

COMMON NAMES OF STAGNANT WATERS IN ROMANIAN

NUME COMUNE DE APE STĂTĂTOARE ÎN LIMBA ROMÂNĂ

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Abstract: *The main objective of this paper is to show the importance water, and particularly stagnant waters (including lakes), has had in Romanians' history. The study area is linguistics: the paper presents an analysis of the Romanian vocabulary of stagnant waters. The method consists of the analysis of relevant semantic traits of the words. The results of the analysis show that both loanwords and derivatives designating stagnant waters and related terms are in perfect equilibrium. The conclusion: during history, Romanians have first borrowed a considerable number of words designating stagnant waters and/or related concepts, and then forged their own vocabulary (derivatives and compounds) of stagnant waters starting from the borrowed root-words. All categories show how important water has always been in the history of the Romanian people.*

Rezumat: *Principalul obiectiv al acestei lucrări este să arate importanța apei, și mai ales a apelor stătătoare (inclusiv a lacurilor) au avut-o în istoria României. Domeniul de studiu este lingvistic: lucrarea prezintă o analiză a vocabularului românesc al apelor stătătoare. Metoda constă din analiza trăsăturilor semantice relevante. Rezultatele arată că atât împrumuturile, cât și derivatele care desemnează ape stătătoare și termenii legați de acestea sunt într-un echilibru perfect. Concluzia este următoarea: în decursul istoriei lor, românii au împrumutat, mai întâi, un număr considerabil de cuvinte desemnând ape stătătoare și apoi și-au făurit propriul vocabular (compuse și derivate) al apelor stătătoare pornind de la rădăcinile împrumutate. Toate categoriile arată cât de importantă a fost apa în istoria poporului român.*

Key words: *Romanian vocabulary, semantic traits, loanwords, compounds, derivatives*

Cuvinte cheie: *vocabularul limbii române, trăsături semantice, împrumuturi, compuse, derivate*

INTRODUCTION

Romanian language has always been dynamic and open to changes, which involves, among others, a great mobility of the vocabulary. The introduction of new words, the disappearance of old words, the development of new meanings, and the migration of some words from specialised vocabularies to the common vocabulary and vice-versa have kept speakers under intense and complex pressure.

Language dictionaries record a lexical inventory or a determined vocabulary that constitutes the norm for both common language and specialised languages. Somewhere between the general representation of the lexical system and its actual use in speaking or writing, dictionaries supply a social reading of the meaning.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The present study of the Romanian vocabulary of stagnant waters is based on a common method of linguistic analysis: the analysis of relevant semantic traits of the words. The goal is to properly describe Romanian vocabulary for a better knowledge through an analysis of general language dictionaries and of the definitions they supply.

The study is done on a well-determined corpus of words – the lexical field of stagnant waters belonging to the common vocabulary – representing loanwords (words borrowed from other languages), derivatives (words formed from root words with the help of affixes), and

compounds (words formed from at least two elements of different linguistic nature: root-words, combining words, etc.). The choice of the corpus was dictated by the fact that it interests both common and specialised vocabularies.

The analysis relies on general and special dictionaries and the results are of interdisciplinary interest – linguistic, terminological, socio-linguistic, and lexicographical.

The distinction between the different vocabularies of a language relies on several independent criteria: range or frequency of the words, interest of the groups of speakers depending on their profession and on their social and cultural status. Thus, we distinguish between fundamental vocabulary (covering the terms mandatory for any variant of the language), standard vocabulary (covering all the terms except for artistic and scientific), and specialised vocabularies (covering all scientific and technical terms). The vocabulary of stagnant waters (i.e. bodies of water that do not flow) is somewhere between fundamental and specialised vocabularies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We have inventoried 25 loanwords (51%), 22 derivatives (45%), and 2 compound words (4%) related to stagnant waters in Romanian (Figure 1).

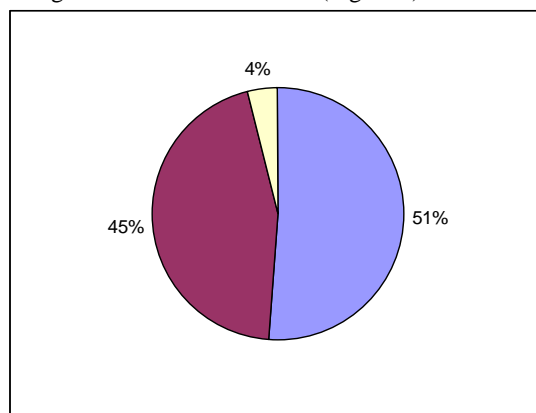


Figure 1. Romanian vocabulary of stagnant waters: loanwords 51%, derivatives 45%, compounds 4%

The 25 loanwords, words in a language that have been borrowed or taken over from other languages (CHALKER *et al.* 1994) in our corpus of words related to stagnant waters are words that have been borrowed from different languages and at different times in the history of the Romanian people and language. They are loanwords from one well-defined language, from one of several languages, or they have unknown etymologies (Table 1).

The following five units (20%) seem to have come from Slavic (Slav): Rum *baltă* 'bog, fen, marsh, moor, pool, quagmire, swamp, wetland' < probably Slav *blato* (cf. Alb *baltë*); Rum *iaz* 'small lake' < Slav *jazŭ*; Rum *iezer* 'mountain lake' < Slav *jezerŭ*; Rum *mlaștină* 'swamp' < Slav **mlaština*; Rum *smârc* 'swamp' < Slav *smrŭkŭ*. Other five Rumanian (Rum) lexical units (20%) are borrowed from French (F): Rum *oceanidă* 'a sea nymph, in Greek mythology' < F *océanide*; Rum *oceanograf* 'a specialist in oceanography' < F *océanographe*; Rum *oceanografic* 'belonging to oceanography' < F *océanographique*; Rum *oceanografie* 'oceanography' < F *océanographie*; Rum *oceanologic* 'related to oceanography' < F *océanologique*. Three units (12%) come from Latin (L): Rum *lac* 'lake' < L *lacus*; Rum *mare*

'sea' < L *mare*; Rum *ochi* 'pool, puddle' < L *oc(u)lus*. One unit (4%) comes from Sanskrit (Skt): Rum *a iezi* 'to dam' < Skr *jaziti*; one unit (4%) comes from Bulgarian (Bulg): Rum

Table 1

Source of Romanian loanwords designating stagnant waters

Loanword	Source (chronologically)						
	Sanskrit	Latin	Slavic	Bulgarian	German	Hungarian	French
<i>bălăştioagă</i>							
<i>baltă</i>			+				
<i>bulhac</i>							
<i>cocioc</i>							
<i>iaz</i>			+				
<i>iezer</i>			+				
<i>iezi (v.)</i>	+						
<i>lac</i>		+					
<i>lăcărît</i>							
<i>lăcovişte</i>	+			+			
<i>mare</i>		+					
<i>mlacă</i>	+			+			
<i>mlaştină</i>			+				
<i>mocirlă</i>				+			
<i>ocean</i>		+			+		+
<i>oceanic</i>		+					+
<i>oceanidă</i>							+
<i>oceanograf</i>							+
<i>oceanografic</i>							+
<i>oceanografie</i>							+
<i>oceanolog</i>					+		
<i>oceanologic</i>							+
<i>ochi</i>		+					
<i>smârc</i>			+			+	
<i>tău</i>							

mocirlă 'swamp' cf. Bulg *močilo*; one unit (4%) from German (G): Rum *oceanolog* 'a specialist in oceanology' < G *Ozeanolog*; one unit (4%) from Hungarian (Hung): Rum *tău* 'marsh, mountain lake' < Hung *tó*. The source of the borrowing is not well-defined in the case of other four units. Thus, two units (8%) may have come from Bulgarian or Sanskrit: Rum *lăcovişte* (Reg.) 'small marsh' < cf. Bulg, Skr *lokva*; Rum *mlacă* (Reg.) 'bog, fen, marsh, swamp' < Bulg, Skr *mlaka*. One unit (4%) may have come from French or Latin: Rum *oceanic* 'belonging to the ocean' < F *océanique*, L *oceanicus*. One unit (4%) may have come from Latin, German, or French: Rum *ocean* 'ocean' < L *oceanus*, G *Ozean*, F *océan*. Four units (16%) have unknown etymologies: Rum *bălăştioagă* (Reg.) 'small marsh', Rum *bulhac* (Reg.) 'small marsh', Rum *cocioc* (Reg.) 'small marsh', Rum *lăcărît* 'a crude extracting procedure'

(Figure 2). As we can see, the loanwords are shared as follows: French (7), Latin and Slavic (5 each), Bulgarian and Sanskrit (3 each), German (2) and Hungarian (1).

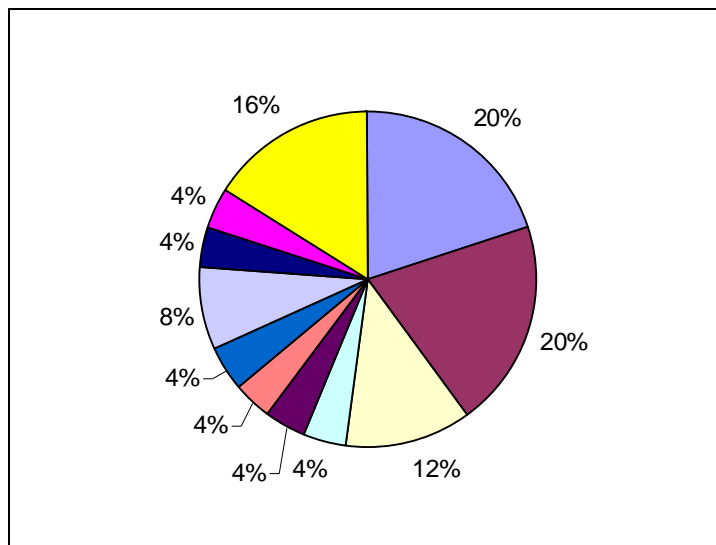


Figure 2. Source of Romanian loanwords designing stagnant waters: Slavic 20%, French 20%, Latin 12%, Sanskrit 4%, Bulgarian 4%, German 4%, Hungarian 4%, Bulgarian or Sanskrit 8%, French or Latin 4%, Latin, German or French 4%, unknown etymologies 16%

Surprisingly, the names of stagnant waters have resulted in about the same number (22) of derivatives, forms that have undergone derivation from other forms (CHALKER *et al.* 1994) (Table 2).

Table 2

Romanian derivatives from borrowed root-words designating stagnant waters

Root-word	Derivatives				
	Nouns			Adjectives	Verbs
	Diminutives	Augmentatives	Others		
<i>baltă</i>	<i>băltac</i> <i>băltiță</i>	<i>băltău</i>	<i>băltoacă</i> <i>băltoi</i> <i>băltiș</i>	<i>băltăreț</i> <i>băltos</i>	<i>bălți</i>
<i>lac</i>	<i>lăcșor</i> <i>lăculeț</i>		<i>lăcar</i> <i>lăcăraie</i> <i>lăcărie</i>		
<i>mlaștină</i>			<i>măștinișă</i> <i>măștiniș</i>	<i>măștinos</i>	
<i>iaz</i>	<i>iezușor</i>		<i>ieștură</i>		
<i>ochi</i>	<i>ochiuleț</i>				

<i>mocirlă</i>				<i>mocirlos</i>	
<i>smârc</i>				<i>smârcos</i>	

Thus, Rum *baltă* 'marsh' can be traced in nine derivatives (40%): Rum *băltac* (Reg.) 'small marsh' < Rum *baltă* + *-ac*; Rum *băltău* (Reg.) 'large marsh' < Rum *baltă* + *-ău*; Rum *băltișă* 'small marsh' < Rum *baltă* + *-ișă*; Rum *băltoacă* / *băltoagă* (Reg.) 'puddle, splash, mud hole' < Rum *baltă* + *-oacă*; Rum *băltoi* (Reg.) 'puddle, splash, mud hole' < Rum *baltă* + *-oi*; Rum *băltăreț* 'marshy' < Rum *baltă* + *-ăreț*; Rum *a bălți* 'to marsh' < Rum *balt(ă)* + *-i*; Rum *băltiș* 'marsh, marshy country' < Rum *baltă* + *-iș*; Rum *băltos* 'marshy, swampy, miry, boggy' < Rum *baltă* + *-os*. Rum *lac* 'lake' has five (22%): Rum *lăcar* 'a bird (*Acrocephalus* sp.)' < Rum *lac* + *-ar*; Rum *lăcăraie* 'pool' < Rum *lac* + *-ăraie*; Rum *lăcărie* 'pool' < Rum *lac* + *-ărie*; Rum *lăcșor* / *lăcșor* 'small lake' < Rum *lac* + *-ușor*; Rum *lăculeț* 'small lake' < Rum *lac* + *-uleț*). Rum *mlaștină* 'swamp' has three (14%): *măștișiș* 'marshy land' < Rum *mlaștină* + *-iș*; *măștișișă* 'a plant (*Epipactis* sp.)' < Rum *mlaștină* + *-ișă*; *măștișinos* 'marshy, boggy, swampy' < Rum *mlaștină* + *-os*. Rum *iaz* 'small lake' has two (9%): *iezătură* 'wicker dam' < Rum *iaz* + *-ătură*; *iezușor* 'very small lake' < Rum *iaz* + *-ușor*. Rum *ochi* 'puddle' has one (5%): *ochiuleț* 'small puddle' < Rum *ochi* + *-uleț*. Rum *mocirlă* 'swamp' has one (5%): *mocirlos* 'marshy, boggy, swampy' < Rum *mocirlă* + *-os*. Rum *smârc* 'swamp' has one (5%): *smârcos* 'swampy' < Rum *smârc* + *-os* (Figure 3). In nouns, the most productive suffixes are *-iș*, *-ișă*, *-ușor*, and *-uleț* (two nouns each), followed by *-ac*, *-ar*, *-ăraie*, *-ărie*, *-ătură* *-ău*, *-oacă*, and *-oi* (one noun each). There are sixteen derived nouns, of which six are diminutives and one is an augmentative. In adjectives, the most productive suffix is *-os* (four adjectives) followed by *-ăreț* (one adjective). The only verbal suffix, *-i*, has produced a single verb.

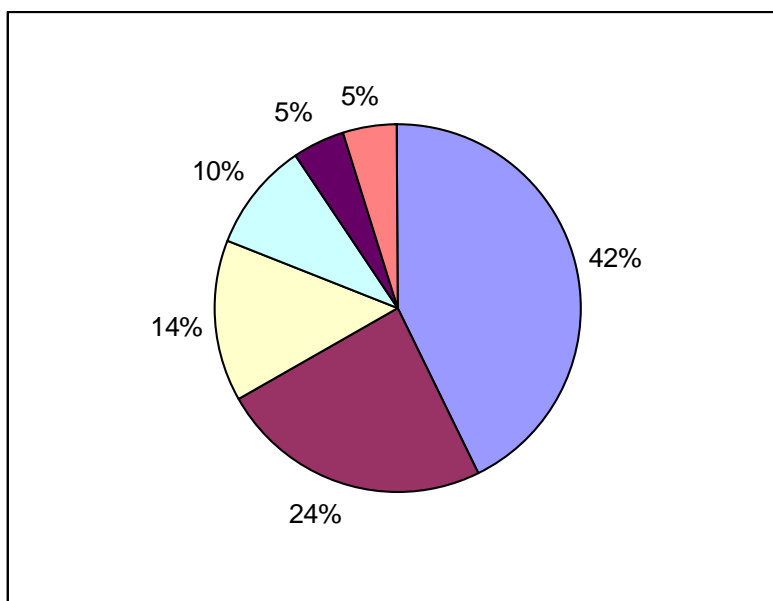


Figure 2. Romanian derivatives from borrowed root-words designating stagnant waters: *baltă* 40%, *lac* 22%, *iaz* 9%, *ochi* 5%, *mocirlă* 5%, *smârc* 5%

Rum *ocean* 'ocean' has resulted in two **compounds**, in our case, words consisting of two parts: a base (a root-word) and a combining form (a linguistic form used only in compound words, never independently) (Chalker *et al.* 1994) (4%): *oceanicultură* 'ocean farming' < Rum *ocean* + *-cultură*; *oceanologie* 'oceanology' < Rum *ocean(o)* + *-logie*.

CONCLUSIONS

This balance between loanwords and derivatives (the presence of the two compounds is irrelevant here) shows that common names of stagnant waters have had a long history with Romanians' ancestors and/or neighbours (they have come from Sanskrit, Latin, Slavic, Bulgarian, Hungarian, French, and German) and that they have been assimilated by Romanian, sufficient enough to engender their own derivatives (nouns, adjectives, verbs).

Their use is sometimes restricted to certain regions of Romania, which turns them into synonymic regionalisms (*bălăştioagă*, *băltac*, *băltău*, *băltoagă*, *băltoi*, *bulhac*, *cocioc*, *lăcovişte*, *mlacă*).

Diminutives show either hidden affection in the speaker (the owner of a lake would call it using a diminutive!), or wishful thinking (a swamp was called by its diminutive to diminish its size!), speaking of the relationship between man and stagnant waters.

LITERATURE

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