THE CONCEPT OF *MIGRATION*: LINGUISTIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL COORDINATES

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Abstract

This paper approaches the concept of migration through the use of linguistic (terminological) and sociological coordinates. The terms belonging to lexical micro-families which are related due to their common initial verb are, in Romanian, mainly borrowed from French. Few of them have a multiple (from several sources) etymology. As they might be found in general dictionaries of current Romanian, the definitions of terms concerning migration as a phenomenon are rather simple and limited. Our sociological considerations come to complete the content of such definitions, to describe the possible types of migration and the phenomenon involving individuals who belong to different cultures.

Key words: *migration, semantics, lexical families, borrowed terms, cultural system*

Résumé

Nous présentons dans cet article le concept de: «migration», à l'aide des reflets que celui-ci engendre en sociologie et en linguistique (terminologie). Dans l'état ou elles se trouvent actuellement dans les dictionnaires du roumain d'usage général, les définitions données aux termes ayant trait au phénomène de la migration sont simples et limitées, n'offrant point le niveau d'information désirable. Les considérations de nature sociologique viennent compléter le contenu desdites définitions, décrivent les divers types de migration et les phénomènes concernant les individus appartenant à des cultures différentes les unes des autres. Les termes concernant la migration en roumain appartiennent souvent à des micro-familles lexicales apparentées parce que provenant d'un verbe de base commun. Pour la plupart, il s'agit d'emprunts du français, quelques uns présentant une étymologie multiple.

Mots-clés: *migration, sémantique, famille lexicale, emprunt, système culturel*

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration is not a recent discovery as an object of study. Long time ago, it drew the attention of many researchers who belonged to diverse fields (demography experts, sociologists, geographers, economists). Each of them analyzed it from his own perspective, so they diverged one from another, each of them elaborating schemes and theories as explanations of the process. For whatever period of time we might look at, the movement across territories was caused by various motivations, and was carried on with different intensity. There are a lot of perspectives from which the phenomenon of migration might be explained, because it raises a wide range of issues. Though commonly known as the mobility of populations across territories, migration is not confined to simple movements in space. On the contrary, it is a much more complex process. In order to solve its equation, a lot of elements should be taken into account. There are plenty of mechanisms which might be able to

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initiate it or to influence it, while the effects it may generate are equally abundant. Several sides of human life come to be affected by such consequences, involving the realms of social life, religion, culture, economy, politics. These effects necessarily occur in two locations: at the starting point of migration, wherefrom the possible migrants are held to leave, and at the destination point. For the former location, a "void" is created (since close families and, generally, the local community – especially if it is a rural one – should experience the absence of migrants as a painful loss). For the latter location, where migrants have chosen to settle down, the created issues concern – particularly in matters like accommodation and employment – the appropriate ways in which the newcomers could be integrated in and/or absorbed by their new community. An appropriate approach to this phenomenon (the most useful one in respect of scientific research), should aim to reunite the points of view of scholars with various training (sociologists, demography experts, geographers, economists, jurists, etc.). Yet, in real life, the existing approaches are, in most cases, strongly unilateral. Thereby, significant details able to complete the phenomenon overwiew picture come to be ignored. In most cases, the studies on migration are carried out by demography experts. Generally, scientists have identified two essential component sides of the process: the territorial side (predilect field for demography experts, who operate in terms of statistic indices that reflect quantities, but which is also theoretically studied within other disciplines), and the social side (which is impossible to reduce to common social relationships, and professional employment issues). This latter side simultaneously involves choices (consequently systems), of an axiological nature, it depicts interactions and confrontations between diverging interests, etc. The sociological approach has made the axiomatic choice elaborate its definition of the migration process upon the ground provided by arguments sought by society itself, in economy and culture. A.G. Johnson defines migration as: "a physical movement of people within social systems and among them". This movement influences deeply the social composition of human populations, because it modifies the relationships pertaining to issues of racial nature, of ethnical belonging and of social group attitudes. Simultaneously, it constitutes an important source of growth for the urban population.

Linguistic coordinates

Our research concerning the lexemes which denote the phenomenon of migration, starting with the verb *a migra* and continuing with the nouns and adjectives belonging to its lexical and semantic sphere, has led us to the evidence that, in the general dictionaries of the Romanian language meant for the use of common people, the content of the provided definitions is, in respect of the term's real semantic sphere, rather deficient and/or limited. The verb *a migra*, regressively derived from *migra□ie*, referring to tribes or peoples, means: "a massive movement of people from one territory to another, from one country to another"[1] . Its origin is ancient: the Latin *migro, -as, -aui, -atum, -are* < the adj. **migro-*[2], into the semantics of which; 2. verbal derivatives were created through suffixion (*-ant,-tor,-re*) and through prefixion (*e-, im-*

[1] DEXI, p. 1153.

[2] «On interprète ce verbe comme dérivé d'un adjectif **migro-*, où la racine, de la forme *mig-* serait un élargissement de la racine **mei-* 'changer'». (EM, p. 402)

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)[3]. The term *migrație* (< Fr. *migration*) is defined as: "movement of a mass of people, tribes or (a number of) persons, determined by causes arising out of economic, social, political or natural circumstances; migrating"[4]. In the *Dictionary of Sociology*, the conceptual sphere of the term is completed with other elements. Migration designates: "the movement of a population from one region to another, especially from rural areas to the urbanized ones, as well as from one society to another. In both cases, the people who migrate are not the poorest ones, but the individuals who are able to become aware of the existing discrepancy between their own aims and the possibility of fulfilling them"[5]. A few lexical micro-families exist in Romanian, formed from the verb *a migra*: a) *migrant* "a person who migrates" (< Fr. *migrant*), *migrator* (about some peoples or tribes) "which migrate", "pertaining to migration"; (< Fr. *migrateur*)[6]; b) *a emigra* (about human individuals or collectivities) "to leave from the country of origin and to settle, for ever or temporarily, into another, being forced by social, political, economic circumstances (< Fr. *emigrer*, Lat. *emigrare*), *emigrant-a* "individual who migrates" (< Fr. *emigrant*), *emigrare* "the action of emigrating (< *emigra*), *emigratie*": 1. emigration; 2. in a certain period, the totality of the individuals emigrating from the same country towards the same destination; 3. the situation of an emigrant individual or (an emigrant) human collectivity; 4. the time during which one is an emigrant; 5. migration "(< Fr. *émigration*, Lat. *emigratio*, *-onis* cf. It. *emigrazione*, Germ. *Emigration*)[7]; c) *a imigra*: "to come into a foreign country, for the purpose of settling there" (< Fr. *immigrer*, Lat. *immigro-are*), *imigrant-a* "individual who immigrates" (< Fr. *immigrant*), *imigrare*: "the action of immigrating" (< *imigra*), *imigrație*: "1. settlement in a foreign country; 2. by extension, general status of the immigrant individual; 3. totality of the immigrant persons, for a given period of time" (< Fr. *immigration*)[8]. In other dictionaries (DEX, DEXI), the definitions and etymology are approximately the same. The Latin model of the verb and of the noun which designate that action may as well be found in other Romance languages. For instance, the Latin *emigrare* has turned into: Port. *emigrar*, Sp. *Emigrar*, Fr. *émigrer*, It. *emigrare*, Rom. *emigra*. The Latin *emigration, -onis* has generated: Port. *emigracao*, Sp. *emigracion*, Cat. *emigracio*, Fr. *émigration*, It. *emigrazione*, Rom. *emigrație*[9]. The ancient, prehistoric phenomenon of migration has evolved in time, the Romanian language reflecting this fact through a series of synonyms and analogue forms: *a emigra = a se expatria*, *a pribegi*, (old use) a se înstrăina (old use, bookish) a se des□ăra[10]; *emigrant = emigrat*, *refugiat*, *expatriat*, *exilat*, *deportat*, *fugar*, *fugit*, *pribeag*, *pribegitor*, (old use) *surghiunit*; *a migra = a emigra*, *a se expatria*, *a (se) exila*, *a (se) băjeni*, (old use) *a băjenări*[11]. Migration is, simultaneously, an occurring phenomenon, but also an undergoing process, in the sense that, in time, the phenomenon might change in quality and number. As a process, migration is

[3] Cf. EM, p. 402.
[4] DEXI, p. 1153
[5] *Dicționarul de sociologie*, p. 168.
[6] MDA, III, p. 564.
[7] MDA, II, p. 287.
[8] MDA, III, 26.
[9] Cf. DELLR, 161.
[10] DS, p. 237
[11] Cf. Bucă, Evseev & colab., *Dicționar analogic şi de sinonime*, p. 211.

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considered to be fluid and dynamic. Furthermore, apart from being seen as a form of territorial mobility, evaluated in terms of geographical movement, it also constitutes a form of social mobility: due to migration, the individual's social status might be modified.

Social coordinates

As an element of the globalization process, migration exceeds the simple movement of populations between regions or between states. Along with the *real migration*, there occurs the global circulation of merchandises, as well as that of capitals, of human labour force and of cultural and political values. Migration, in its concrete action, supposes the invasion of poor people exerted upon the developed world, where they seek economic prosperity. Quite often, once arrived, they join the marginalized side of these societies, becoming subject to social exclusion. However, the rich world has a lot to benefit from the migration process, by making use of the highly qualified human resources coming from poor societies, for the professional training of whom it has made no investment at all. After having reached their economic objectives or after having gained professional experience, a diploma recognizing it, the individuals or collectivities that have migrated come back home. *Virtual migration* (in a cultural, touristic sense) may be fulfilled by computer means. There are persons who work for companies located far away from them without leaving their homes. The products of their work are transmitted on-line. This type of migration is able to contribute to the enhancement of the democratization process (as it is in the Arabic world, Central Africa, Asia or Latin America). The term *migrant* carries the usual meaning of: "whoever lives, temporarily or permanently, in another country, different from the one where he was born and has established significant social links with this latter country". Yet, this definition may be regarded as limited, should we take into consideration the policy chosen by some states to assign the status of immigrants even to individuals who were born inside that very state. The UNO's Convention on the rights of migrant citizens defines the *migrant worker* as: "the person who is currently or is going to be employed in a remunerated activity within a state of which he is not a citizen"[12]. We may formulate a more comprehensive definition of the term *migrant*, which should be understood as representing all the cases where the individual takes out of his own will the decision to migrate, due to motivations of personal interest and with no intervention from an outside cause that might have been decisive[13]. By making use of this definition, we are able to establish a difference between migrants and, on the other hand, refugees, deported people or others who are forced or determined to leave their homes. The people who choose freely when and where to leave, though many times certain circumstances do squeeze them in this direction, are migrants. Some specialists distinguish between voluntary and involuntary migration. The Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights proposed that the following categories of persons should be considered as migrants: (a) Persons who are outside

[12] The full text of the conventionis available at http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmw/cmw.htm.

[13] Measures to improve the situation and ensure the human rights and dignity of all migrant workers. 1998. Report of the working group of intergovernmental experts on the human rights of migrants submitted in accordance with Commission on Human Rights resolution 1997/15. COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS Fifty-fourth session, Intergovernmental working group of experts on the human rights of migrants.

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the territory of the State of which they are nationals or citizens, are not subject to its legal protection and are in the territory of another State; (b) Persons who do not enjoy the general legal recognition of rights which is inherent in the granting by the host State of the status of refugee, naturalised person or of similar status; (c) Persons who do not enjoy either general legal protection of their fundamental rights by virtue of diplomatic agreements, visas or other agreements[14]. This definition provided to the notion of *migrant* reflects the difficulty in establishing a clear distinction between, on one hand, the migrants who leave their country because of political persecutions, of armed conflicts, of acute economic distress, of natural catastrophies or due to several simultaneous such causes and, on the other hand, the persons who leave their birth country simply in search of better standards of living, which they are unable to find within this former country. Another attempt to define the migrant population is also made by taking new situations into account. Cristian Bocancea remarks that cultural systems are affected by the consequences of migration: "The migrant person leaves his culture of origin in order to integrate himself into a new culture, at various degrees. This process is particularly complex and painful, because it supposes a de-location and a re-construction of codes, values and norms, ultimately a de-location and a re-construction of his very identity "[15]. The phenomenon of *a-culturation* was created by the contact between individuals coming from different cultures. This term is defined as: "totality of the modifications which have intervened within the original cultural patterns, when groups of individuals assuming different cultures got in a permanent contact"[16]. This definition is extended and comprehensive. From it, we can extract the idea that exchanges, interferences and reconsiderations do occur between the two cultures. Such situations have permanently existed in the history of humanity: in Antiquity (the Hellenic and Roman civilisations), in the Middle Ages (when the two Americas were colonized), later the imposed predominance of the English, French and Spanish languages and cultures within the colonies conquered during imperialism[17]. Sociologists distinguish between two kinds of a-culturation: the *material* one, when the populations adopt in their public life the model of the dominant culture, but maintain, for their private and family life, their originating cultural code (this is the case of immigrant populations); the *formal a-culturation*, when people, while being in contact, reciprocally influence the others' ways of thought and sensitivity, thus determining the emergence of a new culture, created as the synthesis between the two originating ones (the immigrants'children are in this situation)[18]. The effective status of the emigrants who today work in the Occident has led them to the compulsory sacrifice of moral values (liberty, equality, prosperity). At least one of these three components comes to be sacrified, for the aim of reaching an equilibrium among them. Material welfare prevails. For the purpose of attaining material and financial prosperity, emigrants are willing to risk their own freedom, to experience inequality in the matter of social

[14] Gabriela Rodríguez Pizarro, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human rights in A/57/292, *Human rights of migrants, Note by the Secretary-General*, 09 August 2002.

[15] Cristian Bocancea, *Migrație, aculturație și valori politice*, in „Sfera politicii", no. 166, http:www.sferapoliticii.ro

[16] The definition from *Dicționarul de sociologie*, 1996, p. 12-13 is quoted from the *Memorandum* by R. Redfield, R. Linton şi M.J. Herskovits, published in: "American Anthropologist"(1936).

[17] Cf. Cristian Bocancea, http://www.sferapoliticii.ro.

[18] Cf. *Dicționar de sociologie*, 1996, p. 13.

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rights, in comparison with that country's native citizens. Even once they have returned home, they still run the risk of having lost their initial identity, remaining there a-culturated again[19]. Some highly actual approaches consider the migration phenomenon as *a lifetime strategy*, since it represents: "a perspective upon the sustainable long-lasting ratio between assumed goals (…). They are rational structures of action, relatively perennial at the level of the agent who adopts them" [20], or as a form of protest striving against the changes, reflecting the wish to abandon a society where it is impossible for them to find a place.

Conclusions

International migration is an extremely complex phenomenon, which extends itself to an immense area and which involves a lot of contradictory movements that generate consequences within a multiplicity of reality levels. Due to these facts, within the arena of current knowledge in sociology, a theory which could fully reflect and explain the essential nature and the full impact of international migration is still a *desideratum*. Yet, the absence of a unique theory does not exclude the presence of various theoretical approaches, generally of interpretation relying upon scientific explanations, particularly upon the sociological one[21]. Migration is an extremely complex issue, which contains several types of movements made by populations, each of them conditioned by a series of motivations and acting energies, the causes as well as the consequences of which are highly diverse. This existing diversity leads us to the conclusion that the determining factors and consequences of international migration should be evaluated by taking into account the specific features of each country and each possible type of migration.

Geographical studies on migration (which also make use of the expressions *territorial mobility* or *geographical mobility*) focus more on the territorial movement (either individually or in a group of several people) and on the modifications caused in the environment as a result of that movement. Social issues (professions, education, culture) are, if less taken into consideration, still not totally ignored. Anyway, the comprehension of the migration action requires the definitions and elucidation of some concepts deriving from it, such as emigration, immigration and re-migration. The fact that migration signifies a lot more than a simple movement on a territory is obvious. It is not only a natural physical process, it does not simply suppose a change of environment, but it is a complex process, generating social effects as well.

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[19] Cf. Gavreliuc, 2008, p. 353.
[20] Sandu, 2000, p. 6.
[21] Otovescu (coord.), 2010, p. 609.

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ACRONYMS

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