CHILDREN AS CREATORS OF NAMES

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ABSTRACT

Children are named, *at birth*, *by the adults*, *but in the onomastic repertoire from which the names are selected there are surprisingly many names derived from hypocorisms. These are variants pronounced as such by children in the stage of language acquisition – short names*, *phonetically simple and associated with caressing nuances. In time*, *they are taken and used by the adults and can become first-names or even last-names*, *the percentage of which is significant in Romanian.*

Key words: *children*, *creators*, *hypocorisms*, *first-names*, *last-names*

In every culture, children are named at birth by the adults – parents, grandparents, relatives, representatives of religious institutions and so on – each of them has a well-established role in this full of multiple meanings act. There are differences – sometimes very important ones – between one society and another, between one age and another, between one community and another, and even between one place and another. What one finds in every situation is the link between adults as "those who give names" and children as "those who are given names".

At a closer look, one can discover that this seemingly simple relation hides detailed aspects which, if put together, can complicate the linear image existing in our mind as far as the "creation" and the "giving" of people's names in a community is concerned. These aspects have been overlooked, deliberately or not, including by the specialists in onomastics, either because they did not notice them or because they minimized them.

For instance, they ignored that children, in their turn, contribute to the enrichment and renewing of the onomastic repertoire by creating *sui-generis* names. In fact, this phenomenon is in keeping with the general tendency of children to acquire the first words in a simplified form, in order to be able to pronounce them while their articulatory abilities are still in the process of development. For example, the words with which children "call" the people who look afer them and stay with them most of the time, first of all *mama* ("mother") and *tata* ("father") are pronounced, as one can see, by repeating a simple syllable. These words are sympathetically imitated by the adults and end in becoming established, at least in the familiar language.

It is very well known that the Romanian language inherited from Latin these words – *mama* and *tata* – taken from the children's language and not the words used in the literary Latin – *MATER* and *PATER* – preserved in

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the other Romanic languages[1]. This phenomenon is in keeping with the more general tendency of the Latin vocabulary inherited by the Romanian from Latin becoming rustic, simplified and rendered dry because of the decline of the Daco-Roman population's level of civilization in the period following the Roman army and administration leaving Dacia, in 271 A.D. Moreover, the links with Rome and its literary language being severed, the Romanian language was formed and evolved until the modern period without being obstructed by the cultivated Latin influences, which led to some linguists' appreciation that it developed as a "language in freedom", which consequently gave rise to a language "less fixed" than the other Romanic languages[2].

A confirmation of the "relaxed" way in which Romanian evolved is the active role of children's language in creating and establishing numerous proper names marked as "familiar" in the Romanian onomastics. The cause of these names' formation is the one mentioned above, the difficulty to pronounce in the early stages of language acquisition and the conditions which allowed their becoming established in the familiar language and frequently in the common language is what was properly called the high **acceptance** by the Romanian of the "lower" linguistic elements, belonging to popular, familiar, infantile language[3].

The model of those names was not only the two emblematic terms *mamă* and *tată*, but also the numerous words by which the children address their relatives – grandparents, elder brothers and sisters and so on (*baba*, *bubu*, *bunu*, *butu*, *mae*, *tae*, *nene*, *nană*, *bade*, *dadă*, *gagă*, *dodă*, etc.). It is not relevant for our discussion that these words could have been borrowed from various languages Romanian came into contact with, but their being taken-over and acquired is important. If we talked about their origin, some may have multiple ethymology: created in Romanian as hypocorisms and borrowed from other languages, where they probably functioned as hypocorisms, as well. The forms resulted from the awkward, simplified pronunciation of the "full" names were termed **hypocorisms** by the linguists, emphasizing their caressing afective connotation[4], by transferring the feelings of the adults for children to the words the latter pronounce. Many of these hypocorisms are individual, non-repeatable, depending on every child's "trial" to pronounce, as well as on how they were "heard" and "reproduced" by the adults who took them over and imitated. For example, a child was taught by the adults in the family that his

[1] Iancu Fischer, *Latina dunăreană. Introducere în istoria limbii române*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1985: 135.

[2] Alexandru Niculescu, „Permisivitatea limbii române – o problemă socioculturală", în *Studii lingvistice. Omagiu profesoarei Gabriela Pană Dindelegan*, *la aniversare*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti, 2007: 417-420.

[3] *Ibidem*: 418-419.

[4] Christian Ionescu, *Mică enciclopedie onomastică*, Bucureşti, Editura Enciclopedică Română, 1975: 10.

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gradmother is *mămica Aurora*, a syntagm very difficult to pronounce at his age, which he simplified, pronouncing *Micalola*, a form which was repeated by the adults and become grandmother's "new name". These unique forms can be found in many families and they have an exceptional sentimental value, but they have little significance for the general repertoire of proper names. Yet, there are other variants, created by certain *formative laws*, one could say, a kind of tendencies resulted from the lines of the minimal articulating effort. These having an identical form in many individual situations, they can be more widely used socially and can become part of the names repertoire from which those who create new names draw their inspiration, initially as variants of the "full" names, then as independent names.

A numerically well represented category includes the names formed by repeating a syllable, usually the first one, of the full word (on the model of *mamă*, *tată*, *babă*, *nene*, *dadă*, etc.): *Bibi*, *Bebe*, *Bubu*, *Bobo*, *Cici*, *Coco*, *Didi*, *Dede*, *Dodo*, *Fifi*, *Fefe*, *Fofo*, *Gigi*, *Gogo*, *Gugu*, *Lili*, *Lolo*, *Lala*, *Mimi*, *Momo*, *Meme*, *Nini*, *Nana*, *Nono*, *Pepe*, *Sisi*, *Toto*, *Titi*, *Țiți*, *Țuțu*, *Vava*, *Zizi*, *Zozo*, *Zaza*, etc.). Sure enough, these names sometimes do form specific variants for the feminine and for the masculine, respectively: *Coca*, *Dida*, *Dodu*, *Gogu*, *Goga*, *Lila*, *Lola*, *Nina*, *Tita*, *Vova*, etc.

Other two-syllable hypocorisms can keep two different consonants from the full word: *Bică*, *Busu*, *Bițu*, *Cora*, *Coşa*, *Ducu*, *Duța*, *Duțu*, *Duță*, *Dora*, *Fana*, *Fane*, *Fira*, *Fina*, *Gicu*, *Gica*, *Gică*, *Gina*, *Doru*, *Dora*, *Dori*, *Mina*, *Minu*, *Mină*, *Mită*, *Mitu*, *Mițu*, *Miță*, *Mecu*, *Nica*, *Nicu*, *Nică*, *Nilă*, *Nelă*, *Nelu*, *Picu*, *Pică*, *Piru*, *Pir*ă, *Rică*, *Rica*, *Sică*, *Sicu*, *Sica*, *Şoni*, *Tică*, *Ticu*, *Tinu*, *Tină*, *Vicu*, *Vica*, *Vilu*, *Vilă*, *Zica*, *Zicu*, *Zina*, etc. One can notice that either the initial sequence of the full names or the final one is kept.

Similar to the first two categories are the hypocorisms, also two-syllabled, which include a single consonant between two vowels (the same repeated vowel or two different vowels): *Ada*, *Adi*, *Ala*, *Ama*, *Ana*, *Ema*, *Emi*, *Eta*, *Ene*, *Ena*, *Ela*, *Ica*, *Ina*, *Ila*, *Ira*, *Uca*, *Uța*, etc. Others begin with the consonant, followed by two vowels in hiatus or by a diphthong: *Bia*, *Biu*, *Cela*, *Dia*, *Diu*, *Lia*, *Mia*, *Miu*, *Nae*, *Pia*, *Raia*, *Şia*, *Tia*, *Țiu*, etc.

Some consonants, apparently preferred in children's pronunciation, form "series" of names by changing the vowel segment next to the consonant: *Miu*, *Mia*, *Micu*, *Mica*, *Mihu*, *Miha*, *Minu*, *Mina*, *Mitu*, *Mişu*, *Miş*a, *Nae*, *Nela*, *Nelu*, *Nelă*, *Nicu*, *Nica*, *Nică*, *Dia*, *Decu*, *Deca*, *Dică*, *Ducu*, *Duțu*, *Duță*, *Lia*, *Licu*, *Lica*, *Lică*, *Luşu*, *Luluş*, *Luță*, *Luța*, *Pia*, *Picu*, *Pica*, *Pucu*, *Sia*, *Sică*, *Sicu*, *Sile*, *Tia*, *Ticu*, *Tica*, *Tică*, *Vali*, *Vicu*, *Vică*, *Vilă*, *Vica*, etc.

In this case, the systematizing force amplifies the individual, so-called "creations". The monosyllabic hypocorisms are less numerous and they consist of a vowel placed between two consonants; by adding the final *-u*, as definite article, they could become two-syllable words: *Boc*, *Ban*, *Bud*, *Bot*, *Dan*, *Gog*, *Luc*, *Nan*, *Pic*, *Puc*, *Pir*, *Sic*, *Tit*, *Tic*, *Tac*, *Țuc*, *Vuc*, etc.

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Many of these names, resulted from the reduction of the word's phonetic length, are easily amplified by means of creating diminutives; in many instances, children's language could have contributed to the creation of the new names: *Bănuş*, *Bănuț*, *Coruț*, *Dănuț*, *Neluț*, *Neluc*, *Neluş*, *Neluțu*, *Neluța*, *Reluț*, *Reluța*, *Reluțu*, *Neguț*, *Mihuț*, *Mituț*, *Săluc*, *Văluț*, *Văluțu*, *Văsuț*.

The examples we provided are active hypocorisms in today's familiar language. In older stages of the language, there existed many other hypocorisms created in Romanian or borrowed from other languages, especially from the Slavic ones, where this phenomenon is widely encountered. Ioan Pătruț[5] proved that, together with the huge number of hypocorisms borrowed from the old Slavic and the Neo-Slavic languages, made of micro-systems ordered in accordance with roots and suffixes (e.g. *Baba*, *Bada*, *Bado*, *Badjo*, *Bade*, *Bagjo*, *Bazo*, *Bajo*, *Bako*, *Bake*, *Balo*, *Baljo*, *Bane*, *Bano*, *Bana*, *Baro*, *Barjo*, *Baso*, *Base*, *Bato*, *Batjo*, *Bach*, *Bacho*, *Baca*, *Bace*, *Baco*, *Bača*, *Bačo*, *Başa*, *Başo*), the Romanian language also borrowed the formation mechanism of such hypocorisms, which was productive especially in the old Romanian. Today, it is difficult to tell which of these names were borrowed and which were made by the Romanians. For the purpose of this study, it is important that, somehow, at first, these names were – in Romanian or in another language they were borrowed from – hypocorisms, emerged from the children's language. Their sheer number is amazing, if we take into account that there are dozens of such micro-systems (each of them including over ten hypocorisms).

Most hypocoristic "families" are formed starting from very common first-names: *Ana*, *Anastasia*, *Anton*, *Atanasie*, *Benedict*, *Constantin*, *Cristian*, *Dan*, *Dumitru*, *Elena*, *Emanuel*, *Eugen*, *Gabriel*, *Gheorghe*, *Grigore*, *Ilie*, *Ion*, *Marcu*, *Maria*, *Matei*, *Mihai*, *Nicolae*, *Pantelimon*, *Paraschiva*, *Paul*, *Petru*, *Radu*, *Simion*, *Ştefan*, *Timotei*, *Toma*, *Tudor*, *Vasile*, *Vladimir*. In Romanian or in other languages they are borrowed from, dozens of hypocorisms are made from each of these first-names and later they become expressively neutralized and enter the current onomastic repertoire. For example, in the "family" of the name *Gheorghe* we find, according to Christian Ionescu, the hypocoristic names *Ghiță*, *Ganea*, *Ghica*, *Gherga*, *Ghergu*, *Gherguş*, *Gorghi*, *Gog*, *Goga*, *Gogan*, *Gogea*, *Gogotă*, *Gogu*, *Goguță*, *Guță*, *Ghiura*, *Ghiureş*, *Giura*, *Giurea*, *Giurău*, *Giuroiu*, *Giuran*, *Giurcă*, *Giurcan*, *Iorga*, *Iorgea*, *Iorgu*, *Iorda*, *Iuca*, *Iucaş*, *Iucşa*, *Iucu*, *Giurgiu*, *Georgiu*, *Giurgea*, *Giurgin*, *Giurjea*, *Jurj*, *Jurg*, *Jurga*, *Jurgea*, *Jurja*, *Jurje*, *Jura*, *Jurea*, *Jurel*, *Iurg*, *Iurga*, *Iura*, *Iuraş*, *Iurie*, *Iurii*, *Urie*, *Iureş*, *Iurca*, *Iuga*, *Iugan*, *Iugaş*, *Gogiu*, *Gorea*, *Goța*, *Goțea*, *Goțu*, *Gota*, *Gotea*, *Gheța*, *Ghețea*, *Zorz*, *Zorza*, *Zorzila*, *Gina*, *Gică*, *Gela*, *Jorj*, *Gea*, *Gora*, *Ghera*, *Gherea*, *Gheşea*, *Georgi*, *Georg*, *Jörg*, *Györi*, *Gyura*,

[5] Ioan Pătruț, *Onomastică românească*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiințifică şi Enciclopedică, 1980.

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Györe, *Györk*, *Györgyi*, *Jurja*, *Iorgo*. The first-name *Elena* gave birth to over 20 hypocorisms: *Olena*, *Leana*, *Lena*, *Elina*, *Leanca*, *Lencuța*, *Ilina*, *Lina*, *Ileana*, *Lenuța*, *Lența*, *Ilinca*, *Linca*, *Elenca*, *Elencu*, *Lenca*, *Alena*, *Leni*, *Lenuş*, *Ela*, *Lili*, *Elen*, *Nelly*, *Ilona*, *Aliona*.

We avoided including in the list the diminutives made from hypocorisms (*Georgel*, *Giorgică*, *Ilenuca*, *Ilenuța*), which would have greatly amplified the respective "families".

As one can see, most of the hypocorisms borrowed or created in old Romanian are no longer active today, the dynamics of the language having replaced them with others, resulted from new names, different from those in the Medieval onomastic repertoire. They can be found in documents as well as in first- and last-names as anthroponyms which lost their familiar connotation.

The number of the first-names resulting from hypocorisms is significant. For example, many phone-users registered in the telephone directory in Bucharest and Ilfov County, whose last-name start with *A*, have such hypocorisms as first names: *Culiță*, *Mitică*, *Dorin*, *Ogică*, *Raisa*, *Dan*, *Stan*, *Radu*, *Dinița*, *Sanda*, *Anica*, *Dănuț*, *Dorel*, *Gica*, *Gică*, *Tița*, *Costel*, *Costin*, *Didina*, *Miluța*, *Zoia*, *Dorinel*, *Gena*, *Aura*, *Aurică*, *Dinu*, *Mira*, *Aurel*, *Mila*, *Sava*, *Ada*, *Jănică*, *Rada*, *Anița*, *Badea*, *Duțu*, *Zina*, *Aneta*, *Mişu*, *Mitu*, *Roza*, *Onu*, *Fănică*, *Daria*, *Lina*, *Săvel*, *Ionel*, *Liuba*, *Sinica*, *Chira*, *Lenuța*, *Milica*, *Raisa*, *Rădița*, *Octav*, *Dorel*, *Nică*, *Mina*, *Sandu*, *Voicu*, *Lili*, *Vlad*, *Jana*, *Jenică*, *Gogu*, *Ene*, *Iana*, *Nela*, *Nelu*, *Nicu*, *Nina*, *Niță*, *Olga*, *Safta*, *Sanda*, *Sora*, *Vica*, *Bița*, *Atela*, *Fănică*, *Sorica*, *Stănică*, *Leanca*, *Rita*, *Sima*, *Sița*, *Stana*, *Vili*, *Doru*, *Gelu*, *Dana*, *Siana*, *Sterie*, *Uță*, *Caty*, *Gabi*, *Gina*, *Jeni*, *Joița*, *Lică*, *Linca*, *Maricel*, *Mița*, *Nicuşor*, *Simina*, *State*, *Tache*, *Tase*, *Veta*, *Zoica*, *Catița*, *Geta*, *Bebe*, *Manea*, *Manda*, *Mimi*, *Staicu*, *Tatu*, *Lory*, *Gafia*, *Tisa*, *Edie*, *Tinca*, *Costin*, *Titu*, *Frusina*, *Gigel*, *Sava*, *Doreta*, *Nicula*, *Blaju*, *Mioara*, *Bela*, *Alida*, *Cristea*, *Lelia*, *Lizica*, *Tasi*, *Finița*, *Magda*, *Niculina*, *Savu*, *Sorel*, *Titel*, *Relu*, *Vera*, *Velea*, *Lenuța*, *Fănel*, *Lilia*, *Lilica*, *Mirela*, *Lorica*, *Miorica*, *Daria*, *Pena*, *Voica*, *Viki*, *Fănică*, *Lorica*, *Norica*, *Benone*, *Costică*, *Dobre*, *Dorina*, *Enuța*, *Fănică*, *Ghiță*, *Janeta*, *Leana*, *Maura*, *Mia*, *Magoş*, *Neagu*, *Nița*, *Puiu*, *Vică*, *Zinca*, *Zaca*, *Bran*, *Cleo*, *Stana*, *Tincuța*, *Aristina*, *Vița*, *Nuțu*, *Berta*, *Darița*, *Lia*, *Vanda*, *Catinca*, *Geni*, *Ionuț*, *Alla*, *Ghioala*, *Măndel*, *Monica*, *Maricel*, *Pina*, *Bălaşa*, *Denisa*, *Araş*, *Hantz*, *Andi*, *Dina*, *Lea*, *Neacşu*, *Dochița*, *Steriu*, *Stere*, *Tuța*, *Gabi*, *Milu*, *Ginel*, *Fila*, *Raiciu*, *Rică*, *Marica*, *Nuța*, *Tania*, *Ilse*, *Renee*, *Stelică*, *Vintilă*, *Tănase*, *Janina*, *Vera*, *Lina*, *Petria*, *Stroe*, *Stăvru*, *Ticluța*, *Titi*, *Catrine*, *Cela*, *Emil*, *Mihuța*, *Onela*, *Rariță*, *Satina*, *Sica*, *Manea*, *Hana*, *Ghenca*, *Aranka*, *Lizuca*.

Most of these names appear more than once in the list, and some of them appear frequently as they are usual first-names nowadays.

More profoundly integrated in the Romanian names repertoire are those hypocorisms which, after initially being first-names, have become last-names, either in absolute form or followed by specific suffixes. In order

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to suggest the extent of the phenomenon, we present the list of last-names which most probably contain a former hypocorism invested with the function of designating the members of a family: *Pacă*, *Pacea*, *Paceag*, *Pache*, *Pachețeanu*, *Pachițac*, *Pachiței*, *Pacioianu*, *Paciu*, *Paciurea*, *Paclu*, *Pagău*, *Pah*, *Paica*, *Paicu*, *Pais*, *Paisa*, *Paiu*, *Paiuc*, *Paizi*, *Pajoga*, *Palaş*, *Palcan*, *Palcă*, *Palcău*, *Palcu*, *Palea*, *Paly*, *Panu*, *Panac*, *Panache*, *Panal*, *Pancu*, *Păncescu*, *Panchea*, *Pancă*, *Pancea*, *Pancianu*, *Pancilă*, *Panciu*, *Panciuc*, *Panco*, *Panculescu*, *Pandia*, *Pandichi*, *Pandici*, *Pandil*, *Pandrea*, *Pandrescu*, *Panea*, *Panescu*, *Panghe*, *Pangol*, *Pani*, *Panica*, *Panici*, *Paniş*, *Panişca*, *Panița*, *Pankov*, *Panov*, *Panovici*, *Panovschi*, *Panpu*, *Pantă*, *Pantea*, *Panteş*, *Pantoş*, *Panțescu*, *Panțu*, *Panțuc*, *Paraicu*, *Parasca*, *Parascan*, *Parascu*, *Parava*, *Parchiu*, *Parciulea*, *Parciuc*, *Pardău*, *Pascu*, *Pasca*, *Paştin*, *Paşcu*, *Paşote*, *Patea*, *Patei*, *Patin*, *Pato*, *Pața*, *Pațac*, *Pațiu*, *Pan*, *Pava*, *Paven*, *Pavlov*, *Pavlu*, *Păhu*, *Păianu*, *Păiuc*, *Picău*, *Pănescu*, *Pănoiu*, *Păncescu*, *Pănculescu*, *Pănțescu*, *Pănuş*, *Pănuşița*, *Părnicel*, *Părnuş*, *Păşălan*, *Păşcălău*, *Pățan*, *Păuceanu*, *Păchea*, *Pechi*, *Peci*, *Pegza*, *Peiu*, *Peia*, *Peica*, *Peicin*, *Peiciu*, *Peicu*, *Peiulescu*, *Pelea*, *Pelu*, *Pena*, *Penca*, *Pencea*, *Pencescu*, *Pencia*, *Pencioiu*, *Penciu*, *Penciulescu*, *Penda*, *Penea*, *Pienel*, *Penescu*, *Peneş*, *Peneuş*, *Penev*, *Penga*, *Penica*, *Penteş*, *Pentilescu*, *Penția*, *Pențoiu*, *Penu*, *Penuaş*, *Pera*, *Percuş*, *Perda*, *Persu*, *Perşa*, *Perşoiu*, *Peta*, *Petcu*, *Pețu*, *Peța*, *Pețea*, *Pică*, *Piciu*, *Picu*, *Pința*, *Piuță*, *Pințescu*, *Pircu*, *Pirchiu*, *Pîrlea*, *Piso*, *Pişu*, *Pişotă*, *Pitea*, *Pitiu*, *Pitu*, *Pizza*, *Pița*, *Pițuc*, *Pițulescu*, *Pântea*, *Pârcată*, *Pârtea*, *Pâşcă*, *Plapşa*, *Ponto*, *Pontescu*, *Postu*, *Poşa*, *Praicu*, *Prodea*, *Prozu*, *Proşac*, *Puşcu*.

Finally, we must stress once again that some of the examples we provided are not “living” and active hypocorisms today. They were so in older stages of the Romanian language, before becoming anthroponyms, they could have been formed by analogue systematization, on the model of other “paradigms” or could have been borrowed from other languages, especially Slavic, Modern Greek or Hungarian, where they had functioned as hypocorisms.

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