

“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES

DOCTORAL FIELD: PHILOLOGY

**RUSSIAN INFLUENCES ON THE ROMANIAN
LANGUAGE STRUCTURE IN BESSARABIA**

DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

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CONSTANȚA

2022

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ABSTRACT

Key words: *official bilingualism, linguistic contact, linguistic interferences, phoneticisms, semantic calques, grammatical calques, mixed calques, translations, borrowings, phraseological calques.*

The basis of the idiom on the left side of the Prut is Common Romanian, but the linguistic contact between Romanian and Russian, manifested in the Bessarabian territory for almost two hundred years, resulted in the emergence of some linguistic particularities of the local idiom. These particularities add to the Moldavian dialectal features, specific to historical Moldavia.

Until 1812, the local idiom used on both banks of the Prut had developed under the same historical and social conditions, but, after the annexation of the land on the left side of the Prut to the Russian Empire, the extralinguistic conditions for the functioning of the idiom in the annexed area visibly altered. For example, in 1818, the local idiom officially known as *Moldavian language* and Russian were declared to be the official languages in Bessarabia. From that moment on, Romanian and Russian have, simultaneously or in turns, held the status of official language, which has led to both languages being used concurrently in all spheres of communication and, also, to the evolution of Romanian under the conditions of an enforced bilingualism.

Starting from historical data and from the *Coserian theory*¹ regarding the characterization of the *Bessarabian* idiom, this paper aims to investigate the evolution of the Romanian language on the left side of the Prut from its origins to the present day and the sociocultural context in which it was used under the influence of the Russian language. Moreover, we are going to illustrate the specific features of the local idiom which have resulted from the linguistic contact with Russian and which, in fact, are not found in the standard Romanian of all Bessarabians.

¹ In his studies, Eugeniu Coșeriu describes the notions of Romanian language, Daco-Romanian dialect and *Bessarabian* idiom, applying the comparative method from a genealogical, areal and typological perspective. See Bibliography.

As regards the stage of research, scientific events in which the name and status of the idiom in the Republic of Moldova have been organized as early as 1990. Among them, we should mention *The International Scientific-Practical Conference*², held in Chernivtsi in 1991, *The Fourth Congress of Romanian Philologists*³, organized in Timișoara in 1991, the National Conference “Limba română azi”⁴, held in Iași and Chișinău in 1991, *The Fifth Congress of Romanian Philologists*⁵, also in Iași and Chișinău, in 1994, the Scientific Conference “Limba română este numele corect al limbii noastre”⁶, which took place in Chișinău in 1995. The papers delivered at these events materialized in numerous studies and articles, in collective and individual volumes published over the years, which refuted the *theory of the so-called Moldovan language*⁷. The theory of the *Moldovan language*, conceived by the Soviet linguist M. V. Sergievski and published in the volume *Studii moldavo-slave*⁸, had been rejected even prior to the 1990s by many linguists in their works. We refer to the articles of such linguists as R. A. Budagov and S. B. Bernstein⁹, Carlo Tagliavini’s work *Originile limbilor neolatine (Le origini delle lingue neolatine)* (București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1977), Klaus Heitman’s article “Rumänische Sprache und Literatur in Bessarabien und Transnistrien”, published in *Zeitschrift für Romanischen Sprache und ihre Didaktik*, nr. 1-2, 1965, pp. 102-156 etc.

An overview of the name and status of the idiom in the Republic of Moldova is dealt with by the linguist Eugeniu Coșeriu in his works “Latinitatea orientală”, in *Limba română*, Nr. 3, Chișinău, 1994, “Unitatea limbii române – planuri și criterii”, in *Limba română*, Nr. 5-6, Chișinău, 1994, *Limba română – limbă romanică. Texte manuscrise editate de Nicolae Saramandu*, București: Editura Academiei, 2005, “Unitate lingvistică - unitate națională”, in *Limba română*, Nr. 10, Chișinău, 2002 etc.

² See LREPM, p. 243.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 247.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 249.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 265.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 291.

⁷ See the papers presented by the linguists Eugeniu Coșeriu, Silviu Berejan, Matilda Caragiu Marioțeanu, Nicolae Mătcaș, Vasile Pavel, Valeria Guțu Romalo, Marius Sala, Nicolae Saramandu, Adrian Turculeț, published in the collective volume *Limba română și varietățile ei locale*, București: Editura Academiei Române, 1995, as well as the studies of the linguists Nicolae Corlăteanu, Silviu Berejan, Anatol Ciobanu, published in *Revista de lingvistică și știință literară*, nr. 5-6, Chișinău, 1955.

⁸ M. V. Sergievski, *Moldavo-slavianskie etiudî*, Moscova, 1959, pp. 186-203, *apud* G. Mihăilă, *Unitatea și specificul limbii române în concepția lui R. A. Budagov*, București: Editura Academiei Române, 2000, p. 8.

⁹ In their studies, the linguists R. A. Budagov and S. B. Bernstein show that the “Moldovan language” cannot be considered an autonomous language or a “dialect of Romanian”.

The Romanian linguists concerned with the Bessarabian idiom included George Ivănescu, Ion Gheție, Emil Petrovici, Vasile Pavel, R. Udler, Vl. Zagaevschi, Vasile Melnic etc.¹⁰ Ariadna Ștefănescu's work *Variatie și unitate în limba română standard din Basarabia*, 2016, is one of the recent studies approaching the Romanian language in Bessarabia from a dialectological perspective.

A number of papers address various stages in the evolution of the idiom in the Republic of Moldova: Lidia Colesnic-Codreanca, *Limba română în Basarabia (1812-1918). Studiu pe baza materialelor de arhivă*, Chișinău: Editura Museum, 2003; Vasile Bahnaru, *Calvarul limbii române în timpul dominației sovietice (studiu și documente de arhivă)*, Chișinău: Elan Poligraf, 2015; Carolina Popușoi, *Limba română actuală din Basarabia, particularități morfosintactice și lexicosemantice*, București: Editura Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române, Colecția Aula Magna, 2013.

In terms of the dissemination of results of the research activity, certain contents of our investigation (aspects of bilingualism in the Republic of Moldova, contrastive-typological analysis of linguistic calques, translations) have been the subject of several papers delivered at national colloquiums and conferences and have been published in the collective volumes *Cultură și Comunicare* (coordinated by Roxana-Magdalena Bârlea) and *Diversité et identité culturelle en Europe*. Therefore, certain language facts we have analysed in this study are also to be found in the articles published in the aforementioned volumes.

The corpus underlying this doctoral research includes grammars and bilingual dictionaries, printed in Bessarabia, texts from older written press archives and contemporary mass-media, structures analysed in the compilations *Cuvântul potrivit la locul potrivit* and *Cultivarea limbii* as well as a number of expressions and lexemes gathered in specialized articles from the Republic of Moldova. We have not confined our study to a mere corpus of decontextualized terms but preferred to present the language facts in context with a view to highlighting their meaning.

Many cited texts are taken from newspaper articles and journals published in the former Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic in the decades of the second half of the 20th century. There

¹⁰ George Ivănescu, *Istoria limbii române*, Iași: Editura Junimea, 1980; Ion Gheție, *Baza dialectală a românei literare*, București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1975; Emil Petrovici, "Unele probleme de dialectologie și geografie lingvistă" in: *Limba Română*, Nr. 3, 1954; R. Udler et alii, *Atlasul lingvistic moldovenesc*, Chișinău: Cartea Moldovenească, 1968-1973.

are several explanations for these selections. First of all, they are commonly used in current language research as evidence of Russification of the Romanian language. Secondly, our motivation is the same as that of most researchers of the last decades, committed to pointing out the so-called “Moldovan language” particularities: these texts reflect the officials’ speech – journalists “employed” in the ideological system, representatives of the social-political governing apparatus, various heads of institutions and enterprises, and sometimes even ordinary people – workers, farmers etc. All of them would spread hybrid Russo-Romanian or Romanian-Russian forms which were meant to create a forced linguistic symbiosis. One would use Russian words adapted to the Romanian inflectional system (*besedui* for “discutăm” ‘we discuss’) or, vice versa, Romanian words integrated into the Russian phono-morphological and lexicosemantic system (*calmitate* instead of *calm* after the Russian *spokoistvie*). Thirdly and finally, those publications were very numerous at the time, providing a vast, vivid working material, which mirrored a massive process of linguistic interferences.

Methodologically, our attempt started with the identification of language facts (total borrowings, linguistic calques from Russian, translations from Russian), followed by the analysis and description of these language facts from a contrastive-typological perspective and a presentation of their standard Romanian equivalents. We have also referred to the Russian explanatory dictionary¹¹, using the rules of transliteration¹² in order to record the lexemes from Russian, and we have translated the explanations in the Russian lexicon. Where necessary, we have related the lexical material to the DLR with a view to establishing the historical situation and the degree of dissemination of certain vocables. In order to investigate the evolution and viability of the identified and analysed language facts, we have also consulted several Romanian language dictionaries compiled in the Republic of Moldova in the last decades (DGL; DGL², DDLR), considered normative for the current stage. The interferences identified in texts, which entered the Bessarabian use, are included in the annex to this thesis so as to serve as a lexical guide.

In our analysis, we have used the following research methods and techniques:

- comparative-historical method (to establish the etymology of the analysed lexemes);

¹¹ S. I. Ojegov, N. Iu. Šedova, *Tolkovâi slovar` russkogo iazâka*, Moskva: Rossiiskaia Akademia Nauk, Institut Russkogo Iazâka im. “V. V. Vinogradova”, 2013.

¹² See *Annexe 2, Guide on transliteration from the Russian language*.

- contrastive-typological analysis (to determine the similarities and differences in certain grammatical categories of the two languages in contact – Romanian and Russian; to compare certain language facts; to highlight the structural-semantic features of the two languages in contact);
- descriptive method (to describe the lexical material);
- linguistic geography method (to classify phoneticisms identified in the texts studied);
- componential analysis method (to describe the semantic structure of the analysed lexemes);
- linguistic geography method (to identify common dialectal features).

This thesis proposes an overall view of the evolution of the idiom spoken on the left side of the Prut from its origins to the present, especially since certain stages have been sporadically described over time either from a historical, political and cultural point of view or from a linguistic perspective. The importance of this paper lies in the fact that, in addition to dialectal features common to historical Moldavia and beyond the linguistic particularities resulted from the contact with Russian, the idiom in the Republic of Moldova also conserves earlier stages of evolution of the Romanian language, recording archaic language facts in all linguistic compartments.

We have structured the content based on two fundamental aspects: the evolution of Romanian in the Republic of Moldova, from origins to the present day (part I) and its phonetic and lexico-grammatical features, resulted from the linguistic contact with Russian (part II).

The analysis of the historical and cultural context in which the Russo-Romanian bilingualism occurred in Bessarabia has entailed the following periodization of the evolution of the idiom east of the Prut:

- the old stage. We have included here a short presentation of the evolution of Romanian, starting with Primitive Romanian up to 1812, the year Bessarabia was annexed to the Russian Empire, followed by a detailed description of the conditions of use of the Romanian language in the main sociocultural spheres, from the moment of annexation until 1918, when Bessarabia united with Romania;

- the interwar stage. We have presented the evolution of Romanian between 1918 and 1941. The use of Romanian in this stage was marked by two different sociocultural contexts: a favourable context in the reintegrated Bessarabia, when Romanian became the official language

again and was reintroduced in education and administration, and a hostile context in the former Moldavian ASSR, when the supporters of *Madanism* tried to create their own literary variant, thus promoting the theory of the so-called “Moldovan language”;

- the Soviet stage. Here we have assigned the period spanning from 1940, when Bessarabia and MASSR were included, under the name of MSSR, in the former USSR, to 1989, when the claims of the Great National Assembly in Chișinău were first made. National and linguistic policy measures, adopted in the former Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, were extended in the territory of the new republic: the replacement of the Latin alphabet with the Cyrillic one; the dissemination of a literary norm oriented to the autochthonous model of expression.

- the current context. Starting in 1989, several events, which marked the beginning of a process of consolidating the literary variant of the idiom east of the Prut, occurred in the territory in question: the return to the Latin writing, the proclamation of independence of the Republic of Moldova from the Soviet Union on 27 August 1991, officialising the Romanian language, the introduction of Romanian language and Romanian history as objects of study in schools, the elaboration of normative works on the Romanian language.

In the second part of the paper, we have analysed, in six chapters, the phonetic, lexical and grammatical features of the Romanian language used in the area in question, resulting from the linguistic contact with Russian, as follows:

- phoneticisms, which we have structured based on common dialectal particularities and phonetic features influenced by the Russian language;

- lexico-grammatical aspects. We have included here derivatives and compounds formed on the model of Russian as well as words formed by conversion;

- linguistic calques (semantic, grammatical and mixed);

- translations (total and partial);

- lexical borrowings, which we have classified in terms of grammatical class into noun, verbal and adjectival;

- phraseological calques, which we have divided into idiomatic and non-idiomatic expressions.

Following the research of the sociocultural context in which the Romanian language functioned in the Republic of Moldova, we have noticed that the Russification process was intense in 1812-1918, when Russo-Romanian bilingualism was established, and in the Stalinist and Post-Stalinist years. This is shown by the terms in Mihail Ciachir's 1907 bilingual dictionary “*kislorodul* for *oxigen*; *revoluționerul* for *revoluționar*; *revmatismul* for *reumatism*; *nastoikî* for *tinctură*”¹³, attested as unrecommended terms in Valentin Guțu's dictionaries (1998, 2014) as well and, also, by excerpts from press articles published in the former MSSR, which contain two or three different forms of influencing Romanian by taking over patterns or lexemes in the Romanian syntactico-morphological and lexico-syntactic structure. This happens in the case of the phrase “*subotnicele și duminicalele organize*”¹⁴, in which the noun *subotnic*, derived from *subota*, is a lexical loan meaning ‘voluntary work performed on Saturday’. In the case of the lexeme *duminical* (‘which refers to Sunday’), there is a substantivization of the adjective *duminical*, meaning ‘voluntary work performed outside the official working hours’, on the model of the Russian term *voskresnik*. The cited phrase displays two phenomena – a lexico-morphological one, i.e. contextual conversion of a grammatical class, and a semantic one, which is the use of the lexeme *duminical* with the meaning of ‘voluntary work’. The word *subotnic* cannot be understood by a Romanian on this side of the Prut, but the Romanian-speaking people in the Republic of Moldova are familiar with it, as the term has become relatively common in the social, economic and political context which had a great impact on verbal communication in the area under discussion. Many interferences resulted from translations of press articles from Russian. In our text corpus, we have identified deviations of meaning (*revistă ramurală* for “*revistă de specialitate*” ‘specialized journal’; *a îndrepta la lucru* for “*a repartiza pe post*” ‘assign to the position’) and inappropriate adaptations of grammatical structures (*din numele* for “*în numele*” ‘on behalf’, *al doilea an* for “*de doi ani*” ‘for two years’).

As early as 1989, linguistic reforms were adopted throughout the Republic of Moldova, aiming to stabilize the literary variant of Romanian. Nowadays, literary texts and media articles are written in a neat style. We should also mention the intellectuals' tendency to express themselves in a literary manner. As regards the interferences identified in our text corpus, they

¹³ See the subchapter *Russian influences in textbooks and bilingual dictionaries*, p. 37.

¹⁴ See the subchapter *Derivation*, p. 68.

are considered language mistakes and are not recommended by the normative works in the Republic of Moldova (DGL, DGL², DDLR).

The most common mistakes made by some Romanian-language speakers in the Republic of Moldova are related to the selection of the meanings of a polysemantic Russian word. It is the case of the lexeme *drujnîi*¹⁵ ‘unitary’, ‘homogenous’, which speakers confuse with *drujeskii* (cf. Rom. *prietenos*, *prietenesc*, *amical* ‘friendly’) or *drujeliubnîi* (cf. Rom. *prietenos*, *amical*, *amabil*, *binevoitor* ‘kind, nice’). The idea of “friendship” in the semantics of this word family is also used in other contexts. We refer to such structures as *colectiv prietenos* ‘friendly group’ or *familie prietenoasă* ‘friendly family’ used instead of *colectiv unit/familie unită* ‘tight-knit group/family’. Many calqued meanings identified in source texts have entered the use of Romanian-language speakers in the Republic of Moldova. Such examples are the lexemes *a se atârna*, meaning “a avea o anumită atitudine” ‘have a certain attitude’, *atârnare* meaning “atitudine” ‘attitude’ (both terms attested in the DGL); *întrebare* meaning “problemă” ‘issue’ (attested in DGL, DGL², DDLR); *a însemna* meaning “a sărbători/a marca un eveniment” ‘celebrate/mark an event’ (attested in DGL, DGL², DDLR); *a apăra* for “a susține o teză/o disertație” ‘defend a thesis/dissertation’ (attested in DGL, DGL², DDLR); *a da complimente* for “a transmite salutări” ‘send one’s regards’ (attested in DGL, DGL²); *a retrăi* for “a fi preocupat” ‘be concerned/preoccupied’ (DGL, DGL²); *a se primi* for “a reuși/a obține” ‘succeed/obtain’ (attested in DGL, DGL², DDLR) etc.

In addition to semantic calques, we have analysed the sloppy speech of some Romanian-language users in the Republic of Moldova and identified calqued grammatical structures (*omul științei*, *omul artei*, *invalid al războiului*, *a conduce cu întreprinderea*, *a se schimba cu locul*, *a se schimba cu impresiile*, *a se specializa pe ceva, de la trecut*) and borrowings (*oformare* for “întocmire” ‘elaboration’; *product* for “produs”; *soveste* for “conștiință” ‘conscience’; *pivă* for “bere” ‘beer’; *prezident* for “președinte” ‘president’; *tehnicum* for “școală profesională” ‘vocational school’; *abonent* for “abonat” ‘subscriber’; *a se balota* for “a candida” ‘run for’) etc.

The language facts analysed from a contrastive-typological perspective in this paper are linguistic interferences resulted from the bilingualism enforced in the geographic area in question. Those that entered the use of some Bessarabians have to do with the vulgar aspect of the *common*

¹⁵ See the chapter *Translations*, pp. 133-134.

language, because they double the vocables of the *standard language* in literary Romanian. The Romanian literary language is, to the community of speakers, the higher norm to which they relate, is the language of writers, of the press, of cultural circles.

In addition to the dialectal features common to historical Moldavia and to the linguistic interferences resulted from the contact with Russian, the Romanian language spoken on the left side of the Prut also has an archaic side to it. Therefore, the study of current features of the *Bessarabian* idiom within Daco-Romanian might also bring up a new perspective on the development of geographic varieties of the Romanian language.

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