

G. Ivănescu. Historian of the Romanian Language

- abstract -

The topic of this thesis has to do with G. Ivănescu's conception regarding the history of the Romanian language.

My research was based on two objectives: first, the presentation of the way in which G. Ivănescu conceived the history of the Romanian language and, second, setting the scholar's ideas against its context of historical linguistics. As regards the exposition of this context, I have especially focused on those linguistic doctrines that represented the most important sources of Ivănescu's conception: A. Philippipe's materialistic theory, linguistic idealism and the view of A. Meillet's sociologic school.

As to the structure of the paper, my thesis consists of four parts, preceded by an introductory chapter and followed by a final one, devoted to conclusions.

The first part of the paper exposes Ivănescu's theoretical conception on the methodological principles that should be obeyed by the person who studies the history of a specific language and on the way in which the latter takes place. As regards the methodological aspect, Ivănescu establishes four principles that are to be taken into account when the evolution

of a language is being studied. Thus, he believes that the history of a language should be studied and exposed in stages from its formation to the researcher's present. According to the second principle, the linguist ought to be preoccupied by the causes which have led to the linguistic changes that he has observed. Thirdly, the stages of the linguistic development should be established in relation to the stages of the social development of the people who make use of the respective language. Ivănescu also establishes a fourth principle, which postulates the separation of the study of spoken languages from that of written languages.

As regards the phenomenon of linguistic development, Ivănescu believes that this process is influenced by three categories of factors: materialistic, more precisely, physiologic factors (the basis of articulation), mentalist factors (the psychological basis), and social factors (the structure of society and the economic relations that are characteristic of a specific social milieu); to these, Ivănescu also adds the influence of the substratum language on the "overlapping" language.

In the second chapter I exposed the division of the history of the Romanian language, as it was made and supported by Ivănescu. The first stage is that of the meso-dacic spoken Latin; it starts with A.D. 106 and ends in the 5th century.

During this stage, Dacia was conquered by the Romans and was imposed their way of life and, with it, the spoken Latin language. It was assimilated by part of Dacia's population, but, after Aurelius' withdrawal, due to the decline of the Roman civilization (and the authority of Latin), it began to undergo a series of changes, which laid the bases of its turning into another language. The stage of formation (5th – 7th centuries) is one of “linguistic revolutionizing” (A. Meillet), when numerous linguistic changes occur, under the influence of the basis of articulation, the psychological basis and the new economic conditions (local economy). The third stage is that of the “primitive Romanian” and it lasts, according to Ivănescu, from the 7th up to the 10th centuries. It was a period marked by the old Slavic influence, which exerted a strong lexical influence upon the newly formed Romanian language. It is now that the first migrations of various Romanian groups began: the Aromanians separated from the people in Crișana, Maramureș, Ardeal and Banat in the 10th century; however, they remained in direct contact with the Megleno-romanians. The stage of pre-literary Romanian (10th – 14th centuries) is that during which the Romanian people came into contact with new Slavic tribes (Serbs, Croatians, Ukrainians), which led to new linguistic influences upon the Romanian language. The “old

Romanian language” started with the 14th century. The most important social event of this period was the foundation of the Romanian Mediaeval states. On the linguistic plane, Ivănescu points out the emergence of the Romanian written language (15th century).

The third part of the thesis is devoted to the periodization of the history of the Romanian written language. At the beginning of this chapter, I laid out a few traits of the notion of *written language*, as it was defined by Ivănescu. The evolution of the Romanian language of culture has two periods: an “old” period (15th – 19th centuries) and a modern one (19th century – the present).

According to Ivănescu, the old written language finds its origin in the spoken dialect of the aristocratic strata, which was distinct from that which was employed by the lower classes. Initially, it must have only had an oral usage, but, starting with the 15th century, it is supposed to have developed a written variety as well. Ivănescu believes that the old written Romanian appeared in the region of Maramureș, as he thinks this is the area in which the rhotacist texts were translated. The scholar attributes the initiative of translating these texts to some didactic necessities: they may have been translated by the monks of the “St. Archangel Michael” Monastery in Peri.

The rhotacistic texts are considered very important for the “old” Romanian culture as they founded a tradition of the Romanian written language and exerted a strong influence upon the latter in the entire Daco-Romanian territory, which was manifested whereby a series of elements characteristic of Maramureș; these elements were imposed on the “old” written language.

The “old” written language was not unitary, it contained five varieties, which Ivănescu called literary (that is, written) dialects: the dialect of Crișana and Maramureș, the dialect of Banat, the dialect of Muntenia, the dialect of Moldavia, and the dialect of Ardeal.

The period between 1780-1830 is considered by Ivănescu a stage of transition towards the modern written language. At that point, the written language manifested a tendency of adopting some features of the spoken dialects. There was also another tendency, namely, that of adopting some features of the dialect of Muntenia, and this process is visible in all written dialects. As regards the enrichment of the lexicon, the neologising process was intensifying: numerous neologisms of Greek and Latin origins were introduced then. Also, explicit preoccupations for enriching the written language appeared on the part of such learned people as S. Clain, G. Șincai, and I.

Budai-Deleanu. The transition period is also connected to the beginnings of the modern Romanian artistic literature (Iancu Văcărescu, C. Conachi).

The following stage, 1830-1878, is considered a second period of modernization for the Romanian written language. Although the transitional dimension is maintained, the modernization and regulation of the unitary written language are intensified, as well as the removal of the elements belonging to the “old” language. The written language becomes the instrument of expression employed by the bourgeoisie. During this period, the Cyrillic alphabet is replaced by the Latin one (in 1860 in Muntenia, and in 1863 in Moldavia).

Moving to the modern language implied two processes: modernization and unification. An important part was played by the writers, whose contribution in the field of regulating the language became increasingly intense: some orthographic ideologies appeared, such as the one focusing on etymology, or the one pleading for the phonetic orthography, and several public debates on various language issues were organized.

A central feature of the modernization process was the tendency of Latinisation of the lexicon: numerous Latin and West Romance elements enter the written Romanian language

and replace the Hungarian, Slavic, and Greek ones. The unification of the written language had been achieved by 1880. This process is understood by Ivănescu as a mixture (a compromise) of all written dialects.

The fourth part comprises the main research ideas and methodologies, manifested in linguistics, which contributed, to various degrees, to the crystallization of Ivănescu's linguistic doctrine: the comparative historicism, Humboldtianism, psychologism, Ferdinand de Saussure's doctrine, structuralism, A. Meillet's sociolinguistics, A. Philippi's doctrine and E. Coseriu's integralism. In this chapter I showed the extent to which Ivănescu accepts or, on the contrary, rejects the elements of these ideologies and, based on these arguments, I tried to establish Ivănescu's place within the history of the diachronic linguistics.

In the final section, I exposed the conclusions I reached after finishing my research. Ivănescu's conception represents a synthesis of the prior ideas of historical linguistics: he is a comparativist, an idealist, a materialist, and, partially, a structuralist.

Ivănescu's place in the history of linguistics may be understood correctly if we look at his conception against the context of European linguistics in which it was elaborated.

Thus, his theory appeared against a European context still dominated by the structural linguistics, which had isolated language from all the extra-linguistic factors (including speakers), elements which were employed by some pre-structuralists' doctrines. Under these circumstances, the (stated) intention of the linguist of Iassy was that of expelling the "limitation" of the factors of linguistic development, by re-introducing the social element and, especially, the speaker into the linguistic investigation. Thus, Ivănescu did not only return to some ideas of the 19th-century researchers, but he also re-interpreted them from the perspective of the latest theories of the 20th-century linguistics, achieving a modern doctrine, which brought together the most important results of scientific linguistics.

The value of Ivănescu's conception lies in its complexity, owing to its being based on some ideas which come from numerous and various linguistic doctrines. We stress that the scholar of Iassy did not merely take over some ideas and brought them together, but he re-interpreted, reformulated and articulated them, thus achieving an original conception.

In conclusion, G. Ivănescu's linguistic theory is an eclectic one and represents both a synthesis and a critical evaluation of the previous main diachronic theories. Features such as

complexity, modernity, eclecticism, originality, encyclopedic character, inter-disciplinary dimension, and the rational and persuasive qualities assure an important position for its author in the history of the diachronic linguistics.