant norm (URSU, 2006: 63). *Comparaţie*, one of the most diversified Latin cultisms, has however 39 forms in the dominant norm and 33 archaisms.

Sometimes, the variation degree may indicate more precisely the channel of a word's penetration. A word such as *activitate*, confirmed in a text of Dimitrie Cantemir in 1705 is considered a direct Latinism by *DILR*, the French influence could not be invoked without reservation for that time. ... *Vocabularul reprezentativ*… and all other current dictionaries (including *DELLR,* 2004: 31) consider it as having multiple etymons: French, Latin. Noting the difficulty of semantic adaptation, with recourse to the loan translation *lucrare, lucrărime* can be inferred that there was not an evolutionary continuum, the form recorded by Cantemir remaining isolated. Indication of the etymology by the lexicographical works, other than *DILR*, is therefore correct.

It was shown by the Romanists that there is not, for most Romanic languages, a systematic description of the rules regarding the adaptation of the Latin neologisms (Reinheimer Rîpeanu, 2004: 61), except for Spanish.

Recently we are, however, capable of speaking of the design of a descriptive system for the Romanian language, with a theoretical complex apparatus and closely related to the facts of language, organized in a large bowl of illustration. It is the work of Nicolae and of Despina Ursu: *Împrumutul lexical în procesul modernizării limbii române literare, I Studiu lingvistic şi de istorie culturală*, (Iaşi, Cronica Publishing, 2004) and II. *Repertoriu de cuvinte şi forme* (2006).

The general rule for the Romanian language was based on the features of Italian and French, recorded by Romanists: „L'italiano ha alterado relativamente poco le voci ereditarie (…) Invece il francese ha alterado molto le voci ereditarie…(*ibidem*)

The limitation to the representative vocabulary, although defines the dominant direction, is unable to reflect the whole context in which it constituted itself.

First of all, the accommodation rules have changed in time, and some experts have applied them without distinction, obtaining relative results.

In the first three decades of the 19th century, the rules of adaptation from the old Romanian language were still active; the Latin itself was studied by Romanian scholars in colleges in Germany or in the Slavic world. After this period a new adaptation system is constituted: "Most neologisms are now received from French, Latin, German and Italian, and in their adaptation correspondent forms in Latin are taken as a model, whose ordinary pronunciation in colleges and universities in Italy and in Romanic world is introduced in Romanian culture (URSU, 2004: 264).

The 24 rules (*ibidem :* 263-353) that compose the adaptation system of the neologisms in the modernization process of the literary Romanian language put in a more complex light the adaptation of the Latin cultism from *Vocabularul reprezentativ*… As previously noted, their difficulties of adaptation were smaller, which has allowed them the penetration into the Romanian basic lexical fund.

Dating them (to extremes: *people* – 1525: BOLOCAN, 1981: 189, *king* – 1841: *DELLR*, 2004: 376) involves a large time dimensioning, but, in essence, the success of

BDD-A5673 © 2009 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-29 10:12:05 UTC)

the process was based on the sustained, passionate work of the pioneering generation of the 1848 period.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bolocan Gh., (coordonator) *Dicţionarul elementelor româneşti din documentele slavo-române*, Bucureşti, 1981.
Chivu Gh., (coordonator) *Dicţionarul împrumuturilor latino-romanice în limba română veche (1421 – 1760)* (*DILR*), Bucureşti, 1992.
Gheţie, I., Seche, M., *Discuţii despre limba română literară între anii 1830 - 1860*, în *Studii de istoria limbii române literare, I, Secolul XIX*, Bucureşti, 1969.
Graur, Al., *Tendinţele actuale ale limbii române*, Bucureşti, 1968.
Lupu, C., *Lexicografia românească în procesul de occidentalizare latino-romanică a limbii române moderne (1780 – 1860)*, Iaşi, 1999.
Reinheimer Ripeanu S., (coordonator), *Dictionnaire des emprunts latins dans les langues romanes*, (*DEELR*), Bucureşti, 2004.
Reinheimer Ripeanu, S., *Les emprunts latins dans les langues romanes*, Bucureşti, 2004.
Ursu, N. A., Ursu, D., *Împrumutul lexical în procesul modernizării limbii române literare*, I *Studiu lingvistic şi de istorie culturală*, Iaşi, 2004 şi II. *Repertoriu de cuvinte şi forme*, 2006.

BDD-A5673 © 2009 Universitatea din Piteşti
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.31 (2026-11-29 10:12:05 UTC)