

AN OULOOK ON THE ETYMOLOGY OF SOME ROMANIAN MARITIME TERMS. CRITERIA AND PRINCIPLES OF VALIDATION OF LOANWORDS

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The lexical borrowing is the most basic method of improving the vocabulary of a language. This process has contributed decisively to the structure of the Romanian maritime vocabulary. Generally speaking, the lexical borrowing or the loanword is a word (usually a simple term, non-derivative or compound) taken from a donor language and incorporated as such into a recipient language without translation.

In order to address the persistent problem of etymology of Romanian maritime terms, we have to take into account two perspectives that complement each other - one linguistic, the other extralinguistic.¹ Thus, from a linguistic point of view, we need to use formal and semantic criteria to validate the origin of neologisms. These criteria regard the formal and the semantic characteristics of language, its lexical and grammatical structure, as well as the extralinguistic aspects. In this article we will focus mainly on the linguistic aspects.

According to the formal criterion, there must be an agreement between the borrowed word and the form of the foreign word. Most often, the greater the formal similarity between words designating the same concept in two different languages, the greater the possibility of parentage. For example, the word *yogin* comes from English because the French correspondent *yogi* has a different pronunciation and spelling.² In this respect, a lot of phonetic, phonological and morphosyntactic factors must be corroborated in order to give a certain etymology of a word, either single or multiple. Of course, problems arise especially in the case of words with a form which sends simultaneously to several sources, such as: Rom. *amiralitate* < Fr. *amirauté*, It. *amiralità*; Germ. *Admiralität* Rom. *brigantină* < It. *brigantino*, Fr. *brigantine*, Engl. *brigantine*, Germ. *Brigantine* Rom. *busolă* < It. *bussola*, Fr. *boussole*, Germ. *Boussole* Rom. *gabie* < It. *gabbia*, Fr. *gabie* Rom. *iolă* < Fr. *yole*, Sp. *yola*, Engl. *yawl*, etc.

In this case, the terms can be analyzed using the concept of "multiple etymology".

Even a seemingly insignificant matter for the Romanian language, such as the position of stress, can solve a problem of etymological order. Th. Hristea gives, in this respect, the example of the word *caractér*, which can be explained by reference to the French *caractère*, while the variant *carácter* can send both to Latin (*character*) and German (*Charakter*) origins. And this, if we ignore the variants *haractir* și *haracter*, indicating neo-Greek or Russian sources.³

In the adaptation of formal neologisms to Romanian, we observe the fact that in most cases, the signifier of the neologism also established itself under the influence of the appropriate Latin form. This is especially true for loanwords taken from French. The formal identity, however, is not enough to give a final verdict in the case of establishing the origin of a term. The formal criterion must be supported by other criteria, such as the semantic criterion, which requires the identity or the justifiable relationship between the meaning of the two words, the etymon and the loanword.⁴ This criterion should be used especially when the formal indicators are not able to determine the origin of a certain word. There are words that could be explained, in terms of form, as belonging to a specific language, but, semantically, they could come from a different linguistic source. This is the case of some words whose forms

indicate Latin as source, but whose meanings correspond to more modern languages. For example, the word *stat* comes from the Latin *status*, according to the formal criterion, but because its meaning corresponds to that of the French word *état* "political-administrative institution", we are dealing with a calque or a loan translation from French.⁵

If we consider such terms as:

Rom. *cap* „direction” < lat. *caput*, cf. Fr. *cap*;

Rom. *măr* „mast” < lat. *melus*, cf. Fr. *pomme*;

Rom. *meccanică* < lat. *mechanica*, Fr. *mécanique*, It. *meccanica*, Germ. *Mechanik*.

It is clear that both the form and the meaning of these terms are relatively recent acquisitions in Romanian, even if some of them appeared in French as Latin notions, which would justify the assumption that such words could just as well be inherited directly from Latin into Romanian. With strict reference to the maritime field, however, none of the above mentioned terms is certified in Romanian before the contact with the French language.

There are also loans from French, which were enriched with new meanings through semantic calques of English origin, such as the verb *a aplica* < Fr. *appliquer*, „to apply for”, cf. Engl. *apply*; and *oportunitate* < Fr. *Opportunité* „chance”, cf. Engl. *opportunity*.⁶ We can observe here another type of multiple etymology, in which two successive loans overlap. According to the lexical-grammatical criterion, the borrowed word must maintain the word class of the language of origin and, as much as possible, all the corresponding grammatical categories. In the examples below, the Romanian maritime terms borrow the word class of the original, by remaining nouns and keeping almost all the grammatical categories of the noun - gender, number and case:

Rom. *amiral* < Fr. *amiral*

Rom. *bonetă* < Fr. *bonnette*

Rom. *bulb* < Fr. *bulbe*

Rom. *cadet* < Fr. *cadet*

Rom. *comandă* < Fr. *commande*

Rom. *derivă* < Fr. *dérive*

Rom. *pală* < Fr. *Pale*.

As far as the grammatical category of gender is concerned, the neutral gender has disappeared in its evolution from Latin to French, while in the evolution towards Romanian, the neutral maintained itself, probably under the influence of the Slavic superstratum and of the Balkanic influence.⁷ In the following examples, the lexical-grammatical criterion is respected, because the borrowed word follows the grammatical rules of the target language:

Rom. *hamac* < Fr. *hamac*

Rom. *cablu* < Fr. *câble*

Rom. *abandon* < Fr. *abandon*

Rom. *ambarcader* < Fr. *embarcadère*.

Thus, *abandon*, masculine singular in French, becomes *abandon*, neutral singular in Romanian. Since all the other morpholexical structural elements are copied identically, and since other criteria are valid as well (the semantic and the formal criteria), the origin of the Romanian word is French, with a degree of certainty almost complete.

The criterion of compliance with the rules of derivation applies to those terms which follow the rules of derivation of the source language. The possibility of a total loan from French is accepted if it can be proven that the

¹ C. P. Pinzariu, 2007, p. 167.

² Fl. Dimitrescu, 1994, p. 274.

³ Th. Hristea, 1968, p. 104.

⁴ M. Sala, 1999, 26.

⁵ Th. Hristea, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

⁶ L. Groza, 2004, p. 122.

⁷ See also I. Coteanu, 1969, p. 217.

borrowed term does not comply with the Romanian rules of derivation. In this sense, the theme of the derivative must be certified as a 'standalone' unit in the Romanian language, while some suffixes or prefixes can be combined only with certain bases, as in any natural language.

For example, in the terms *cheiaj, pilotaj, portaj, compartiment, deplasament, greement, relevment, cabotier, gabier, timonier, vrachier, timonerie, galerie, balenieră, belieră, civadieră, dragor, ejector, halor, mașinist, optimist, semaforist, manevrabilitate, navigabilitate, flotabilitate, inflamabil, manevrabil, navigabil, etc.*, we can easily recognize the suffixes of French origin: *-aj, -ment, -ier, -erie, -ieră, -or, -ist, -itate*, corresponding to the French – *age, -ment, -ier, -erie, -ère, -eur, -iste, -ité, -able*.

All the derived terms listed above have their bases borrowed from French, functioning as independent terms. These suffixes, however, have become productive in contemporary Romanian, some contributing to the formation of derivatives, not necessarily from a French basis, while others were inherited from Latin. Such is the case of the Romanian words ending in the suffix *-bil*, which are either derived from Romanian verbs:

e.g. *acceptabil < a accepta*
adaptabil < a adapta
calculabil < a calcula, etc.,

or loans:

e.g. Rom. *accesibil < Fr. accesible, Lat. accessibilis*
Rom. *dirijabil < Fr. dirigeable*
Rom. *flotabil < Fr. flottable*
Rom. *inflamabil < Fr. inflammable*
Rom. *navigabil < Fr. navigable, lat. navigabile*
Rom. *rabatabil < Fr. rabattable*
Rom. *solubil < Fr. soluble, lat. solubilis, etc.*⁸

The chronological criterion is also a valuable aid in determining the origin of a term, and in drawing the evolution of a term based on its placement in time, serving as a line of demarcation between the internal creations and the inherited elements, the loans or the recent linguistic creations. For example, in the following series of maritime terms of French origin, similar in structure: *alură, capelatură, centură, garnitură*, the term which stands out is *capelatură*, which, unlike other terms, is not a direct loan from French, but a calque after the French *capelage*. With respect to the extra-linguistic perspective, this implies compliance with several criteria related to the cultural and economic life of a nation, as neologisms were able to enter the Romanian language together with the new concepts already present in the source languages. This criterion traces the history of the word, that is its spreading according to the geographical area, its position and frequency in the language, etc., information which must be taken into account for both the source language and the target language. The word *lampă*, for example, has as primary etymon, the Neogr. *lamba* "oil lamp", but later acquires new meanings with different etymons (Germ. *Lampe*, Fr. *lampe*, Russ. *lampa*, Hung. *lámpa*), depending on the progress of technology: *lampă de radio, lampă electrică, lampă de gaz*, etc. As already pointed out, the above mentioned criteria are difficult to apply in many cases of multiple etymology. For example, the formal criterion encounters difficulties of application where there are different lexical variants, which determine an increase in the number of potential sources of loan and therefore makes it even more difficult for the researcher to choose an etymon. A good example in this case is the word *arteră*, about which S. Șora states that it was certified as such since the nineteenth century, with reference to the French *artère*, and which also presents the variants *artirie* (eighteenth century), with reference to the Neogr. *artiria* and *arterie* (certified in 1850), which could be Italian, German or Russian. In this case, we are dealing with several forms, each having entered Romanian by another trajectory, but which coexisted. Therefore, the current version *arteră < Fr.*

artère was either influenced by all the other versions, or is a form borrowed twice.⁹

Moreover, the noticeable difference between the Romanian and the French phonetic systems led to a quasi-general adaptation of French loans to the Romanian phonetics. Hence the frequent confusion between this type of neologisms and those of Italian origin. On the other hand, the words entering our language through French, and especially those having an Italian etymon, can be confused with the Latin words formally introduced in the Romanian language in the late eighteenth century by the "Transylvanian School".¹⁰

Also, neither the linguistic nor the extralinguistic criteria seem to be enough to make a distinction between those loans which are derived in the source language, on the one hand, and the internal creations, on the other hand, sometimes created using Latin affixes. Illustrative is the case of the Romanian words ending in the suffix *-bil* (*acceptabil, adaptabil, calculabil, accesibil, solubil, inflamabil*) that are either derived from Romanian verbs or are simply loans. Therefore, establishing the etymology of a term is a very important task for the lexicographer, who must know how to present the word in all its aspects.

The heterogeneity of the Romanian maritime vocabulary is due to the multiple influences on its creation. This is why an etymological analysis of the loans belonging to this field can only highlight the complexity of the origin of some terms, sometimes giving rise to controversy. Among the difficulties encountered in establishing the etymology of a term we include: the absence of the first certification in dictionaries; the lack of examples in context, the hesitant phonetic aspect, which refers to several sources; the incorrect explanation of variants or the lack of it, which could be helpful in detecting the correct etymology of terms. A good example is the word *inginer*, which some dictionaries (DLRM, CDDE) explain only by the French *ingénieur*, without taking into account two important aspects. First, the forms indicating the analogue evolution of *-or* from the French suffix *-ieur* are problematic in many cases, such as: Fr. *trieur* > Rom. *trior*; Fr. *skieur* > Rom. *schior*. Therefore, the adaptation of *ingénieur* to Romanian ought to have been **ingeni-or* sau **injeni-or*. Secondly, the oldest variant, *ingenier*, (attested by George Barițiu) creates problems, because its form makes reference to the Italian *ingegnere*. In this case, a proper etymological definition should mention all the linguistic stages, such as: *inginer < It. ingegnere, cf. Fr. ingénieur, Germ. Ingenieur, cf. rus. ingener*.¹¹ Florica Dimitrescu in *Dinamica lexicului limbii române*, draws attention to the problem of etymology of neologisms and how it is often wrongly addressed. The author believes that dictionaries should specify the fact that a neologism originally came from one language but enriched its meaning according to another. A good example is the word *poligon*, whose recent meaning ("area of land used for driving trials") does not come from the French *polygone* ("a flat shape with three or more straight sides"), which is only the phonetic support, the new meaning being born in Romanian. Another example is the word *zebră*, which for the meaning "animal" has a French origin, while for the meaning "pedestrian crossing" has Italian or English as source languages.¹²

In conclusion, in order to determine the precise etymology of a maritime term, we must consider that the origin and the adaptation of neologisms is primarily a problem of language history. If we ignore this, we will not be able to make a meaningful analysis of the relationship that exists between the forms of some neologisms, their origin, the phonetic and morphological structure of a language in different periods of time and the extralinguistic factors (See also N.A. Ursu, *op. cit.*, pp. 246-247).

⁹ Cf. S. Șora, 2006, *apud* M. Popescu, 2009, p. 44.

¹⁰ Cf. N.A. Ursu, 1962, p. 115.

¹¹ See also Th. Hristea, 1968, p. 111, and M. Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

¹² Fl. Dimitrescu, 1994, p. 68.

⁸ Cf. M. Iliescu, 1959, pp. 85-99.

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