

TERMINOLOGIE

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ASPECTS OF LINGUISTIC CREATIVITY IN THE FIELD OF ROMANIAN FOLK CULTURE

A thorough research on the topic announced has not been pursued yet. Based on the literature in the field and on our personal observations, we propose a number of suggestions which might prove useful in an ampler study on linguistic creativity in the traditional field.

The incantation is a magical practice which proves particularly interesting in the context of the present research. Scholars such as O. Densușianu, Al. Rosetti, I.A. Candrea, Gh. Pavelescu, etc. have traced numerous lexical coinages specific to the domain of incantations. Below, there is a list of such terms identified by Al. Rosetti: *a bărăta*, *budihace*, *cununat*, *a frăsui*, *a se izda*, *miraz*, *mânătură*, *noii*, *a orbălți*, *răsfug*, *a râmni*, etc.

Some comments are made below relative to some of these terms (as well as to other terms identified by O. Densușianu):

apucată [caught] is present in invocations with the meaning of seizures disorder [1].

According to archaic mentality, the respective disease was the result of the action of a maleficent spirit over a human; other disorders, such as *întâlnitură*, *izbeală*, are also explained as a result of the action of malefic spirits [2];

cununat [wed] is used in the sense of “high quality” [3]. As a matter of fact, Rosetti stresses the fact that, according to folk thinking, the knife that the groom wore during the wedding ceremony is endowed with special magical qualities;

terms such *fapt*, *facere* (<*a face*) [fact, doing] emphasise the remarkable implications of the verb *a face* [to do, to make] in the domain of magic, where one of its primary meanings was “to bewitch, to cast a spell on someone” [4];

noii [nines] – “a name attributed to various elements such as ashes, coal, leaves, etc. which are usually used in 9 pieces as ingredients in the composition of some quack remedies” [5];

mânătură – “spell, throw” [6]; basically, it refers to objects which the witch throws with her hand in the way of the targeted person [7];

miraz – “evil eye” [8]; this word should be considered in relation with the verb *a se mira* [to marvel at], which, in folk language has also the meaning of “casting an evil eye” [9];

a râmni [to covet] – to cast an evil eye; this verb has acquired this meaning as a result of some beliefs related to the intensity one has when looking at someone else: “When the look is accompanied by lust, when someone covets, the effects of the evil eye are more powerful” [10].

Moving on to ludic folklore: it is a fact that there are several types of creations in folk culture: made by adults for adults, by adults for children, and by

children for children. Ludic folklore considers that this latter category is characterised by simplicity, musicality, and figurability. The elimination games are particularly interesting from the perspective of linguistic creativity: oftentimes, in such cases, children are eliminated from the game one by one, until the winner is found. The numerals used to count the children in the game employ interesting linguistic alternations:

unca, donca, trenca, panca, cînce etc.

unele, doile, treile etc. [11];

This way, the language is enriched with new words. The language of the elimination games becomes a sort of argot, a language only accessible to the initiated ones [12]. Ludic folklore is also remarkable through its recourse to specific means of creative usage of the linguistic material:

repeating the final part of a word (*gărgăriță-riță*);

changing the initial consonant (*gârză-bârză*);

using additional syllables or consonants (*ulcior-bulcior, cuțite-răscuțite* etc.).

As O. Bârlea maintains, “what is the most relevant is the pleasant sound for the child’s ears, obtained through various auditory symmetries. We are in the sphere of elementary aesthetics” [13].

A few words about urban folklore: it has recently come to the attention of the researchers. Among its most spread genres, one should mention the political joke, which makes use of a specific vocabulary [14]: *nicutron* (< Nicu+ neutron), *Ceaushima* (Ceausescu + Hiroshima), *Ceauschwitz* (Ceausescu + Auschwitz), *Ușchidava* (*a se ușchi* = slang for *a pleca* = to leave, but also *a fura* = to steal), *a gorbăci* (< *Gorbachev*), *a pârvuli* (< *Pîrvu*), *a scornici*, etc. A few things are to be observed:

the word *Ușchidava* occurs together with other so-called toponyms with the compound *dava*. This seems to be an allusion to the historians’ exaggerations during the communist regime (the trend known as *Thracomania*), as *dava* is usually used in Dacian toponyms;

nicutron (just like *ceutron*) – is a 1980s coinage (*Nicu* – endearment variant of Nicolae, the first name of Ceausescu), after the US tests with the neutron bomb: in political jokes, the *nicutron* bomb was by far more terrible!

Ceaushima, *Ceauschwitz* – contain affixes reminding of places associated with destruction. Such toponyms were used to designate Bucharest, whose central area was demolished by Ceausescu in order to build The People’s House;

words like *decreței* [diminutive formed from the Romanian word *decret*, meaning decree], *ceaușei* (and also *Mamoș Vodă cel Cumplit*) refer to the children born against the will of their parents as a consequence of a famous decree which declared abortion illegal.

Let us further mention that some terms usually employed by general language have been endowed with new, suggestive meanings in the sphere of urban folklore: *procuror* (which actually denotes the *prosecutor*) comes to represent a person able to **procure** food, which was difficult to find during those times; *mitologie* (mythology) – the job of one who bribes (based on a partial homophony of

the words *mită* [bribe] and the noun *mit* [myth] in the Romanian language; *adidași* [sneakers] – for the pigs hooves (sold as pork meat), etc.

Based on the information provided, one may draw a series of conclusions in relation to the question of linguistic creativity in the field of folklore:

- linguistic creativity is present in various fields in specific forms;
- it primarily manifests in two directions: the formation of new words and the development of new meanings for existing terms;
- we are of the opinion that another form of manifestation of linguistic creativity is also the occurrence of new words and syntagms by formal alteration of existing words and syntagms: *termofrecare* instead of *termoficare*, *beneciuciu* instead of *beneficiu*, *cultul personalității* instead of *cultul personalității*.

The study of linguistic creativity in the field of folk culture will also require an inquiry into other forms of folk creation (e.g. riddle, traditional verbal fixed phrases, etc.) which may provide further information and interesting suggestions in this respect.

NOTES

- [1] Rosetti, Alexandru, *Limba descântecelor românești* [The Language of the Romanian Incantations], Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975, p. 49.
- [2] Densușianu, Ovid, *Opere I* [Complete Works I], EPL, Bucharest, 1968, p. 222.
- [3] Rosetti, Alexandru, *Op cit.*, p. 25.
- [4] Bălțeanu, Valeriu, *Terminologia magică populară românească* [Romanian Folk Magic Terminology], Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2000, p. 155.
- [5] Rosetti, Alexandru, *Op. cit.*, p. 37.
- [6] *Ibidem*, p. 34.
- [7] *Idem*.
- [8] *Dicționarul limbii române* [The Romanian Language Dictionary] (DA), tom VI, fasc. 8, p. 590.
- [9] Bălțeanu, Valeriu, *Dicționar de magie populară românească* [A Dictionary of Romanian Folk Magic], Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 187.
- [10] Ioniță, Vasile, *Metafore ale graiurilor din Banat* [Metaphors in the Idioms of Banat], Facla Publishing House, Timisoara, 1985, p. 145.
- [11] *Istoria literaturii române*, I, The Romanian Academy Publishing House, Bucharest, 1964, p. 182.
- [12] Bârlea, Ovidiu, *Folclor românesc* [Romanian Folklore], II, Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1983, p. 415.
- [13] *Idem*.
- [14] *Discursul intelectual la răspântiile istoriei* [Intellectual Discourse at the Crossroads of History], Europlus Publishing House, Galati, 2007, pp. 27-33.
- [15] Ștefănescu, Călin Bogdan, *10 ani de umor negru românesc* [Ten Years of Romanian Black Humour], Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 1991, p. 17.

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ASPECTE ALE CREATIVITĂȚII LINGVISTICE PE TERENUL CULTURII POPULARE ROMÂNEȘTI

Rezumat: *Lucrarea prezintă aspecte ale creativității lingvistice din câteva domenii ale culturii populare: magia populară, folclorul ludic, folclorul urban. Pe lângă exemplele aduse în discuție sunt menționate și principalele direcții în care se manifestă creativitatea lingvistică în domeniile amintite. Analiza noastră scoate în evidență și eventualele implicații de ordin spirirtual, social, politic etc.; prezenta lucrare poate fi utilă și penru cunoașterea unor aspecte concrete ale relațiilor complexe dintre mentalitate și limbaj.*

Cuvinte cheie: *mentalitate, limbaj, creativitate, cultură populară.*