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**Ph.D. THESIS**

**"Romanian verbal idioms with  
key element of Turkish origin "**

**SUMMARY**

**Scientific coordinator:**

**Prof. univ. dr. PETRE GHEORGHE BÂRLEA**

**Ph. D. Candidate:**

**FIRDES MUSLEDIN VELI**

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### **1. Premises**

The present study starts from the premise that the Romanian verbal idioms preserve in their structure a small lexical thesaurus of Turkish origin, whose detailed knowledge, under the lexico-grammatical and logical-semantic aspects, could change the perception regarding the weight of the oriental-Turkish element in the structure of the Romanian language. We are convinced that the percentage of Turkish elements in the Romanian language is a little bit higher than 5%, set by the specialists and accepted unreservedly by the present generation of researchers. This infusion, historically determined does not affect the profoundly Romance character of the Romanian language, as it is not affected by the even more consistent and better known contributions of Slavic, Greek, Hungarian languages, etc. The analysis of structures such as verbal idioms can illustrate the internal mechanisms of linguistic interference from a particular, but very common, perspective in the practice of living, natural languages.

On the other hand, I considered that this study brings benefit to my mother tongue, Turkish, by detailing the processes of diffusion of various layers of Turkish before and after the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan territories and across Europe.

Our work is one of Romanian diachronic linguistics, but we believe that it will serve, at least intentionally, other domains such as contrastive-typological grammar, sociolinguistics,

anthropology, history of mentalities. All these are possible by analyzing some secondary structures: phrases in the Romanian verbal system.

## **2. Research stage**

A little less was written about idioms and various constructions based on the Turkish element, taken entirely from Turkish or created in Romanian, around a well-integrated term in the Romanian vocabulary, given the difficulty of analyzing these structures. Examples and explanations appear in L. Șăineanu, especially in the second volume of the monograph from 1900, then in Scriban's "Dicționarul" (sic!) and others, with examples of popular speech, folkloric and religious texts, but specific studies were written only by T. Papahagi, VI. Drimba, and among the foreigners, L. Spitzer. A systematic treatment, based on careful confrontations between possible Turkish models and Romanian creations, has been carried out only in recent years by the turkologist Emil Suciu, who synthesizes his research in his monographs, dissertations and his dictionary (2006, 2009, 2010, 2011) carried out for almost half a century.

## **3. Corpus**

Our analysis is based on a corpus of about 600 verbal idioms with key Turkish elements, selected from various sources. The first examples of verbal idioms were collected from the living language of the Turkish-Tatar community in Dobrudja and recorded in an ad hoc glossary. We have confronted these expressions with the "Turkish Dialectal Dictionary" and we have found that there are many more Turkish variants that do not correspond to those in Romanian, on the basis of a word more or less recognizable in Turkish. I then gradually expanded the area of research to the sources of phraseological units, investigating the specialized lexicographical works - glossaries, dictionaries, but also works on the Romanian language, of etymology, to the monographs devoted to dialects of the Romanian language or punctually dedicated to the Turkish element in Romanian language. In some of the works of lexico-semantic and grammatical analysis devoted to the problem of the Turkish-Romanian influences, such as those due to L. Șăineanu, VI. Drimba and E. Suciu, we have found a whole series of idioms, with the rigorous divisions regarding the relation between the Turkish model and the Romanian form of the respective constructions, even if the metalanguage of the analytical act and the classification criteria (loanwords, loan translation, parallels accounted by the cognitive-linguistics universalia, creations of the Balkan background or Romanian territory) were synthesized and systematized convincingly only in the works of the latter specialist of the above. So we borrowed from the lexical material, the methodological framework of the analysis and proposed solutions for the typology of the idioms from an etymological point of view, with references to the precious bibliographic source used.

A fertile way to access verbal idioms, especially the highly expressive, metaphorical ones, hidden in the archaic, popular and dialectal background, sometimes referred to as hapaxes, in

a more or less known literary writing, was the consultation of the Thesaurus Dictionary of the Romanian Language (TDRL), starting from the key word.

Trying to find out more about the history of his attestation in Romanian, about the forms of phono-morphological adaptation and his movement in time and space, we have discovered that the idiom we know was not the only one derived from that word. Different variations, with the alteration of the supporting verb, different creations, with meanings far removed from the primary one, were lying almost unknown in old or little known documents, but fortunately recorded in the great dictionary until the writing of the "entry".

However, even if now we are aware that the Romanian verbal idioms of Turkish key element inventory is far from complete, we consider that our "harvest" is very rich. Which means that only from this particular, lexico-grammatical and semantic point of view, the assessment of the general contribution of the Turkish elements to the etymological and structural-semantic configuration of the Romanian language needs to be reconsidered.

We cannot make an exact statistic of the percentage of verbal idioms of this type in the general sphere of this subcategory, because if we have the number of idioms with a meaning close to the meaning of the key word, be it roughly, we do not have the number of idioms which have a completely different meaning and we do not know how many verbal idioms of all kinds may exist in today's Romanian language. We can only assume that, if this subtype only is so numerous, the total number of Romanian verbal idioms must be very high. In her work on the method of grammatical analysis, Domnița Tomescu asserts that the verbal idioms are "the most numerous and the most frequent, representing 50% of the total number of idioms in the Romanian language, determined after the existing dictionaries". In Florica Dimitrescu's monograph, an important source used by us since the beginning of the present corpus, there are recorded approx. 800 Romanian verbal idioms. Of these, we selected 125 units with a Turkish key term, which means 15% of the total. We have reason to believe that the percentage is at least comparable in the current conditions of the evolution of the Romanian language. Of course today, the means of identifying and recording different lexical structures are more effective. On the other hand, language has evolved much, quantitatively and qualitatively-structural at the lexicon level. So, we can assume that the number of verbal idioms is much higher than the inventory in the sixth decade of the 20th century. We also do not lose sight of the fact that Turkish influence ceased to be active in Romania at the end of the 19th century. There are, however, compensatory factors: a) many "Romanized" Turkish words prove to be productive and have a great circulation, under various forms and syntagmatic organization; b) written texts and spoken language samples are infinitely better known through modern, recent communication techniques; c) General, etymological and specialist dictionaries have multiplied and contain much richer examples of idioms than in the past.

All this advocates an open and nuanced approach to the inventory of verbal idioms in the subcategory we take into account.

#### **4. Structure of the paper**

In the first part of the paper we presented the ethnolinguistic situation of Dobrogea in diachrony and synchrony, with a special focus on the Turkish-tatar element. It has been our intention to prepare the ground for the understanding of the linguistic phenomena that we have analyzed. It is about the research of the Romanian fund of phrases (idioms, idiomatic expressions, metaphorical expressions) containing terms of Turkish origin.

Our research had an interdisciplinary character, being at the confluence of two fundamental disciplines - history and linguistics, predominant, in the pages so far being the first of them. In addition, by necessity, elements of linguistic geography, dialectology, as well as some elements of anthropology and theory of mentalities have been added.

The diachronic perspective was imposed by the necessity of establishing the historical layers that contributed to the configuration of the Turkish ethnicity and language in Dobrudja. We considered two milestones in the phasing out of ethnolinguistic contributions to the historical formation of the Turkish-Tatar community in present-day Dobrudja: 1. The domination of the great civilizations that favored ethnic and linguistic contacts between the peoples - a phenomenon which reverberated to the mouth of the Danube. 2. The waves of populations that have lived or colonized successively Dobrudja and which coincide, in general, with that of the entire ethnic group.

The diachronic perspective led us to the conclusion that Dobrudja was a melting pot in which the essences of ethnicities and languages of great radiance were decanted in the ancient historical epochs. Regardless of the contributions that have been assimilated, the Turkish community has preserved and strengthened its ethnic and linguistic cohesion.

Of course, within it, subdivisions, languages, different families are recognized, but the differences are observable only within the great family of the Turkish-Tatar from Dobrudja.

In the second chapter we focused on the problems presented by the vast field of phraseology, regarding the methods and criteria of analysis, namely the object of study and the delimitation of the conceptual framework. We considered the overview of the general aspects of the discipline, namely: the emphasis on the directions of analysis posited by Charles Bally, Eugeniu Coșeriu or George Lakoff and Michael Johnson: the model from a holistic perspective, known as "repeated discourse", and the model of the "cognitive metaphor", cf. the cognitive theory of the metaphor. We believe that the two directions offer the possibility of extensive, interdisciplinary research from a linguistic and ethnolinguistic point of view, marking the relation between lexicon and culture: the lexicon is a primary representation of culture.

This interdependence is evidenced by the creation of numerous phraseological units that perfectly describe what linguists call the "universalia of thought" and the "universalia of the language".

Also, the actuality of the research brings to the forefront, various ways of analyzing the language facts in the field of phraseology. Thus, our approach aimed to delimit the

operational concepts of "phraseological unity", "idiom", "expression", "syntagm", "colocation", considering an analysis grid consisting of the valorization of descriptive and structural methods, respectively semantic, morphological, stylistic-functional criteria.

In the third chapter we tried to expose the Romanian verbal idioms built around a key term of Turkish origin from the semantic sphere of several fields of activity that often resume the usual Turkish-language patterns but also develops rich lexico-semantic series of their own.

Most such structures dominate the end of the 17th centuries (only a small number of written documents prevent us from establishing more intense circulation in an earlier period), then the 18th and the 19th century as well as the first half of the century 20th century, despite the modernization, respectively the westernization of the Romanian-literary and plain language.

Of course, using these terms in syntagms, idioms, metaphorical structures, etc. has prolonged their survival long after the very concepts they called (units of measurement, coins, commercial trading formulas) came out of use in the community of Romanian speakers.

In the 4th chapter we tried to show the lexicographic features of the Romanian verbal idioms with a key element of Turkish origin. The systemic differences between the two languages are not very small, even if we reduce the analysis to the dimensions of a statement (when there is a personal verb) or a developed syntax (when the verb-vehicle is used in the infinitive), as we did in the present paper. It is about the lexico-semantic aspects (forms composed or derived from simple lexemes), but especially about the morphological aspects, more precisely the nature of the grammatical categories: different voice, mood and tense, nuances of duration and frequency; verb with a functional morpheme attached at the end, name with article or other determiner included, etc., as opposed to the analytic inflexion, with prepositions, which double the case morpheme and / or gender morpheme, number morpheme, etc.

Most of the verbal idioms in the categories studied by us were created in the ancient epochs of the Romanian language and circulated in those epochs, some with an extension until the middle of the 19th century, as we have shown, others - until the middle of the century 20th century (after the Second World War). Today, over half of the inventory that makes up our example corpus has become opaque for Romanian language users. Expressions such as "a da carar" *give a resolution*; "a sta divan" *to be respectful*; "a pune nartul" *to fix the price*; "a mâncă o săfărdea" *to be beaten*; "a-I veni zămanul" *to take advantage of a good opportunity*; "a face cabul" *to accept* and so on, are no longer used even in literary works with historical themes to create "local color".

However, the other part, calculated by us at approx. 40% of the total, are idioms used in today's Romania. Some reasons may be invoked to explain their survival over time. The former would be extra-linguistic, combined with a linguistic but extragrammatical one. It is about the fact that these idioms present real life facts, value judgments, and attitudes that are always present, such as social relations, trade and economic life in general, then human qualities and defects, etc. Secondly, the suggestive, connotative conspicuousness of the respective idioms, in simple forms, with an elementary grammar, practically a simple verb

group (verb-predicate + object), with a transparent and eloquent imagery, contributed to their survival.

When the Key Term found various improvements and "opportunities", then that idiom became productive. The key term, verb-vehicle and the whole expression have been reinvented formally and semantically, not only verbal idioms, but also noun, adjective or adverb idioms, that revolve around the primary, as well as nominal uses (attribute-epithet), derived and compound forms, etc., examples of words such as *belea*, *maidan*, *para*, etc.

## **5. Conclusions**

At the end of these modest considerations, we can say that the analysis of simple words, such as verbal idioms, reveals not only a long history of the Romanian language but also an entire universe of feelings connected to the human communities in the territories inhabited today by the speakers of this language and the minorities.