

DISCUSSION

THE HISTORY OF THE RUMANIAN ELEMENTS IN THE HUNGARIAN

BAKOS, FERENC

A magyar szókészlet román elemeinek története

(The History of the Rumanian Elements in the Hungarian Lexicon)

Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1982, 560 pp.

A Book Review

1. *Introductory.* The problems raised by this interesting and most valuable book are manifold and complicated. I will not be able to discuss all of them and in particular, I will neglect problems which are beyond linguistic analysis, properly speaking. I am, however, convinced that such a topic could be analysed only in an adequate interdisciplinary framework including linguistics, history, anthropology (in the broad sense of this term), etc. Let me point out at the very outset that I consider Bakos' book the result of serious and fastidious research. On the other hand, however, any such work will have shortcomings, some of which may be due to differences in theoretical positions.

In our opinion some of the "problems" derive from the lack of firm initial definitions (postulates) of the frameworks, theories and hypotheses to be used. We do not, for example, know for sure whether Bakos is interested in standard language, "literary language", or the totality of dialects and sub-dialects. For this reason, the term in the title of the book *szókészlet* remains unexplained. Do we take it to mean 'lexicon' (in the transformational sense), or 'vocabulary' (in the traditional, pre-structuralist sense)? To which entity (kind of language) does this *szókészlet* ('set of words') belong?

A purely technical observation is that Bakos quotes the place names and also the names of districts (or other administrative units) in their Hungarian form and does not indicate the corresponding Rumanian* names for places in the territory of Rumania. As a result, a person not acquainted with the Hungarian toponymy in Transylvania will find it difficult to see the territorial distribution of the linguistic forms.

* *Editorial Note:*

For the country 'Romania' and for the people 'Romanian' are the preferred terms in *Hungarian Studies*. We recognize and accept, especially in references, the use of the letter 'u' in place of the letter 'o'.

1.1. Linguistic contact. Bakos frequently quotes Weinreich's classical work about linguistic contact; he seems, however, to show little interest in the anthropological (including socio-cultural) aspects of the problem.

1.1.1. The nature of linguistic contact. Linguistic contacts may be of different kinds. Formally, we shall speak of two languages, L_1 (which "gives") and L_2 (which "receives"), although the relationship "give-receive" is—as a general rule—bi-directional. The relationship between L_1 and L_2 may be represented as

L_1 L_2

(1) is officially imposed upon
(2) imposes itself culturally upon
(3) imposes itself linguistically upon (?)
(4) bi-directional contact, determined geographically
and possibly in other forms. In the case of Hungarian (H) and Rumanian (R) case (4) seems to be the general rule:

$R \leftrightarrow H$

$L_1(L_2L_1)L_2$

The phenomenon of linguistic contact takes place both in time and space (see also 1.1.1.1.-1.1.1.2.).

1.1.1.1. The contact in time. The Rumanian/Hungarian linguistic contact has a long history (although Bakos sets a later time for its beginning than I would, I will not enter into a historical discussion here), and its effects can be felt in the most remote parts of the Hungarian linguistic territory (up to its Western and Southern borders), as Bakos shows in several places.

1.1.1.2. The contact in space. Although Bakos does not offer any cartographic representation of his data, it is important to stress that the linguistic contacts in discussion ($R \leftrightarrow H$) cover the entire territory of Transylvania and an important part of the actual Hungarian territory (where earlier an important Rumanian population existed, now more or less assimilated). The borrowings penetrate not only the individual dialects, but also what we prefer to call "standard language".

1.2. Bilingualism represents a peculiar linguistic situation when (i) two ethnically distinct populations also speak each other's idiom, or (ii) a certain population speaks besides its own idiom, also that of another population. A special situation arises when a certain layer of a population speaks its own idiom, and in addition the idiom of another population (this being a problem for sociolinguistics: "upper" classes speaking besides their native tongue, another, "more elegant" one; e.g., English noblemen: English and French, Russian nobility: Russian and French etc.).

We will distinguish the following main forms of bilingualism (some of which were not discussed by Bakos):

- (1) cultivated—cultivated
- (2) cultivated—non-cultivated
- (3) non-cultivated—cultivated
- (4) non-cultivated—non-cultivated

each with two “sub”-forms: (i) with official approval (and/or enforcement), and (ii) without it. This last opposition is important, because as a result bilingualism may be enforced as a first step towards total linguistic denationalisation (see also the discussion in 1.1.1.).

From among the four basic forms of bilingualism we will consider only (1) and (4) in what follows.

1.2.1. Cultural bilingualism. Irrespective of official approval, we speak about cultural bilingualism when it involves the educated strata (of one or more) population(s). Its effects may mainly be felt in standard language; as to $\langle R + H \rangle$, the situation has radically changed over the last decades in this respect, when large portions of the educated strata of Hungarians in Transylvania have learnt standard Rumanian; although there were undoubtedly such persons in earlier centuries, they represented exceptional, rather than regular cases. This type of bilingualism is only implied by Bakos, when he discusses the different recordings of the Rumanian borrowings in Hungarian (but see also 1.3.–1.4., and Bakos, p. 55).

1.2.2. Non-cultural bilingualism. Bakos, p. 55, considers that “The most important part of our Rumanian borrowed words penetrated our language by way of direct popular contact . . .” Popular bilingualism leads to the borrowing of popular forms by L_2 from L_1 , and L_2 uses these borrowings in its popular variants; however, it may happen that some of the effects of this bilingualism are brought about in L_2 on the basis of a presupposed L_1 etymon: *árgyellánus* ($\langle *ardeleana$, with the meaning of Hungarian ‘Transylvanian danse’).

It is worth mentioning that two types of borrowings belong to this category: (i) necessary in L_2 , and (ii) redundant in L_2 ; the first type may be illustrated by *cinemintye* ‘a person who does not forget the evil someone did him (her)’ \langle Rum. *ține minte* ‘he (she) remembers’, which represented a monosemantic and monolexematic unit not existing in Hungarian, while the second type can be exemplified by *páznik* ‘watch(man), guard’ Rumanian *paznik* ‘watch(man), guard’, because there exists a Hungarian correspondent *őr* ‘watch(man), guard’ (see also Bakos, p. 35, who does not make this distinction).

1.3. The borrowings. The words borrowed by L_2 from L_1 : $w_i(L_1) \rightarrow w_i(L_2)$ bear the phonetic/phonological (and semantic) features inherent in both L_1 , L_2 . The important thing, however, is that they gradually get integrated into L_2 (see also Bakos, p. 54). After a certain lapse of time they cease being borrowings (for the layman) and become genuine words of the language.

1.3.1. Classification of borrowings. Bakos, p. 139, classifies the loanwords only on the basis of the following trichotomy: (i) back borrowing, (ii) multiple etymology, and (iii) repeated borrowing (using our own terminology, P. Schweiger); notice that on pp. 30–31 he interprets “multiple borrowings” as words borrowed in different places. In our opinion this classification needs further refinements and elaboration. We would like to use the following criteria: (i) direct origins, (ii) etymological status of the borrowed word, (iii) social, linguistic etc., strata to which the words belonged in L_1 , (iv) strata of L_2 to which the borrowed words belong. The first criterion is very important for the theory of loan-words (see 1.3.2.).

1.3.2. “Channel borrowing”. Bakos seems to be well aware of the fact that there are cases of

$$w_i(\in L_1) \rightarrow w_1(\in L_2)$$

$$w_i(\in L_2 = L'_1) \rightarrow w_i(\in L'_2)$$

i.e. a word from language A first enters language B , and then language C ; for C this word has to be considered as a word from language B (notwithstanding the fact that B has received it from A), but he does not state this idea clearly (see Pătruț, p. 19). Bakos, p. 165 and passim, discusses in detail the problem of Rumanian and Slavic loanwords in Hungarian analysing them with the help of data furnished by linguistic geography, historical lexicography etc.; for him the Slavic elements that entered Hungarian by Rumanian channels are Rumanian loanwords in Hungarian. Taking this for granted his Table 3 (p. 112), where he speaks about Rumanian words in Hungarian that have passed through Slovakian or Ukranian “channels”, is hardly understandable.

1.4. The explanatory power of “attestation through documents” of the loanwords. It is customary in historical linguistics to consider a word as existent since the date of its attestation, although it is self-evident that the year of attestation is much later than the year of its entering L_1 ; in our opinion, for early the Middle Ages we could say that if w_i is attested by documentary evidence in year A , it was present in it at least 100–150 years before A . This is due to the conservativeness of the “writers” of those times, and to the scarcity of documents. Beginning with the 17th century this period of time may be reduced to 50–75 years.

Bakos discusses (pp. 104–105) the length of Rumanian–Hungarian linguistic contacts in considerable detail. Some of his conclusions are based on the existence of Rumanian loanwords in Hungarian, designating economical relationships, objects, etc. He does not, however, justify his contradictory assumptions about the beginning of these contacts (p. 455, where he considers that the 14th–15th centuries represent this beginning, or p. 203, where he considers that in Transylvania an important Rumanian population existed only since the 14th century). These assumptions are contradicted by many documents and other finds.

Let us have a look at Bakos' data:

| Century | Attested words |
|---------|----------------|
| 14th | 4 |
| 15th | 10 |

| Century | Attested words |
|---------|----------------|
| 16th | 53 |
| 17th | 80 |
| 18th | 132 |

(see also pp. 202–282 etc.), which represent an increase as follows:

| | |
|---------|---------|
| 14–15th | 250% |
| 15–16th | 530% |
| 16–17th | 150,94% |
| 17–18th | 170% |

yielding an average increase of 275.235%. The mere enumeration of these values contradicts the author's assumption that the Rumanian–Hungarian contacts began in the 14th century and not earlier.

We will briefly comment upon some of Bakos' views about the first documentary attestation of Rumanian words in Hungarian: *ficsúr* < *fecior* 'young man' (year 1570; p. 214) was much earlier attested; *dragány* < *drăgan* 'military speciality' (1653; p. 231) seems dubious, because this 'speciality' was little known by Rumanians (however, this etymon led to the antroponym *Drăgan*); *murga* < *murga* feminine form of *murg* 'dark bay horse' (1788; p. 267) if compared with *balán* < *bălan* 'yellow horse' (1833; p. 283) because there is no internal, linguistic cause for these two semantically closely related words to be borrowed at an interval of 45 years. It is more probable that they were borrowed at the same time, but were attested at different times, because they were needed by the context of the document at different times.

I have some other doubts with respect to Bakos' data. Consider, for example, *batuta* < *bătută* 'Rumanian folk dance' (1755; p. 250); *bácsol* < *a băciui* 'to work as a shepherd'; *árgyellánus* < *ardeleana* 'Rumanian folk dance' (the last two from the 20th century; p. 457), etc.

2. *Semantic aspects of borrowing.* Bakos seems to be little interested in the semantic aspects of word borrowing, and as a result he does not pay sufficient attention (p. 41) to the differences in the semantics of the Rumanian *ciordi*, *măceș*, determined by the

different socio-linguistic strata they belong to, although he is aware of these facts (see p. 95). The same is—at least partially—true of the different *hapax legomenon* he describes. Bakos distinguishes (pp. 86–87) “modification of meaning” from “autonomous meaning development”, but does not explain the difference; in our opinion this distinction—if left unexplained—lacks any significance. Although interesting, his discussion of the mixing of lexemes (pp. 82–83) is not convincing: *árija* (< Rum.) + *szérű* (Hung.) = *szérija* (both etymons meaning ‘threshing floor’); *floc* (Rum.) + *koc* (Hung.) = *floca*, both with semantically undefined developments. Similar considerations apply to Bakos’ discussion of *kosár* < Rum. *coşar* (p. 44, p. 202), where neither the etymon nor the result is rendered explicit.

Other dubious semantic developments are *krajnik* ‘tax collector’ from *crainic* ‘herald’ (pp. 202–203), *poronty* ‘bastard’ from *prunc* ‘little child’ etc.

3. *Grammatical (morphological) aspects of the loanwords*. Bakos shows (p. 62, note) that languages that borrow words in general do not borrow affixes (incidentally, he fails to refer to Pătruţ, 1974, 1980, etc. in this connection). The mere fact of deriving a word from L_1 in L_2 means that it has become a word in L_2 (although Bakos, pp. 189–190, seems to think otherwise).

It is worth mentioning that some Rumanian homonymous suffixes are not felt to be distinct when they are borrowed with the word: *-an* (*bal-ăn* ‘(quality of being) white’, *munte-an* ‘place of origin: mountain’), p. 37, *-ică* (*biserică* (not a suffix), *plăt-ică* ‘diminutive’), pp. 68–69, *-at* (*bărbat* (not a suffix), *spure-at* ‘past participle’), p. 63 etc.

Bakos discusses as similar the cases of *gyete* < *ghete* ‘high shoes’ which is a *plurale tantum*, and *vinete* < *vinete* ‘egg plant’ which is a simple plural (but see p. 61).

4. *Phonetic/phonological aspects of borrowing*. My main dissatisfaction concerning these aspects of borrowing results from Bakos’ lack of interest in the phonological rules of borrowing (although he describes them, pp. 30–31, p. 41). He formulates a couple of “regularities”:

| | |
|----------|------------|
| | (V) → (V) |
| | (V) → (V̂) |
| but | |
| | (ó) → (ó) |
| | (o) → (o) |
| (p. 18), | |
| | (o) → (ú) |
| (p. 19), | |
| | (é) → (é) |
| | (e) → (e) |
| | (á) → (á) |
| | (a) → (a) |

(p. 16) etc., but he himself shows that in words of the same category there are lots of exceptions (e.g., *strungă* > *esztrenga* 'sheepfold' (p. 20) etc.). Sometimes he mixes the categories to which different words belong: *grangur* > *krankó* 'big gun' with *pajură* > *pazura* 'eagle/arms' (p. 16) etc.

One of the main reasons for Bakos' "mistakes" is that he denotes by (V) both the stress and the length of the vowel; another reason may be that he does not distinguish between the various positions in which a phonem/sound may appear.

An interesting phonemic phenomenon is, with some Rumanian loanwords in Hungarian, the prothesis of (e), (i) before the initial groups (st-), (sc-): *esztena* < *stîna* 'sheepfold', *iszkumpia* < *scump* 'expensive, dear', *eszkapál* < *scăpa* 'to save (him/her/itself)', the previously mentioned *esztrenga* < *strungă* etc.; these, however, remain unexplained.

Bakos also leaves unexplained the so-called pleniphony, well-known from the history of Slavic languages

$$(C_{(r,i)}) + (V) \rightarrow (V + C + V)$$

which may be illustrated with *furulya* < *fluier* 'whistle' (1643; pp. 232-233) *kaláka* < *clacă* 'group work' (p. 44, p. 235 etc.), *poronty* < *prunc* 'little child' (p. 20) etc. In some cases (*hirib* < *hrib* (p. 33)) there exists a pleniphonic Rumanian form: *hirib* 'edible boletus', which Bakos does not discuss.

It should also be pointed out that by not taking into account the onomatopoeic and/or pejorative/meliorative nature (from the point of view of a "phonological stylistics") of the word in L_1 in some of his analyses of phonetic evolution, Bakos misses some important insights.

Many of Bakos' observations about Rumanian dialectal pronunciation are purely impressionistic, and do not reflect the results of a systematic analysis of actual facts. Moreover, by discussing almost exclusively the standard Rumanian forms he renders the accurate phonological analysis rather difficult. Finally Bakos does not take into account the distinction between the dialectal and standard forms in Rumanian.

5. *The psycholinguistic justification of borrowing word.* The observation made by Bakos (p. 89) that the "foreign element" is more "coloured" and, as such, more adequate to express 'pejorative/meliorative' aspects is quite interesting (but see also pp. 108-109). He does not accept the opinion that Hungarian has borrowed those Rumanian words that were shorter and had a simpler phonetic structure (p. 108, but see also Szabó, 1968); in our opinion Szabó's position is based upon the principle of the economy of efforts which plays a central role in actual linguistic performance. One may wonder whether the protheses discussed in 4. are not manifestations of this principle.

We cannot find—except in terms of "popular etymology" or dubious "hyperurbanism"—any justification for *nyekál* < *neca* 'to drawn/to sink' (p. 71), because in Rumanian such a word does not exist.

Bakos seems to ignore the fact that while *oaie* 'sheep', *capră* 'goat' are feminine generic nomina, *iapă* 'mare' is the term for the female of *cal* 'horse'. Moreover he does not take into consideration that *bălană*, *murgă*, *roibă* are (dubious) terms for the female of *bălan* 'fair horse', *murg* 'dark horse' and *roib* 'chestnut horse', respectively, which belong to different categories (but see also pp. 62–63).

6.1. *The socio-cultural status of the loanwords.* It is evident that the borrowing of words reflects the long-lasting coexistence and contacts between two peoples (see p. 11). It happens (mostly in Transylvania) that the same object is referred to by Rumanians by means of a Hungarian word, and by Hungarians by means of Rumanian word (p. 107).

Bakos (pp. 116–117) recognizes the existence of an important Rumanian stable population on the present territory of Hungary, which may explain the great number of Rumanian lexemes in Hungarian, but he ignores their dialectal stratification. The variants that co-exist, also prove the extremely large area of co-existence (p. 139 and passim). Bakos points out quite correctly (p. 454) that Rumanian–Hungarian "bilingualism" is mainly dialectal. For some reason, however, he does not discuss the Rumanian words in Hungarian that have penetrated into Hungarian from the speech of the Rumanians living on the actual territory of Hungary.

6.2. *The stratification of the borrowings.* Evidently, there are many ways of classifying linguistic material. Bakos, however, seems to ignore some of the important classifications. Thus, for example, he does not classify the loanwords according to their position (standard, dialectal etc.) in Rumanian and Hungarian, or according to their origin in Rumanian (though this may have a certain importance: gipsy loanwords possess a certain stylistic connotation, that Slavic loanwords do not have etc.). As a result some of Bakos' explanations lack consistence.

7. *Final remarks.* First of all, it should be made clear that Bakos' book is informative and a valuable source for further research. My remarks and comments are about the details and do not concern Bakos' main results. There is no doubt whatsoever that—though it may need some corrections—Bakos' book is of great scientific interest for everybody interested in Rumanian, Hungarian and Romance linguistics.

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