# Sources of Errors in Using Romanian Technical and Scientific Terms

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**Key-words**: *technical vocabulary, paronyms, folk etymology, analogy*

A multitude of technical and scientific terms must – very much like those characteristic of standard/ common language, which are in frequent use by the average speaker – be acquired and used correctly. This is a rather truistic statement, and yet that reality is sometimes neither very simple, nor thoroughly turned to general awareness, nor at least unanimously admitted by the speakers of Romanian themselves. There is a leaning towards employing certain technical (or specialized) words in an improper or deformed manner, or towards mistaking them (*v*. the numerous examples provided by the late Professor Theodor Hristea's article *Technical terms mistakenly used* (Hristea 1981) – e.g. *a asambla, (industrie) carboniferă – carbonieră, miner – minier, contor, siderurgie, amplitudine*, etc., cf. Hristea 2000). The rather obvious reason for the occurrence of solecisms in the above-mentioned field is the incredible abundance and the highly intricate structure of the neologistic technical and scientific vocabulary of contemporary Romanian, where especially the disconcerting ampleness and variety of the (strictly) specialized meanings, no less than the variegated relationships established between form and sense can lead the speaker/ reader astray.

There are, indeed, some notorious "pitfalls" that tower over the general picture of the technical/ specialized lexicon; they are mainly language facts and structures especially concerning the form of individual terms (and sometimes also their meaning, or else both their form and their meaning), such as: the plural form of certain Romanian nouns or their belonging to one or another grammatical gender, the conjugation pattern of some verbs, paronymy, "look-alikes" or "sound-alikes", or the existence of a number of semantically and functionally marked variants, to which such phenomena are added as folk etymology, paronymic attraction and hypercorrectness, as well as the foreign (more especially Anglo-American) derivation of certain terms. The category of the neologistic "pitfall"-plurals is relatively rich in Romanian, e.g. *habitat* (the recommended plural form of which is *habitate*), *anacolut* (whose plural form, as indicated by $DOOM_2$ is *anacoluturi* – and not *anacolute*, as it is frequently spelt in a lot of printed – mainly press – material), *reziduuri* (although, in an article signed by several members of the Romanian Academy, which appeared in the March 8, 2006 issue of the magazine *Formula As*,

„Philologica Jassyensia", An VI, Nr. 2 (12), 2010, p. 109–119

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on page 2, column I, the term has the plural form *rezidii*). As a matter of fact, the remark made to the effect that, in Romanian, many neuter plural forms were "adjusted" through redirecting their masculine form, by attaching to it the plural ending [-i] is quite well-established in Romanian linguistic studies: see such "specialized" forms, typical of the technical and scientific domain, as *vagoneți*, *robineți*, *segmenți*, *baloți*, *cuzineți*, *recipienți*, *spalieri*, *tarozi*, *paleți*, *elemenți* (mainly in the phrase *elemenți de calorifer*)*, suporți* (we have also come across the combinative form *suporți de curs* "manual-like/ didactic materials, usually in written form, necessary for presenting an academic course of lectures"), etc.; the variant **convertizori* can be heard, as well – although in extremely infrequent cases – in the engineers' milieus. The fact that the plural forms ending in [-i] are preferred by the technical/ scientific usage (or, anyway, the specialized usage) of the Romanian language can be noticed, quite clearly we think, in the circumstance that, for instance, nouns that are very recent (or even ignored by most dictionaries), such as *bracketi* ("in orthodontics: special tooth-supporting stainless metal wires, used to correct irregularities of the teeth."), do prefer that grammatical solution. It seems that the most obvious examples of domain specialization are provided by the plural forms *viruşi* and *regiştri* (which are however familiar only in computer science and practice)[1].

For some of the nouns belonging to the above-mentioned category there are clear normative mentions in dictionaries and similar standardizing books. For instance, the rather recent $DOOM_2$ accepts, for the noun *strat*, the variants *straturi* and *strate* (the latter being glossed as a specialized term in the field of geology); the plural of *nucleu* is, according to $DOOM_2$, *nuclee* (as a neuter noun), but the same term, when used in the domain of medicine, is a masculine noun, having the plural form *nuclei*. For the Romanian noun *algoritm*, the older dictionary $DEX_2$ indicates the plural form *algoritme* (with the accepted variant *algoritmi* – which is, on the other hand, the only variant accepted by the $DOOM_2$), although current speech, no less than the lingo of the media, more often than not favours the alternative form *algoritmuri* (most probably through analogy with the noun *ritmuri*). The noun *complex* has, according to $DOOM_2$, two distinct plural forms, used in different meanings: *complexe* "a tendency in behaviour", vs. *complexuri* "construct / structure"; however, the same dictionary fails to record the plural form – which happens to be very frequent in the technical usage (relevant of the field of chemistry) – *complecşi* (e.g. *complecşi chimici nesaturați*), which can logically be proved to be the reflex of Eng. *complex* "1. (also called: *coordination compound*): a chemical compound in which molecules, groups, or ions are attached to a central metal atom, esp. a transition metal atom, by coordinate bonds. 2. any chemical compound in which one molecule is linked to another by a coordinate bond" (COLL). Similarly, although the plural form recommended by the $DOOM_2$ is *versanți*, the speakers of Romanian who say *versante* are quite numerous (the latter form actually appears – as a primary variant – in $DEX_2$). In much the same way, $DOOM_2$

[1] Considered overall, the fact seems to dramatically clash with the remark (made by a number of foreign linguists, as well – see for instance *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Linguistics*, 1988, s.v. *Romanian*) that the neuter gender has been made to thrive by "engineering" it with the help of the specific *-uri* ending.



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recommends the spelling and pronunciation *masive* [*muntoase*], and not *masivi* [*muntoşi*], and still the latter form occurs as a relatively frequent variant in everyday speech. The variability of the said plural forms in the current use of the language is rather high; to take only one example, in one and the same paper on a biological topic (i.e. the differentiation of certain classes of ferns) – having, to be frank, three authors, two affiliated with the University in Piteşti, and the other one with the National Institute of Eesearch and Development in Horticulture at Ştefăneşti, Argeş – the noun *protal* variously occurs with the plural forms *protale*, and *protali*.

Though $DOOM_2$ does not even record the plural form *produşi*, but only *produse*, it has recently become evident that virtually all the specialists in the field of chemistry will say *produşi de sinteză* – and, moreover, the same "technical" form is sometimes willingly taken over by speakers who have nothing to do with the specialized fields of technology and engineering: for instance, in an interview published by the March 2007 issue of *Magazin istoric*, the young historian Adrian Cioroianu says that "(…) Nicolae şi Elena Ceauşescu erau *produşii* unui sistem". Along the same line, the noun *profil* assumes two distinct plural forms, which are kept apart by their grammar and semantics, viz. *profiluri* and *profile* (the latter is to be used, according to prescriptive works, only in the technical field, accompanied more often than not by the adjectival phrase *metalice*, or an attribute specifying the shape of the metallic part in question, i.e. *profile în L*, *profile în H*, *profile în T* etc.). Unfortunately, fluctuating linguistic usage in contemporary Romanian – plentifully illustrated by the very manner in which most normative works nowadays record and gloss neologistic terms – is to blame for such situations as the existence, for the noun *item* (which can be either masculine, or neuter), of no less than three plural variants, viz. *itemi*, *itemuri*, *iteme*. None of the above forms enjoys any semantic or domain specification; the only valid remark, according to our own observations, is that the plural form *itemi* can be considered as having specialized in the domain of psycho-pedagogic and social sciences.

The state of sheer confusion manifestly plaguing most common speakers of Romanian is also deepened by the phenomenon of *analogy*, which conduces to uncertainty in using gender (and, consequently, the very singular form) of certain nouns such as *celenterate* (neuter), *gasteropode* (neuter), *hematode* (neuter), *homoptere* (neuter), *holoturide* (neuter), *muride* (neuter), *nevroptere* (neuter), *ungulate* (neuter – the term was not recorded by $DOOM_2$), *imparicopitate* (neuter – in this class of nouns though, it is possible that the speakers may analogically relate the term with the more common plural nouns *cornute* "horned animals", or even *vite* "cattle"). Unlike the above-mentioned nouns, which clearly belong to the neuter gender, nouns like *vertebrate*, *nevertebrate*, *cordate*, *halofite*, *umbelifere*, *holoturii*, etc. are feminine, while *hominid*, *metilen*, etc. belong to the group of the masculines. Similarly, sources of errors can appear in the morphological class of the verb, in connection with the morphological and semantic-functional status of a number of terms. For instance, the definition of the verb *a divide* is done in $DEX_2$ through the first (and most general) sense of the verb *a diviza*. For a non-specialist/ an "outsider", it is rather difficult to know which of the two verbs collocates, in the type of discourse specific to biology, with the terms *microorganism* or *cell*: should we say that "microorganismele şi celulele *se divid*", or "microorganismele şi celulele



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*se divizează*"? If, in that domain, one cannot be absolutely certain which form is, or should be considered as preferable, the verb *a diviza* (whose main acceptations are "to calculate the quotient of (one number or quantity) and (another number or quantity) by division", and respectively "to mark increments of (length, angle, etc.) as by use of an engraving machine") is the rule in mathematics, as well as the domain of general technology – but only in its specialized sense (which is marked as such by most dictionaries – namely, $DEX_2$). Difficulties of a formal nature are also generated by the category of the invariable adjectives of the type *motrice*: this seems to conduce, in fact, to one of the most common groups of errors in Romanian. Sometimes, certain terms taken over from the specialized lexicon and shifted into a figurative use fail to observe the (practical and sound) rules of Romanian morpho-syntax, e.g. "avansarea artelor către *primul plan* al vieții sociale" (instead of "către *prim-planul*…"). In the same connection, patent improprieties pointing to phraseological and collocational usage can be noticed: for instance, using phrases that sound unnatural in Romanian such as *cursă împotriva cronometrului* (which obviously copies Fr. *contre-la-montre*), e.g. „Angajat într-o veritabilă *cursă împotriva cronometrului*, Comitetul de redactare a documentului şi-a continuat lucrările până aseară târziu (...) (*Curentul*, August 5, 2005).

In a similar context, it should be mentioned that there are extremely numerous (and difficult) pairs of neologistic paronyms, look-alikes, and sound-alikes, out of which at least one member is a (highly) specialized term, e.g. *afluent – efluent*, *apetit – apetență*, *arterită – artrită*, *creiologie – criologie*, *curbură – curbatură*, *declinare – declinație*, *deligație – delegație*, *denaționaliza – deznaționaliza*, *discont – discount*, *efet – efect*, *egrena – angrena*, *emenda – amenda*, *endoplasmă – entoplasmă*, *entopic – entropic*, *extras – extract*, *godron – gudron*, *idiografic – ideografic*, *jantă – joantă*, *luxură – luxurie*, *maltază – maltoză*, *mamba – mambo*, *memorand – memorandum*, *metol – mentol*, *minut – minută*, *muliné – mulineu*, *nucleol – nucleon*, *paiet* (mar.) *– paietă*, *panarterită – panartrită*, *perempțiune – preempțiune*, *pitură – pictură*, *promoțiune – promoție*, *protază – protează*, *radom – radon*, *seminologie – semiologie*, *serpentin – serpentină*, *spondil – spondeu*, *şlam – şlem*, *talus – taluz*, *teligenie – telegenie*, *tepală – sepală*, *traheidă – traheită*, *traduce – transduce*, *transductor – traductor*, *troacar – trocar*, *troleu – troliu*, *verină – verigă*, *virtuos – virtuoz*, *voltametru – voltmetru*, *xilem – xilen*. The cases of paronymic triplets are rather uncommon, though, e.g. *corvetă – covertă – cuvertă*, *diaforază – diaforeză – diaftoreză*. Furthermore, some paronyms also happen to have very similar senses, e.g. *parafinic – parafinos*. At times, things can be even more complex: there are (exceptionally) rare instances of words that are, concomitantly, both paronyms, and synonyms, e.g. *proligerație = proliferație*. Moreover, the existence must be noted, as an additional source of confusion, of many variants such as *magnetit – magnetită* (although $DOOM_2$ only glosses the former term), or *limitator – limitor*. The similar sub-category of the suffixal paronyms can be distinguished, e.g. *behavioralism – behaviorism, biolog – biologist, calvar – calvariu, cardial – cardiac, condensor* "an optical device" *– condensator* (a bi-semantic term, used in the field of thermotechnology and, respectively, electrical engineering), *modeling – modelaj, morfologie – morfologism, progresism – progresivism, societal – societar, transcendentalism – transcendentism*,



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*transformism – transformaţionalism*. It would be otiose to add that words of that kind "call for trouble", i.e. they can generate semantic solecisms – more precisely, through paronymic attraction, e.g. *pleonast* "a black mineral" vs. *pleonasm*, as well as the phenomenon of latent folk etymology, e.g. *infectum* (a term used in linguistics). The neologistic term *reluctant* "unwilling; disinclined" has nothing to do with *reluctanţă* "mărime egală cu raportul dintre tensiunea magnetică de-a lungul unui circuit şi fluxul magnetic care îl străbate" ($DEX_2$) – (cf. Eng. *reluctance* "*Physics*. a measure of the resistance of a closed magnetic circuit to a magnetic flux, equal to the ratio of the magnetomotive force to the magnetic flux" – COLL). Some words can be mixed up because they are distinguished only by their gender form, e.g. *comutator* (neuter), and *comutatoare* (feminine, plural) – all the more readily as the plural form of the former noun happens to be *comutatoare*, as well. As can be seen, in many such paronymic pairs it is only one's specialized knowledge or the assiduous consultation of (good) dictionaries and lexical-grammatical guidebooks that can help one in one's attempt to avoid errors. Let us compare, for instance, the terms *deluviu* "material sedimentar provenit din alterarea şi dezagregarea rocilor, aflat în curs de scurgere sub influenţa apelor de şiroire pe pantele diferiţilor versanţi" and *diluviu* "1. potop(ul biblic); 2. (geol.) pleistocen"; or the terms *urinar* "urinary" and *urinal* "a reservoir for urine", out of which pair the former word functions only as an adjective, whereas the latter is only a noun (its Romanian sense is marked as "vas de sticlă sau de plastic folosit în spitale pentru a urina fără a coborî din pat" – cf. the situation in English, where *urinary* is just an older variant for *urinal*). The confusion between the paronymic terms – which "attract one another" in the common speaker's linguistic conscience – often leads to semantic usurpation, e.g. *a infesta* "a bântui, a pustii, a nimici; a invada" is mistakenly used instead of *a infecta* "a transmite microbi, a răspândi substanţe vătămătoare etc.; a contamina. ♦ Fig. a corupe" ($DEX_2$).

Yet there are, unfortunately, a fair number of cases of discordance and inadvertency between the current dictionaries of contemporary Romanian as far as the (variant or prime instance) status of a number of terms are concerned, or with regard to the specific differences between terms that are remarkably close in point of both form and meaning (e.g. *impresie – impresiune*, *emisie – emisiune*, etc.), the semantic or contextual nuances of which are not, quite often, very clear to the speaking public (unlike, for instance, parallel forms such as *pensie* and *pensiune*, whose distinct senses have come to be well acquired and used by speakers, and also firmly, unequivocally recorded by dictionaries). $DEX_2$ refers to *emisiune* for *emisie*, while $DOOM_2$ glosses *emisie* through "emitere" (Eng. "giving off, emitting"), whereas *emisiune* is linked with the field of radio and TV broadcasting; while $DEX_2$ acknowledges, for the term *impresiune*, the status of a variant of *impresie*, without supplying any register, domain or style clue for the former word, and $DOOM_2$ does not record *impresiune* at all (thus, one can suppose the word was considered, exclusively, an old-fashioned – and consequently unadvisable – variant of *impresie*); nevertheless, the technical term *impresiune* is still commonly used, at least to the knowledge of the authors of the present paper, in the domain of photography. We think that the authors of $DOOM_2$ are wrong when not admitting the existence of the suffixal variant *impulsiune* alongside of the form *impulsie*; the treatment of the word



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is done by $DEX_2$ in a manner that comes much closer to the linguistic reality, as the form *impulsiune* is pointed to as a variant (it is true, with the added specification *rare*). On the other hand, the pairs *depresie – depresiune* and *dicție – dicțiune* are treated irreproachably by $DOOM_2$: the former – as standing for two terms, distinct as far as their sense and referential field are concerned (glossed as "deprimare" and, respectively, "formă de relief şi criză economică"), and the latter – as two suffixal variants (out of which *dicție* was rightly considered the first/ primary variant). From among the instances when $DOOM_2$ gives a many-sided, meticulous treatment of terms which $DEX_2$ considers as mere variants, suffice it to cite the following pairs: *patent – patentă*, and *partiție – partițiune*. On the other hand, for the pairs of variants acknowledged by $DEX_2$ as such, like *monotrem – monotremă*, *panicul – paniculă*, *pegmatit – pegmatită*, $DOOM_2$ only glosses the first form of the pair (respectively, *monotrem*, *pegmatit*, and *panicul*). Here are some other illustrations of the glossing divergencies occurring among the dictionaries most widely used by the Romanian public at large (i.e. $DEX_2$ and $DOOM_2$): for the pairs of variants *nautil – nautilus*, *peplu – peplum* (as glossed by $DEX_2$), $DOOM_2$ only records *nautil* and, respectively, *peplum*, although the same $DOOM_2$ glosses, for instance, the variants *panoptic – panopticum*. Similarly, for the variants *pedaler – pedalier*, *termificare – termoficare*, "generously" recorded by $DEX_2$, $DOOM_2$ only gives *pedalier* and, respectively, *termoficare*. Homonyms, homographs and homophones also contribute towards amplifying the inherent difficulties in the correct acquisition and use of the vocabulary linked with science and technology. For example, $DEX_2$ records as many as three words (whose separate meanings belong to the domains of chemistry, music and mythology, and zoology, respectively) represented by the same form, i.e. *tritón*, and $DOOM_2$ glosses three different words having the same form, i.e. *receptór*.

The Romanian monolingual dictionaries of current use (namely, $DOOM_2$) accept – and also recommend, quite paradoxically, we believe – a number of rather rare (or at least debatable) variants, while excluding other forms, which can be easily proved to be quite frequent in actual usage. For instance, the variant forms *dicotomie* and *tricotomie* (reflexes of Fr. *dicotomie* and *tricotomie*) are recorded side by side with *dihotomie* and *trihotomie*, respectively, but the dictionary only indicates the existence of the term *pahiderm*, flatly rejecting the form *pachiderm*, relatively frequent in the common use of the language (another reflex – of a different nature, it is true – of a French word, i.e. *pachyderme*). Similarly, the variant *culasă* for *chiulasă* (both forms being glossed by $DOOM_2$, unlike $DEX_2$, which records *chiulasă* only as a variant of *culasă*) is extremely rare in the use of contemporary Romanian – although it is obviously closer to the form of the French etymon. There are also stress variants – some of which, like *asfixíe* şi *asfixie*, are, oddly enough, glossed only in $DOOM_2$ (while $DEX_2$ does the right thing by giving only the stress form *asfixíe*).

Pronunciation itself represents the ground of manifestation for a number of patent language errors within the framework of specialized vocabularies; a brief list, including the terms that are more frequently used mistakenly by Romanians, should doubtless comprise instances like *aeropag* – mistakenly used for *areopag*, *albocalmin*/ (rarely) *alvocalmin* – instead of *algocalmin*, *amigdalite* – instead of *amigdale*, *arahnide* – instead of *arahide* (or even reversely: *arahide* instead of



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*arahnide*), *auromicină* or *auremicină* – instead of *aureomicină*, *cloranfenicol* – instead of *cloramfenicol*, *cofrag* – instead of *cofraj*, *conzistent* – instead of *consistent*, *conzistență* – instead of *consistență*, *cremarieră* – instead of *cremalieră*, *criptograme* – instead of *criptogame*, *delicvent* – instead of *delincvent* (although the cognate terms *delicvescent* and *delicvescență* are absolutely correct), *diazepan* – instead of *diazepam*, *escavator* – instead of *excavator*, *extima*, *extimare*, *extimativ* – instead of *estima*, *estimare*, *estimativ*, *filigram* – instead of *filigran*, *olender* – instead of *holender*, *intinerar* – instead of *itinerar*, *mangolie* – instead of *magnolie*, *monstră* – instead of *mostră*, *napotom* – instead of *napoton*, *panóplie* – instead of *panoplíe*, *virbrochen* – instead of *vilbrochen*, etc. Among the terms that bring about the use of numerous sets of erroneous forms count such neologisms as *obertail* (not *obertai*, *obărtai*, *obârtai*, *obertain*, *obărtain*, *obertainer*, *obărtainer*, *obertainăr*, or even *obărtainăr*) and *marşarier* (not *marşalier*, *malşarier*, *malşalier*, *manşalier*, *manşarier*, or even *manşanier*). As far as the stress patterns assumed by many words belonging to the neologistic lexical stock of science and technology, scores of cases can be noticed in the current use, which fail to comply with the spirit of the language and the normative indications in dictionaries, e.g. „*recéptorii* din oase" (*ProTv*, December 9, 2006). For the above cases – (inevitably) fragmentary illustrations of a substantial neologistic lexical subset – the speakers' chance of encountering the correct forms (those which are recommended by the normative lexicographical instruments that are commonly handy for the use of those interested), and effectively employ them, is in direct proportion, on the one hand, to the speakers' possibility of hearing or seeing them – possibly pronounced/ written by specialists in the respective domains –, and on the other hand, to the cultural level of those who take over or repeat such terms and phrases, and – last but not least – to the efforts that educational institutions are willing (and able) to make in order to ensure the correct acquisition of neologistic terms – in our case, of technical/ specialized lexical items; this is true, of course, of all other didactic and cultural organizations, including the academia.

The degree of difficulty in correctly acquiring the spelling and pronunciation of technical/ specialized terms is, quite naturally, increased exponentially by the fact that lots of them are recorded vaguely or hesitantly in the current dictionaries of Romanian, e.g. variants like *mordant*/ *mordent*, *neuron*/ *nevron*, etc. In $DEX_2$ the form *treiler* is glossed as "remorcă joasă de mare capacitate, folosită în construcții, pentru transportul elementelor prefabricate grele, de beton armat", whereas $DOOM_2$ records the form *trailer* meaning "remorcă"; from our observations, hardly anyone actually uses the first variant/ form (although it would not have been a bad thing if it had gained general currency – as it approximately renders the original phonetic pattern); similarly, the phonetic pattern of the English etymon should have generated the form **conteiner*, but that pronunciation does not in actual fact exist (both $DEX_2$ and $DOOM_2$ only record *container*). Likewise, the form *hon* (the correlate of Eng. *hone* [həun]) is the only one to have struck roots in the specialized neologistic lexicon of Romanian. $DOOM_2$ records the forms *minion*, [-ă] (adj.), in addition to the form *mignonă* (s.f., used as a technical term in the vocabulary of typography, and meaning "a type of letter"), while $DEX_2$ only records the form *mignon*, [-ă]. In $DEX_2$ two stress variants are recorded for the term *motrice*, viz. *mótríce* and



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*motríce*, although $DOOM_2$ only glosses *mótrice*. $DEX_2$ records, for the term *manager*, a stress pattern which is, we believe, completely erroneous – namely *managér*, while $DOOM_2$ records both *mánager* and *manáger*. Here are some remarks and illustrations concerning the relationship between the form of the terms in question and their etymological (or else, only seemingly etymological) antecedents, which represent still other source of errors. If a term like *hocheton* exasperates the linguistic sense of those having a good command of French (the term would normally have evolved to **(*h*)*oşton*, if it had followed the path of phonetic adjustment in keeping with the original French pronunciation – *hocheton* [oštõ]), the form *chiuloasă* is a patent case of mispronunciation generated by the attempt of "adjustment" to a Romanian phonetic pattern, felt to be "more indigenous" – through diphthongization meant to analogically ensure a would-be vowel alternation (cf. the adjectival feminine form *periculoasă*, or the regional verbal form *coastă* – instead of *costă*). Numerous confusions are possible, especially with users of Romanian having a rather low cultural and educational level, in those cases when a technical term has an etymon (even if it is a fairly remote one) whose form is virtually identical to that of a word belonging to the common vernacular lexicon, e.g. *a ausculta* "to auscultate" vs. *a asculta* "to listen (to)".

The influence of the French phonetic model, with which many speakers of Romanian are (still) well acquainted, can lead to erroneous forms like *eterogeneitate* (cf. Fr. *hétérogénéité*), instead of *eterogenitate*. However, in other cases the habitual pronunciation has come to accredit forms that have deviated from the pattern provided by the very French etymon in question, e.g. *cuzinet* – although the French word *coussinet* does not contain a [z]. We find it interesting, in the same connection, that some specialized terms actually form a number of provocative etymological doublets, the two parts of which are sui-generis variants, based on the diverging Romanian pronunciation, e.g. both *cuvetă* and *chiuvetă* are derived from Fr. *cuvette*, but the sense of the former is "cauldron-shaped syncline" – Rom. "sinclinal în formă de căldare, cu lungimea şi lățimea aproape egale şi cu secțiunea orizontală aproximativ rotundă" ($DEX_2$), whereas the latter term belongs to the common vocabulary, in the well-known meaning of "washbasin, washbowl" – Rom. "vas de porțelan, de faianță sau de metal smălțuit prevăzut cu o gură de scurgere, fixat în perete dedesubtul unui robinet de apă şi folosit la spălat" ($DEX_2$) – cf. also Eng. *cuvette* "a shallow dish or vessel for holding liquid"). Only $DEX_2$ records the form *holendru*, a "Roumanized / adapted" form corresponding to the following senses: "1. filtru pentru vin; 2. instalație de rafinare sau de spălare; 3. maşină de cojit sau şlefuit cereale" – cf. *holender* (which is actually the only form accepted by the authors of $DOOM_2$). A number of neologistic terms of Anglo-American derivation, which happen to be very voguish of late, are mispronounced, e.g. *TV tuner* (recommended pronunciation [ti vi 'tiunăr]) is often erroneously pronounced [ti vi 'tanăr] (although nearly all literate Romanians holding a driver's licence know how to correctly pronounce "*tuning*-ul unei maşini"). Unfortunately, some affected pronunciations (which could be called Franco-Englished) ruin such terms coming from English as



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*nursing* (for which the $DOOM_2$ recommended version is ['nörsing])[2]. On the other hand, growing familiarization with the pronunciation and spelling rules of English has lately caused many speakers of average education to (try and) correctly pronounce terms like *cyborg* or *thriller*.

The phenomenon of folk etymology is answerable for the occurrence of hybrid, contaminated forms like *albocalmin* (cf. *alb* "white") – instead of *algocalmin*, *repercursiuni* (cf. *curs*, *cursă*) – instead of *repercusiuni*, or *talazoterapie* "thalassotherapy" (cf. *talaz* "billow, large sea wave") – instead of *talasoterapie* (cf. Tohăneanu 1995: 23). In like manner, analogy conduces to forms of the type: *cantarină* instead of *cantaridă* (cf. similar names of well-known substances, e.g. *atropină* "atropin(e)", *cocainǎ* "cocain(e)", *lecitină* "lecithin", *nicotină* "nicotine", *ranitidină*, etc.). Another patent source of errors is the phenomenon of *hypercorrection*[3] (also called "hyperurbanism" by some older Romanian linguists), e.g. *ampecilină*, *egrasie*, *lubrefiant*, *reminescență*, etc. (instead of *ampicilină*, *igrasie*, *lubrifiant*, *reminiscență*, respectively). As a matter of fact, the pressure of hypercorrection has even led to the occurrence of technical terms whose (unetymological) forms are considered standard, e.g. *facocer* (< Fr. *facochère*), or *ceasla* (< Fr. *chasselas*). The (substandard) hypercorrect forms (*un*) *obed* / (*o*) *obedă*, which can be occasionally encountered instead of (*un*) *obez* / (*o*) *obeză*, are coined yb analogy with (more often than not neologistic) forms that display consonant alternation such as *aed – aezi*, *stabilopod – stabilopozi*, (*eu*) *cred* – (*tu*) *crezi*, etc.

The uninterrupted "race" that goads the speaking subjects to permanently change and renew the lexicon of the language – even at all costs – is often conducive to the appearance of such cases of linguistic impropriety traceable to the field of semantics, as misusing the adjective *troglodit* in the sense "decrepit" (Rom. "îmbătrânit, decăzut fizic"); the reason for that solecism is certainly the abusive extension of the sense "troglodytic; uncivilized" (Rom. "grosolan, retrograd, necivilizat" – hence "primitive; decrepit; aged" which is etymologically comprised by the semantics of the respective term)[4]. Furthermore, even a verb could be (falsely/ abusively) derived, through a paradoxical type of backformation, viz. **a se troglodi* "to become decrepit" (Rom. "a decădea fizic, a îmbătrâni"). A similar malapropism is the would-be verb **a (se) fortui* "to be(come)/ make urgent" – cf. adj. *fortuit* "fortuitous", erroneously thought to be a past participle form meaning "urgent". The same type of affected, pretentious – and overall ignorant – speech often generates ludicrous malapropisms like: "Vă rog, doamna secretară, să *stipulați* în procesul-verbal…" (instead of "…să *consemnați*…"). Similar improprieties are

[2] Fluctuant usage can indeed baffle many speakers, while those who possess a (comparatively) good command of English will find such mispronunciations hardly palatable; let us compare, for instance, the highly divergent pronunciation indications given by $DOOM_2$ for the words *nursing*, *rummy* and *rugby*!

[3] *Hypercorrection* is "a mistaken correction made through a desire to avoid nonstandard pronunciation or grammar" (COLL).

[4] Cf. the explanation provided by $DEX_2$ to gloss the figurative sense of *troglodit*: "Fig. Om cu un nivel de trai extrem de scăzut, care duce o viață primitivă ♦ Epitet dat unui om grosolan, necivilizat, retrograd".



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generated by semantic usurpation triggered by form similarity; for instance, under the influence of Eng. *professional*, the sense of the Romanian adjective *profesionist* "professional; qualified" has come to be usurped by *profesional*, e.g. "aparatură *profesională* la cele mai bune prețuri". The degree of correctness of the technical / specialized terms is at times undermined by improprieties having to do with collocation, e.g. "ştacheta care a ajuns la *altitudinea* de 1,95 m" (sports commentary – *TVR2*, Sept. 18, 2004). At other times, it seems that the mistakes are merely the result of understandable, human slips of the tongue, or of the pen (i.e. *lapsus linguae*/ *calami*): "*memorialul* transmis primului ministru…" – instead of "*memorandumul*…" (radio *Romantic FM*); "(…) CeBIT adună laolaltă 8.093 de *exponenți* din 60 de țări…" – instead of (in the article titled *Din lumea calculatoarelor. Pregătiri pentru CeBIT 2002 – Hanovra*, in *Adevărul*, no. 3632, Febr. 23, 2002).

Within the scope of the lexical segment here analyzed, the cases of pleonasm can occur all the more frequently as the semantics of the technical/ specialized terms is less familiar to the common speaker; it is obvious though that the said semantic "opaqueness" can, in most cases, be accounted for through etymological reasons. Therefore, expressions like the ones below are fully censurable: "Am făcut *pleurită la plămâni*" (TVR1), "*averse de ploaie* mai sunt posibile şi la munte" (*Evenimentul zilei*, no. 1473, May 4, 1997, p. 8), "[revoluție] ai cărei *principali protagonişti* au fost tinerii" (*Adevărul*, no. 1, Dec. 25, 1989, p. 3), "încălcare a oricărei *deontologii profesionale*" (*Jurnalul Național*, no. 1863, July 10, 1999, p. 8), "guvernul va fi pus în situația de a organiza un *referendum popular*" (*Jurnalul Național*, no. 1863, July 10, 1999, p. 10). The same manifestation of redundant verbosity is basically at the bottom of occurrences like "colectarea unui *procent de 1%* din impozitele percepute pentru clădiri" (*România liberă*, no. 2893, Sept. 29, 1999, p. 24); cf. also „o *cantitate de 30 de tone* de lignit", "un *număr de 25* de vagoane". On the other hand, there are pleonastic expressions (which, plethorically and redundantly, double the dictionary definition of the nuclear term) intended to highlight the meaning of the terms, or specifiy them within the respective context, e.g. "a fost cumpărată prin *licitație publică*" (*Lumea*, no. 4021, July 19, 2003, p. 4), "dictatorul (…) făcuse din el un *monopol personal*" (*Adevărul*, no. 5, Dec. 29, 1989, p. 4). At other times, we can come across pleonastic expressions that occur in strict conjunction with the syntactic vicinity making up the context in question, e.g. "*intravilanul localității* respective" (*Evenimentul zilei*, no. 1473, May 4, 1997, p. 3), "Complexul (…) va găzdui *vernisajul expoziției* de pictură", etc. A phrase like "(…) să interzică difuzarea *spotului publicitar*" (*Bravo*, no. 26, Dec. 10, 2001, p. 6) cannot be censured, as a matter of strict principle – although one of the meanings of Eng. *spot*, when not accompanied by atributive extensions, is "a short period between regular television or radio programmes that is used for advertising" (COLL), or "a short presentation or commercial on television or radio between major programs: *a news spot*" (AHD). The very same word *spot* (usually accompanied by such attributive extensions as *luminos* or *de lumină*) also occurs in physics, but it is hard to believe that the common user of the language, or even the TV producer who is concerned with broadcasting the respective *spoturi… publicitare* (cf. the illustration provided the second definition above – viz. *a news spot* – which is quite distinct from the strict domain of advertisement), know anything about the respective scientific



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meaning, so that they should be wary about avoiding a confusion, by adding an adjectival qualification.

Concluding, we can only accentuate the need for a special treatment of the technical/ (highly) specialized lexicon of Romanian, both by linguists (mainly lexicographers) and educationalists, and the public at large.

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## Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to analyse and illustrate a number of sources of difficulty current in the Romanian vocabulary of science and technology. Such 'pitfalls' as the plural or gender form of certain nouns, the conjugation of certain verbs, the existence of a number of semantic-functional variants, paronymy, folk etymology and latent folk etymology, analogy and hypercorrection are treated, most of them supported by the ad-hoc assessment of their recording by the current dictionaries of Romanian. Special attention is also paid to some relevant semantic improprieties, including pleonasm.

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