

Ion Gheție: linguist and philologist. Monographic study

Abstract

Ion Gheție was born in 1930 in Șimleul Silvaniei, Șălaj county. After a childhood marked by the 1940's events, the capitulation of northern Transylvania, the Treaty of Vienna, Ion Gheție has attended the courses of "Simion Bărnuțiu" high school until 1948, but also those of "Gheorghe Barițiu" high school. He completed his studies at the later one, in 1949. He then enrolled to "Victor Babeș" Faculty of Philology of Cluj. At first, the student Gheție was interested in literature, but very good professors of linguistics were present in Cluj and some of them were former collaborators of Sextil Pușcariu. Emil Petrovici (1899-1968), I. Pătruț (1914-1992), Ștefan Pașca (1901-1957), Liviu Onu (1917-2002), Henri Jacquier (1900-1980) were the most famous in the field of linguistics. He completed the faculty courses in 1953 as valedictorian. Two years later, in 1955, at the advice of his former professor, Dimitrie Macrea (1907-1988), who became the director of the Institute of Linguistics in Bucharest, he left Cluj and moved to Bucharest. Under the direction of Tudor Vianu (1897-1964) he participated in the elaboration of the works *Dicționarul limbii poetice a lui Eminescu*, published in 1968 and *Bibliografia analitică a limbii române literare (1780-1866)* issued in 1972. In 1967 he obtained the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in philology with the paper *Opera lingvistică a lui Ion Budai-Deleanu*. The same year, he became the leader of the group of Literary language and philology, which later became a Sector. At the age of 70 he retired from the board of the sector, which he had loyally directed for more than a quarter of a century, even if between 1975-1989 – due to economic reasons – the sector was directed from an administrative point of view by Mioara Avram (1932-2004). Ion Gheție died on 19th of May 2004.

Ion Gheție was a scientist, a man who devoted himself during his entire lifetime to various fields of research. His main fields of research were literary language, Romanian philology and historical dialectology. The famous philologist from Bucharest brought important contributions to the above-mentioned fields. He made many researches in the field of language, which were materialized into ample and well-documented theories. In his studies, he fought against the clichés and the myths existing in the Romanian philology by using solid arguments and by imposing new and well-documented points of view.

The field of literary Romanian language has been analyzed by many Romanian philologists and linguists. Remarkable representatives of the three great Romanian Linguistics Schools have approached in their studies the literary Romanian language. Nowadays, the specialty literature gathers hundreds of pages where this concept is analyzed and presented from all points of view. The literary Romanian language had been one of Ion Gheție's main fields of activity. Multiple studies and articles have been dedicated to this part of the Romanian culture. Being original and somehow

different from his predecessors' opinions, the theories of Ion Gheție about the literary Romanian language have been accepted in the specialty literature. Ion Gheție's research is not based on the analysis of the great writers' works, but on the analysis of the old Romanian texts. For Ion Gheție the beginnings of the literary Romanian language should be placed in the 16th century, when the first monuments of Romanian language appeared. This theory has been presented in the works *Istoria limbii literare. Privire sintetică* (1979) and *Introducere în studiul limbii române literare* (1982). During its evolution, the literary Romanian language had – according to Ion Gheție – two main periods: the old age (1532-1780) and the modern age (1780-1960). This classification can also be further subdivided. The old age is composed of the following periods: 1535-1656 and 1656-1780. The modern age is composed of the following periods: 1780-1836, 1836-1881 and 1881-1960. In the study *Baza dialectală a românei literare* (1975), Ion Gheție has determined other sub-periods, within the same ages: the old age is subdivided into three sub-periods: 1532-1588, 1588-1656 and 1656-1715. The modern age presents the following sub-periods: 1715-1780, 1780-1836, 1836-1881 and 1881 -1960. Even if these periods vary, it is important to notice the fact that the author remained loyal to the idea that the literary Romanian language had two different ages. According to Ion Gheție, the old literary Romanian language was not unitary, but presented multiple territorial ramifications. The theory had been imposed by the monumental work of G. Ivănescu (1912-1987), *Problemele capitale ale vechii române literare* (1945). Ion Gheție had the undeniable merit of imposing in the Romanian linguistics the term of regional variant (or regional realization) of the literary language. This notion competed with another denomination: literary dialect. G. Ivănescu, in the above-mentioned study, has used both denominations, thus creating a terminological confusion between the Daco-Romanian dialect and the dialects of the Romanian language. By proposing the term of regional variant, Ion Gheție thought that the term of dialect does not completely negates the designated notion. The four regional variants are: Walachian-South-Transylvanian, North-Moldavian, Banatian-Hunedorean and North-Transylvanian. From all these literary variants it was the Walachian speech which was enforced as the basis of the literary Romanian language in the second part of the 18th century. The process of unification is closely connected with the variants of the literary Romanian language and the basis of the literary Romanian language. According to Ion Gheție, the first unification of literary Romanian occurred in the mid 18th century, being facilitated by the social-cultural conditions of the time. In the mid-18th century the typography of Ardeal's cathedral was out of order and the one from Iași was still printing, but very rarely while the typographies of Bucharest and of Râmnic had an intense activity. In these conditions, when the typographies Blaj and Iași resumed their activity, they started to print Walachian books. This unification was significantly named "the 1750 moment". The first unification was realized at the level of printed books and it faded in the following period, 1750-

1780, because the laic literature was increasingly cultivated. The second fundamental process in the creation of a literary language, besides unification, was represented by the modernization of the literary language. In the case of literary Romanian language, the process of modernization began with the first Romanian texts and it continued during the entire historical period. In the opinion of the philologist, in 1880 the literary Romanian language was not only uniform, but also modern. In our opinion, the theory formulated by Ion Gheție was pertinent and well-argued. Ion Gheție's theory about the literary Romanian language is representative of the linguistic school of Bucharest, being a point of reference in the specialty literature for many contemporary linguists and philologists. Through his studies regarding the literary Romanian language, which have been elaborated during his entire scientific activity, Ion Gheție proved an exceptional and perfect knowledge of the essential problems of the literary Romanian language's history.

Philology represented for Ion Gheție, along with the study of literary Romanian language, an important field of research, a field to which he brought many contributions. The Romanian philology faced a series of specific problems: age, dating and localization of the first monuments of the Romanian language and interpretation of the Cyrillic written form are two of the most debated themes from the universe of Romanian philology. However, the main preoccupation of the Romanian philology was represented by the rhotacized texts. The old Romanian text which have been preserved since the 16th century are very important for the Romanian language because they represent the proof of a lost time. Although they are very important, they also have many shortcomings. They have been preserved until now, but with no information regarding their origin and this fact lead to many disputes between the Romanian philologists. A lot has been written about the oldest monuments of Romanian language, the so-called rhotacized texts and their most known theory regarding their origin is represented by the provenance from the Maramureș region. Many historians, as Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940) and philologist, as P. P. Panaitescu (1900-1967) have supported this theory. Ion Gheție did not share this hypothesis and he has tried his entire scientific activity to prove that the rhotacized texts can also have their origin in other regions of the country as Banat-Hunedoara, for example. This theory has been formulated even since the beginning of his scientific activity. In his later studies, the author has supported, by using crushing arguments, the fact that the rhotacized texts were not translated in Maramureș. Armed with linguistic and social-cultural evidence, Ion Gheție has convincingly proved that the rhotacized texts originate from Banat-Hunedoara region. A series of phonetic particularities, such as *ğ* or *dz*, as well as the presence of the terms *adămană*, *gilălui*, *felelui* and *fuglu*, in the rhotacized texts, have led Ion Gheție to the formulation of the thesis stating that Maramureș is not the place where Romaninan writing was born. The establishment of rhotacized texts' origin in Banat-Hunedoara by Ion Gheție is also due to the historical context and has marked the cultural life of this region. The oldest information about

the penetration of the Reform among the Romanians from Banat-Hunedoara dates since 1526. As a result, the favorable environment for the translations was created in Banat-Hunedoara. Ion Gheție has accurately observed that in the other regions of Daco-Romania such information is not present at all for the 16th century, while Banat-Hunedoara region has been a flourishing cultural center in the above-mentioned century. The researches of Ion Gheție have defeated the hypothesis formulated by the deacon Coresi. Coresi has been considered by many researchers the founder of the literary Romanian language. The deacon Coresi is a very complex personality belonging to the culture of the Romanian people and he has an honored place among the personalities who contributed to the development of the Romanian culture in the 16th century. Ion Gheție has the merit of putting a new light on the deacon from Târgoviște, by showing the real role of Coresi in the development of the Romanian language. Far from negating its importance, the deacon Coresi was considered by Ion Gheție an ordinary pressman who has also printed books under the impulse of the Reform. As an editor, Ion Gheție has realized text editions which were flawless from all points of view. During his scientific activity, Ion Gheție has elaborated the following text editions: *Ion Budai-Deleanu. Scrieri lingvistice* (1970, in collaboration with Mirela Teodorescu), *Manuscrisul de la Ieud* (1977), *Fragmentul Todorescu* (1982), *Cele mai vechi cărți populare în literatura română* (with Alexandru Mareș). He has prepared for printing, together with Mirela Teodorescu, an edition of *Psaltirea Hurmuzachi*, which was posthumously published in 2005.

In the field of historical dialectology, Ion Gheție has approached various problems with a high complexity degree. He has closely examined the concept of primitive Romanian language. In his studies, he has analyzed the Daco-Romanian speeches from the 16th century. Ion Gheție has cautiously formulated a conclusion regarding the territorial repartition of the Daco-Romanian speeches before the 16th century. In the field of historical dialectology, Ion Gheție distinguished himself through the originality of his ideas. Ion Gheție has studied the most diverse problems of the Romanian dialectology: the final *u* in Neculce's works or the labial palatalisation are only two of the themes which have been approached by the researcher in his studies. After 1990, an increasing preoccupation for the correct forms of the Romanian language can be observed in the scientific activity of Ion Gheție. He has approached in articles various themes such as the Romanian speech on the radio, where he criticized the mistakes of the radio announcer Florența Mihail. Still after 1990, Ion Gheție has manifested a real interest for the orthography of the Romanian language. He did not accept and had the belief that the writing with *â* and the form *sunt* – which had been proposed by the orthographic reform in 1992 – would not be adopted. However, the reality was different.

His ideas have not always been accepted by the other philologists. Due to this reason, a series of theories have generated negative reactions. Ion Gheție wrote polemical articles against Johannes

Krammer and Valeriu Rusu (1935-2008). The debate between Ion Gheție and Johannes Krammer was based on the fact that the two philologists had a different perspective on the manner of realizing the editions of old texts. Ion Gheție promoted the interpretative transcription while the professor Krammer chose transliteration. In Romanian philology, the facts are more complicated and the *ad-litteram* transcription of Cyrillic texts is not always a solution. Ion Gheție did not declare his opposition against the publishing of texts with the Cyrillic alphabet, but he understands that the old texts are interesting not only for the philologists, but also for the literary critics. An article published by Ion Gheție caused the reaction of Valeriu Rusu. The article signed by Ion Gheție, *Cu privire la repartitia graiurilor dacoromâne. Criterii de stabilire a structurii dialectale a unei limbi* appeared in the magazine „Studii și cercetări lingvistice” (Linguistic studies and researches), in 1964. The debate between the two was developed in the page of the magazine „Limba română” (Romanian Language), 1969-1970. The debate between Ion Gheție and Valeriu Rusu, Romanian linguist and dialect specialist, had started from the focal point of the Romanian dialectology, namely the repartition of the Daco-Romanian speeches.

Being an outstanding representative of the Linguistic School of Bucharest, but trained in Cluj, under the auspices of the professors Romulus Todoran (1918-1993) and Emil Petrovici (1899-1968), the scientific doctrine of Ion Gheție enjoyed an exceptional reputation and today, after 90 years from his passing, his ideas and conceptions about the literary Romanian language the deacon Coresi and the rhotacized texts, are accepted and promoted not only by his followers from Bucharest but also by the ones from Iași.