ROMANIAN – A UNITARY AND INDIVIDUAL ROMANCE LANGUAGE [1]

Abstract*: The paper presents the formation process the stages of Romanian language evolution from its origins to the present day. At the beginning, the author points out the place of the Romanian language in the large family of the Romanic languages. Then, the author makes a survey of the intrinsic features which differentiate and impose Romanian as an unitary language with a prominent individuality. These valences are the expression of its perpetuation force based on a phonetic and grammatical system of a Latin type and on a main word stock made up of Latin and autochthonous elements with a large derivative availability and a remarkable functional capability.*

Key words: *Romance origin, Latin language, Romanian language, phonemic morphological and syntactical system, linguistic cohesion, unity and individuality.*

The Romanian language is the Latin spoken continuously in the space between the Carpathian Mountains and the Danube. Used continually from the Roman colonization until the contemporaneous epoch, the Romanian language has continuity in time, being situated in all the stages of its evolution in opposition with the languages from the South-East of Europe. In the epoch of the genesis of a language, there are many and important transformations, mainly of a phonetic nature.

Regarding the Romanian language, the majority of the phonetic transformations with major consequences at the morphological level occurred in the period of the common Romanian language (17^{th} – 18^{th} centuries), before the Slavic language exercised its influence.

A proof in this respect is the fact that the phonetic rules which individualize the Romanian language, driving it apart from the Late Latin and the other Romance languages did not influence the borrowings from the Slavic language.

In Dacia and in the two Moesias, the linguistic Latinity was preserved with more fidelity than in the Occident, a fact attributed by some linguists to the popular and colloquial character of the Latin from this side area of the colonized territory.

The Romanian preserved the ancient traits common to the Romanic languages accurately. Yet, during its history, the Romanian language has acquired some individual traits which ensure its originality within the community of Romance languages.

Among these, we have to mention: the enclitic position of the definite article, the preservation of the neutral gender, the retention of the Vocative in –**e** (*frate!)*, the forming of the future with the help of the auxiliary ***a vrea (to want)*****,** and the broadening of the use of the Conjunctive mood, to the detriment of the infinitive. These linguistic facts, which represent some innovations proper to the Romanian language (attributed either to the influence of the substratum, or to the influence of the Balkan environment), do not isolate it from the other Romance languages.

The Romance character of the Romanian language is sustained by the internal organization system, which is based on a solid Latin structure (the morphemes and the grammatical instruments are of Latin origin).

The Thracian-Dacian substratum confers to the Danubian Latin a specific character, a reality which completes its physiognomy. Occurred in the special conditions of bilingualism, the autochthonous influence on the Latin had a homogenous character in general. This thing is explained by the assimilation of the pre-Latin elements by the Danubian Latin during the

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process of Romanization. Thus, these influences are inherited as a Latin stock proper, the fact that the autochthonous material has underwent the same type of changes as the Latin one, also pleads in favor of this statement.

Nowadays, there is a general consensus of the linguists regarding the acceptation of an archaic development stage of the Romanian language, usually placed before the separation of the four dialects: Daco-Romanian, Aromanian, Megleno-Romanian and Istro-Romanian, a stage known in the specialty literature under different names, among which the more used are the following: *the archaic Romanian* (S.Puşcariu), *the primitive Romanian* (Al. Philippide, G. Ivănescu), *the common Romanian* (Al. Rosetti), *the common primitive Romanian* (D. Macrea), *the Balkan Romanian* (Ov. Densusianu), *the Danubian Roman Language* (E. Petrovici) and *the Proto-Romanian* (I. Coteanu).

Sextil Puşcariu understands by *primitive Romanian* or *archaic Romanian* the language spoken by the ancestors of Daco-Romanians, Aromanians, Megleno-Romanians and the Istro-Romanians from nowadays, before any connection between them was interrupted.

S. Puşcariu remarks also the fact that all four dialects develop according to the same general tendencies of a Latin type, which may be considered as forming the national character of our language. The acknowledgment of the unity of Proto-Romanian leads to the conclusion that in the epoch of the genesis of Romanian language, our ancestors were not yet divided and that between those who were speaking Romanian there was a geographical community, an important fact for the subsequent development of the Romanian language.

Formed on an extended Romanized area, North and South of the Danube, *the common Romanian* reflects, by its unitary character, a popular civilization and culture of a pastoral and agricultural type, being the way by which the unity of the social groups of Romanians is ensured.

The common Romanian is the result of comparing the dialects from the North and South of the Danube, representing the intermediate stage of reporting the Romanian dialects to Latin. The phenomena found approximately in the four dialects are characteristic to the common Romanian.

The unity of the common Romanian is continued in the Daco-Romanian, an idiom characterized by a special dialectical unity. The differences between the patois of the Daco-Romanian are not significant. They are of a phonetic, lexical nature and they are found, in an exceptional way, at the grammar level.

Eugeniu Coşeriu noticed the superiority of our language in the context of the Roman languages, stating that the Romanian language represents an *autonomous unity*, by the fact that, in its very ancient stage:

- the influence of the Classic Latin lacked
- its substratum is different from that of the western Roman languages
- the foreign influences were others than those of the Roman occident - the Slavic, Byzantine, Hungarian, Turkish and Neo-Greek influence (Coşeriu Eugenio, 1994: 12)

The unitary character of the Romanian language, as an expression of the Romanian spiritual unity from the times of the Dacians until nowadays, was claimed for the first time in the modern epoch by B. P. Hasdeu. The contact of the Romanian language with the Balkan languages proved the resistance of its Latin character. Even if it developed in isolation from the other Romanic idioms, the Romanian became the vitality of the elements of Latin origin, the resistance of the structures specific to the Latin and the capacity of assimilation of the foreign elements. For example, the

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generalization of the constructions with the help of the Conjunctive instead of the Infinitive marks the preference of the Romanian language for the analytical structures, specific to the concrete popular language, like the common Romanian.

The Romanian language has a distinct ***individuality*** as compared with the popular Latin and with the other Roman languages.

The Romanian language had the conditions to get formed earlier than the other Romance languages. After the partition of the Roman Empire, the Eastern Roman peoples remained isolated from the Western ones. On the territory of the Eastern Empire, the Greek became the official language, the classical Latin ceasing to exert an influence upon the spoken language. This thing didn't happen in the Western Roman Empire. Here, the influence of classical Latin exerted permanently through administration, school and church. This is why the Romanian language offers to the researchers a rich linguistic material which allows them to settle the elements inherited by the Romanic languages from the popular Latin, as well as the borrowings from the classical Latin.

Beginning with the 7th century, when the contact with the Slavonic people became more active, the Roman language was already formed in its fundamental compartments. The proof of this fact is that the grammatical structure of the Romanian language contains few Slavonic elements, and the lexis does not take part to the settling of the phonetic laws.

In the **phonetic system** of the Romanian language, Latin in its essence, there are some specific traits due to the historical evolution of our language. Thus, the vocalic system enriched with the vowels **ă** and **î** and with a considerable number of diphthongs and triphthongs, and the consonant system with the affricates **č**, **ğ**, **ţ** and the fricatives **ş** and **j.**

A characteristic of the Romanian language in comparison with the other Romance languages is the development of the *system of phonetic alternations* (vocalic, semi-vocalic and consonant), frequently used in flexion (in order to mark some grammatical categories) and in the word-forming process. Under the Slavic influence the semi-vowel **i** before the initial **e** developed [*iel*, *ieste, iera*], and the laryngeal consonant **h** entered the Romanian language.

The morphologic system had, even from the beginning period, a visible tendency of simplification and systematization of paradigms: the flexion of the noun was reduced and the verbal system simplified itself by the analogical reconstruction of some equivocal forms.

The morphological categories of the Romanian language are those of the popular Latin:

- the three grammatical genders: masculine, feminine and neutral were preserved in the Romanian language from Latin;
- the endings of each gender are the Latin ones;
- the neutral gender, disappeared from the other Romanic languages, but kept in Romanian only in the case of the noun, knows a reorganization on the Romanian territory.

From the popular Latin, the Romanian language preserved:

- the adjective and the comparison category;
- all types of pronouns with their entire flexion;
- the auxiliary verbs and the four conjugations;

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- the Romanian numeral from one (unu) to ten (zece) is the Latin one, the numeral from eleven (unsprezece) to one hundred (sută) is formed with a Latin material, but following the model of the Balkan numbering system (also met in the Bulgarian, the Albanian and the Neo-Greek);
- the numeral thousand (mie) is Latin;
- the adverbs, prepositions and the conjunctions, with some exceptions, are also of Latin provenience.

Due to the reorganization of the morphological structure there appeared, in all Roman languages, some inexistent grammatical forms: the article, the conditional mood.

The numeral **sută** is Slavic, and the use of the reflexive voice registered in the Romanian language a great ampleness, probably under the Slavic influence. In neither of the Roman languages is the reflexive voice as frequent as in the Romanian language.

The derivative system of the Romanian language is, in majority, the Latin one, completed with numerous suffixes and prefixes of a Slavic origin, some of them really productive (**-ean**, **-iș**, **-iță**, **răs-**, **ne-**).

In the **syntactical system** of the Romanian language we may list some essential characteristics, which represented in the popular Latin some constant tendencies:

- the usual topic of the words in the phrase: subject, predicate, complement, is, in the Romanian language, the one from the popular Latin and from the other Roman languages;
- the development and the extension of the analytical flexion;
- the disappearance of the sequence of tenses;
- the reduced proportion of subordinate clauses;
- the simplifying of the case system;
- the reinforcement of the conjunctive to the detriment of the infinitive.

The reduced presence of the non-Latin elements in the Romanian language, in spite of the long relations with other peoples, especially with the Slavs, is explained by the fact that the grammatical structure, as the most stable compartment of a language, is also the most resistant to the entrance of new elements.

If in the grammatical structure of the Romanian language few non-Latin elements entered, in the lexis they are numerous. The part of the vocabulary resistant to the entrance of new elements is the **main word stock**, which represents the second element of the individuality of a language.

Analyzing the origin, the structure and the evolution of the Romanian language through its main word stock, its predominant Latin character can be noticed within the system. As opposed to the grammatical structure, the main Romanian stock comprises a relatively important number of Slavic elements, as well as a more reduced number of words borrowed from the: Hungarian, Turkish, Neo-Greek, and French language or from the Thracian-Dacian substratum etc.

As a result of a group of evolutions underwent by the popular Latin brought in Dacia and in other Danubian provinces of the Roman Empire and spoken continually on the Northern-Danubian territory where the Romanians live today (from the colonization until nowadays), the Romanian is a Romanic language with an individual personality and physiognomy. The personality is given by its great perpetuation resistance based on a phonemic and grammatical system of the Latin type and on a *basic vocabulary*,

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formed of the ancient Latin and autochthonous elements in the first instance, with a special derivation force and with a great functional capacity.

The close solidarity between the phonetic, morphological and lexical factors made that this neo-Latin language, acquire the individuality before the exerting of the Slavic influence and admit foreign influences in its phonological and morphological system only in the peripheral points (the feminine vocative in *–o*, considered to be of Slavic, Bulgarian origin).

A rustic civilization, the lack of cultural centers in the ancient epoch, the pastoral transhumance (which favored the permanent contact between the social groups from all Romanian provinces), a "weak" feudalism in comparison with the Western one are external factors which favored the permanent up-keeping of the spiritual and linguistic unity of Romanians. To these facts, we may add the fact that the Romanian language developed in a side area of the Romance peoples, as a Latin idiom in a non-Romanic neighborhood.

The close contact of Romanians with their neighbors determined a tenacious preservation of the Latinity of the language, of its unity, so that the Romanian appears as a unitary language in all its evolution stages, from the origins until nowadays. It reflects the civilization and cultural unity of the Romanian people trustily, along the entire course of its history.

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