# *THE STANDARDIZATION OF THE ROMANIAN LITERARY LANGUAGE IN THE ROMANIAN GRAMMAR OF ION HELIADE RĂDULESCU*

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***Abstract:*** *Ion Heliade Rădulescu was one of the most remarkable personalities in the Romanian culture. He was considered the creator of modern grammar because, during his linguistic activity, he was involved in the process of reinforcing the canons of the Romanian literary language. Moreover, in 1828, he published* The Romanian Grammar, *a study which included a series of problems related to the standardization of the language. As the standardization had a key role in the evolution of the language, he dealt with problems associated with the spelling, on the one hand, and with the enrichment of the vocabulary, on the other hand. Furthermore, Heliade thought of adopting the model of religious writings, as a basis for the further development and unification of the literary language. His aim was to create a unitary language that could be used in different fields of activity.*

***Keywords:*** *linguistics, standardization, Romanian grammar.*

## 1. Ion Heliade Rădulescu - an ideologist of the language

Ion Heliade Rădulescu (1802-1872) was a remarkable personality in the Romanian culture in the first half of the 19th century. The cultural activity in the Principalities was totally dominated by him; this fact creating a real Heliade moment in our Romanian culture.

The discussions about the development of the language were predominant over the 19th century. The linguists were discussing firstly about the establishment of some spelling rules, then about creating some new dictionaries and new grammar books. All these trials had an important role in the evolution of the language. Ion Heliade Rădulescu was a pioneer in this domain and for this reason he laid the bases of a society called *Romanian Academic Society* in 1866, which later (in 1879) became *Romanian Academy (Academia Română)*.

The problem of the standardization of the Romanian language turned into a very important subject at that time due to the fast developing of the Romanian culture. Moreover, the standardization implies an encoding of the language, and the trial that sustain this process became practical by developing grammars, spelling books and normative dictionaries. The first half of the 19th century is characterized by the affirmation of the writers that belong to the Forty-Eighters generation, a seamless generation that was fighting for the accomplisment of a common goal: the unification of the Romanian literary language: "Țălul nostru este realizația dorinței ca românii să aibă o limbă și o literatură comună pentru toți". On this line, the embracement of some unitary canons was compulsory.

The need of using a modern language was formed due to a general opinion according to which the Romanian language was situated, in the 19th century, at a lower

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level of development, in contrast with other Romanic languages. That is to say, the linguists tried to discharge the language of its archaic level of development.

An important role in the unification of the Romanian literary language came to Ion Heliade Rădulescu; he hall-marked the whole process of synchronization of the culture with the century, without giving up on the idea of a national identity. In fact, this aspect was, in other words, the ideal that guided an entire generation - the Forty-Eighters. Ion Heliade Rădulescu focused on the standardization phenomenon, continuing the undertakings of the Transylvanian School. He defined the language cultivation as a personal mission he had in a letter to his Moldavian correspondent, Costache Negruzzi, in 1836: "A cultiva o limbă, va să zică a o curăți de tot ce nu o poate face să înainteze, de tot ce nu este al său și nici nu poate simpatiza cu dânsa" (Macrea, 1970: 136). Furthermore, Heliade's interest for studying the Romanian language is an idea that comes from the Enlightenment period.

The process of unification and standardization of the Romanian language was guided by the language spoken in Walachia and a proper explanation for this is the fact that the literary language had, from its beginnings, a Walachian pattern; furthermore, Ion Heliade Rădulescu assessed the Walachian patterns also in the writing of the Moldavians, in the 19th century. Heliade's linguistic evolution had two stages: the first stage was marked by the elaboration of some theories regarding the standardization and the unification of the literary language, while the second stage displayed the writer's excessive predilection for italienism.

### 2. Linguistic approaches in the *Romanian Grammar*

Ion Heliade Rădulescu's linguistic direction within 1841 is sustained by the publication of the most known normative work in the period, the *Romanian Grammar*; firstly, the study went as a manuscipt as far back as 1820, being published in 1828, at Sibiu. It was inspired by the model of the French philologist Charles-Constant Le Tellier. Heliade's *Grammar* imposed as a real linguistic landmark in the age and all the other studies about grammar did not come to the same level. Heliade, a real "language theoretician" (Haneș, 1904: 43), created a book that distinguished among others by stating a series of canons in a pertinent way. The appearance of the book was determined especially by educational reasons; moreover, its importance consists of the further developing of the Romanian language. Also, one of the book's objectives was the correction of the language.

Regarding the table of contents, the *Romanian Grammar* is composed of Introduction (Prefață) and five parts, being an integer in which all the author's theories about the modernization of the language are gathered. The Introduction has a key role because it represents a premise, a bridge that makes possible the connection with the further analyses offered in the book. The Introduction includes the main vocabulary aspects: on the one hand, the spelling (which will be developed in the final part of the book), and on the other hand, the problem of the neologism. In addition to this, the Introduction is one of the parts that has helped Heliade to be on the rise in comparison to the other Forty Eighters. Also, the book brings forward the linguistic outlook of Ion Heliade Rădulescu, along with the solutions offered by him in order to solve the language problems.

The standardization of the Romanian language was an essential condition for its evolution, existing a general agreement in the acceptance of the idea that the Romanian literary language is based on the liturgical language of the 18th century. Led



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by the faith that the language was one of the main agencies for developing the national unity, Heliade imposed this idea in the respective period, declining all the latinists' trials at that time: "Limba bisericească dă rumânului nişte tipi obşteşti, însă în puncia şi faşele sale, căci se află cuvinte în deosebite noroade rumâneşti, cum şi tipi gramaticali, dar cu mult mai clasici şi mai regulaţi decât cei scrişi până acum" (Costinescu, 1979: 55).

Another important aspect of the standardization of the language is the progressive replacement of the Cyrilic alphabet with the Latin one. To this effect, Heliade suggests, in the first instance, that the Cyrilic script should be reduced to 29 letters. The criterion that underlies this resolution is a phonetic one: "pentru fieştecare sunet şi pentru fieştecare glas câte un semn, adică câte o slovă" (Heliade Rădulescu, 1980: 542). The Slavonian letters are considered by Heliade inappropriate: "Literele slavone sunt haine nepotrivite pentru limba noastră, care îşi poate lua din magazia cea mare şi bogată a maicei sale veştmintele dorite şi pe măsura ei" (Heliade Rădulescu, 1973: 16). Appart from the phonetic criterion, Heliade was guided by the idea of national dignity: "Limbii române îi şade mai bine a se înfăţişa în veştmintele ei cele vechi care au fost pentru dânsa, a se înfăţişa adică scrisă cu litere strămoşeşti" (*ibidem*, 16). Through this spelling transformation, Heliade becomes the creator of the transition alphabet, a stage that finishes in 1841, when the Latin letters monopolize the writing of all the texts at that time. The spelling is defined as the art of writing corectly: "meşteşugul de a scrie drept şi cu judecată zicerile oricărei limbi" (Macrea, *op. cit.* : 138). With the help of the grammar, Heliade encouraged the phonetic writing in the Romanian language.

The problem of the enrichment of the vocabulary, proposed in the *Introduction* of the book, is another interesting aspect which takes part in the process of the language standardization. Concerning vocabulary, Heliade exposed three main problems. Firstly, he talked about the enrichment of vocabulary so that it can be able to easily express the ideas of a modern science which was in progress. Secondly, he proposed the replacement of non-Latin words. Thirdly, he suggested the embracement of some Latin terms in order to express new notions that did not have correspondents in the Romanian vocabulary.

According to Heliade, the enrichment of vocabulary can be made in two ways: on the one hand, by forming words with the help of intrinsic means, and on the other hand, by loaning words from other languages. Heliade relieves the problem of the neologisms due to a cultural necessity, in the sense that, through the enrichment and the arrangement of the old language, it will be created a new language. This new language will be an instrument of communication in all domains: "Acela care cunoaşte şi ştie mai multe lucruri, a aceluia limbă este şi mai bogată în vorbe şi mai plăcută" (*ibidem*, 552). Heliade makes recommendations about the loanwords from the Romanic languages, that should be done within bounds: "Trebuie să ne împrumutăm, dar trebuie să luăm numai acelea ce ne trebuie şi de acolo de unde ne trebuie şi cum ne trebuie" (*ibidem*, 553). Moreover, he assesses the embracement of the neologisms: "Vorbele streine trebuie să se înfăţoşeze în haine rumâneşti şi cu mască de Rumân înaintea noastră" ( *ibidem*, 553).

The *Romanian Grammar* is an important book through its Introduction and its table of contents; this represents a unit of aspects which led to making Heliade's point: the standardization of the Romanian language. The publication consists of three main chapters: etymology, syntax and spelling and deals with ten parts of speech that still exist nowadays in the Romanian language. Besides, the book starts with a definition of the grammar: "Grămmătic'a este unŭ meşteşugŭ prin care învăţămŭ să cunoaştemŭ o limbă a o vorbi şi a o scri' întocmaĭ după însuşirile şi firea ei" (*Ibidem*, 73). This



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definition highlights the practical outlook about the language. Also, it defines the grammar as a study of the language structure, from different points of view: descriptive, normative and historical. Heliade tries to discover and to set the language rules in an accurate way and this attempt represents, in fact, the apparition of an extraordinary moment in the evolution of the linguistic thinking, which played an important role in the foundation of the Romanian literary language. At a morphological level, Heliade prefers the Walachian canons against the Moldavian ones. Some of the most important issues are linked to verbal forms, auxiliaries or degrees of comparison for adjectives. Both the classifications and the theories proposed by the linguist can be easily recognized in the modern grammar used nowadays, which means that Heliade's purpose was fulfilled. The syntax is made upon the model of Le Tellier's French grammar and it demonstrates the following problems: concord, syntactical relations between clauses and description of the syntax categories. In other words, a first attempt of describing the language syntax begins to form. Heliade's contribution to the language is an important one but, beginning with the year 1841, he abandons this line and strikes to the italienism.

### 3. Conclusions

The process of reinforcing the modern literary language started due to an imperative need of expression in a new language which will become a communication tool in various domains. Ion Heliade Rădulescu was a pioneer on this line. He had a well-known contribution to the modernization of the language and his philologic activity played an exceeding part in the development of the Romanian literary language, being thankworthy at that time. Moreover, Mihai Eminescu considered him the father of the language, a language that is still spoken nowadays.

The *Romanian Grammar* is a study that has a normative essence and Heliade's role in developing the language is huge and undoubted. He became the creator of the modern grammar, a true adviser in language problems. His linguistic activity influenced the whole process of the language unification and went a long way towards the reinforcing of the Romanian literary canons. That is to say, all his trials were intented upon creating a perfect and correct language.

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