AMBIGUITY AND METAPHORICAL DESIGNATION IN THE RIDDLES OF THE MEGLENO-ROMANIAN DIALECT

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Résumé : Les devinettes sont des espèces du genre ludique, appréciées à toutes les époques pour leur subtilité et leur ingéniosité. Elles font appel, dans la construction du contenu sémantique, à des images inhabituelles, qui sont souvent basés sur des divers phénomènes métaphoriques.

Ce travail exploite la théorie intégrale de Eugeniu Coșeriu sur la métaphore et examine la manière dont la créativité se manifeste dans le domaine linguistique du discours. Nous mettrons en évidence que ces „unités universelles de l'imagination humaine" (E. Coșeriu) sont culturellement marquées et projettent, par désignation expressive et ambiguïté, des représentations mentales humaines liés principalement au monde environnant.

Mots-clés : créativité, ambiguïté, métaphore, devinettes, dialecte mégléno-roumain.

1. In the scientific context of linguistic theory, especially in that of cognitive and integral semantics, the problem of metaphorical creation in language has experienced several changes of perspective over time, based on different perspectives of understanding and investigating the nature of the metaphorical phenomenon. The diversity of orientations and formulated opinions, with the emphasis placed only on the linguistic side, on the cognitive side or on the integral approach, has drawn attention to the importance of metaphor in everyday speech and, implicitly, to the (creative) way in which man relates to reality and designates it as accessibly and clearly as possible.

Without insisting, in the present work, on examining the options in relation to the criteria, work hypotheses and perspectives expressed in the specialized literature regarding the nature of metaphor and the subsequent conceptualization, our study aims to highlight some means of ambiguity through metaphorical designation in Megleno-Romanian riddles, by taking into account some theoretical frameworks expressed within integral semantics. The corpus consists of the 100 riddles collected by Theodor Capidan and published in the volume *Meglenoromânii*, and, for the comparison with the Daco-Romanian dialect, we used

the work of Arthur Gorovei, *Cimiliturile romanilor*, edited and with a foreword by Iordan Datcu (Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing), a unique collection that includes riddles and conundrums in the Daco-Romanian and Aromanian dialects or in other languages.

1.1. In the beginning, we will focus on the construction of the riddles' text, which is a specific one, being made up, according to Coseriu's model as proposed by Tămâianu-Morita (2020: 83-89) of *textual-constitutive units* and *textual-constitutive procedures*, in which the linguistic composition is represented by declarative and interrogative sentences made up of the "current lexical material of the language" (Pascu, 1909: 12). These textual peculiarities are also reflected at the level of terminology, where specialists make several distinctions, both in terms of structure and of content, which have not yet found a definitive circumscription. If, for Arthur Gorovei, the difference between a riddle and a conundrum is "the same as the one between genus and species, in the sense that every conundrum is a riddle, but not every riddle is a conundrum" (Gorovei, 1972: XV), Theodor Capidan's terminological option is for riddle, known in the Megleno-Romanian dialect as *mintšuń*, a term to which Dr. *minčună*, Mr. *țińitură* (Eng. "lie"*)* correspond, according to G. Pascu. Following the investigations carried out by G. Pascu, the verb *cimilesc* also exists in Megleno-Romanian, but it was preserved only with the meaning of "to deceive, to make a joke" (Pascu, 1909: 8).

From the open list of elements that represent textual-constitutive units proposed by the mentioned author, we note, in the case of riddles, two types that "guide the articulation of meaning": "idiomatic signs from all levels of the organization of the functional language and including all types of signified, with the whole constellation of paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships that they maintain at the level of particular languages" and the existence of "some traditional means for the realization of specific textual functions". Within the type of enigmatic microtext called conundrum, we note the existence of specific opening formulas (*cinel-cinel, cimel ce-i, cimili ce-i, ciumelei-cei* or *ghici ghicitoarea mea*) (Pascu, 1909: 8-9) and ending formulas, in the case of riddles (*Ghici, ce este?*)[1], as well as two elements, detectable, according to G. Pascu, in all conundrums: "the thing to guess, *the subject of the conundrum*, and the words, the figure through which it is expressed, the form of the conundrum" (Pascu, 1909: 10). In the category of textual-constitutive procedures, the author includes "evocative sign relationships, textual functions, among which a privileged role is played by «metaphorical layers as textual functions», as defined and described by Zagaevschi Cornelius (2005), forms of suspension of incongruity and incorrectness through the values of appropriateness, expressive gaps" (Tămâianu-Morita, 2020: 85).

In the case of riddles, the articulation of meaning can be studied by taking into account three levels related to the formation of the signified, so called by M. Borcilă (2009, apud Tomoioagă, 2016: 160-161): *the significative level* ("from which three aspects occur: denomination, which is spontaneous, as a form of protolanguage, determination, which orients the signified towards the experiential world, and metasemia, by which two signifiers are associated with totally different designations, in order to determine a new, «metaphorical» signified and designate, with it, a «new, unique aspect of the experience»") (Tomoioagă, 2016: 160-161), *the representational level* ("or of the imagination, an aspect of the source, of a behavioural nature, is transferred to the target, a process carried out inside the

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[1] For details related to the origin and structure of conundrums, see *Prefață* la *Cimiliturile românilor. Ediție îngrijită și cuvânt înainte de Iordan Datcu*, Bucharest, 1972, by Arthur Gorovei, pp. XV-XXIII.

speech, not before it") (Tomoioagă, 2016: 160-161) and *the skeologic level* (which must tell us, according to Eugeniu Coşeriu "what the contribution of general knowledge of things is to each speech" (1992, apud Munteanu, 2011: 219).

Regarding the analyzed corpus, it is observed that the metaphorical designation mainly aims at the precise designation, the analysis of the occurrences highlighting the fact that the best represented categories of signifiers are objects, followed by animal species, parts of the body, plants from the immediate universe, elements of nature, etc., less often abstract and harder to define realities, such as emotions, feelings, passions, for example.

Regarding the level of signification, we note that the target domain best represented in riddles is that of household tools, the lexical signified – human being associated with nominal lexical signifiers from the category + human, usually from the animal register, less often from the human register. Here are some examples:

"Am ună cătsaὖă, /Toată zὖua latră /Şi seara cǫn vine /Si culcă dupu uşă. /Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am o căţea, /Toată ziua latră /Şi când se face seara /Se culcă după uşe./Ghici, ce este?"

(Eng. "I have a dog, /It barks all day /And when the evening comes /It sleeps behind the doors. /Guess what it is?") (the axe),

with the variants:

"Am un cǫni, /Toată zὖua latră /Ca vini seara /Si scundi dupu uşă." – "Am un câine, /Toată ziua latră /Şi când se face seara /Se culcă după uşe."

(Eng. "I have a dog, /It barks all day /And when the evening comes /It sleeps behind the doors.");

"Belca-n latră zὖua-n deal /Şi noaptea stă scunsă." – "Belca îmi latră ziua în deal /Şi noaptea stă ascunsă."

(Eng. "The bitch barks on the hill during the day /And hides at night.").

"Ań am, ἀń am un pul'i, /Amnă di pri tumbă, tumbă, / Nits con nu zastà. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Îmi am, îmi am un puiu, /Umblă de pe o măgură pe alta, / Niciodată nu se opreşte. Ghici, ce este?"

(Eng. "I've got, I've got a baby, / Walking around from one hill to the other, /Never stopping. Guess what it is?") (the razor),

with the variants:

"Ań am un pul'i, /Tucu pri rid, rid amnă /Făr di si si zăcătşască." – "Îmi am un puiu, /Din deal în deal mereu umblă, / Fără să se oprească."

(Eng. "I have a baby, /From hill to hill he always walks, /Without stopping.");

"Ań am un gulub alb, /Tucu di pri tşucă, tşucă meardzi (Tucu di pri zeană zeană meardzi) / Fără si zăstà." – "Îmi am un gulub alb, /Mereu umblă din deal în deal, (Mereu din deal în deal umblă) /Fără să se oprească."

(Eng. "I have got a white dove, /Always wandering from hill to hill, (Always from hill to hill wandering) /Without stopping.");

"Am un boṷ roş, /Iundi si culcă, /Iarbă veardi nu iasi. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un bou roşiu, /Unde se culcă, /Iarbă verde nu creşte. Ghici, ce este?"

(Eng. "I have a red ox, /Where it sleeps, /Green grass does not grow. Guess what it is?").

"Ań am un bou /Tot ăntră ăn pleamnitsă, /Saldi coada nu-l'i antră. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un bou /El intră întreg în grajd, /Numai coada nu-i intră. Ghici ce-i?"

(Eng. "I have an ox /It enters the stable whole, /Only its tail does not enter. Guess what it is?") (the spoon).

"Ań am patru suror, /Tucu si tsăpes şi nu pot si si jungă. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am patru surori, /Mereu se gonesc /Şi niciodată nu pot să se ajungă."

(Eng. "I've got four sisters, /They're always chasing each other /And they can never catch up.") (the reel).

The cross-domain projection can also be realized between the lexical signifiers – human to nominal lexical signifiers – human:

"Am un munti, /La ună parti neaṷă /La lantă garduşcă." – "Am un munte, /Într-o parte zăpadă /În cealaltă parte gard."

(Eng. "I have a mountain, / Snow on one side /On the other side fence." (the cotton spindle);

"Am ună butseaṷă plină cu vin şi cu rachiă, ama nu şi burves. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un butoiaş plin cu vin şi cu rachiu, dar nu se amestecă. Ghici ce este?"

(Eng. "I have a barrel full of wine and brandy, but they don't mix. Guess what it is?") (the egg).

The representational level is the result of the system's exploitation of meanings from the category of "circumstances", called "frames" (Coşeriu, 2013: 137). Aspects related mainly to behaviour, and less to the particularities of the objects/beings are highlighted in the case of Megleno-Romanian riddles: the dog that barks, the pig that squeals, the stable where the animals live, etc.

As far as the skeologic level is concerned, in the case of riddles, we find some of the particularities that, for example, objects have, other than those known through the usual occurrences in which the terms enter. For example, in the *egg* riddle: "Am ună butseṷaă plină cu vin şi cu rachiiă, ama nu şi burves. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un butoiaş plin cu vin şi cu rachiu, dar nu se amestecă. Ghici ce este?" (Eng. "I have a barrel full of wine and brandy, but they don't mix. Guess what it is?") (the egg). Thus, in addition to the suggestion regarding the form, the trait related to the content is also captured, in which the two membranes do not mix.

For the parts of the body, on the other hand, which enjoy a good representation among the conundrums, the metaphorical designation is based on the same imagistic pattern in the Megleno-Romanian and Daco-Romanian dialects, namely the substitution of an element, different in status and importance:

"Ań am un ại̯ọr plin cu cal' albi /Sandi un roş în mējluc /tucu ạl' clutsă aşti. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Îmi am un grajd plin de cai albi. /Numai unul roşiu mereu în mijlocul lor, mereu îi ghionteşte. Ghici, ce este?"

(Eng. "I have a stable full of white horses. /A single red one always in their midst, always nudging them. Guess what it is?") (the mouth);

"Ań amună băsearică plină cu cal'i al'bi şi ăn mējlucu lor ăi un roş tse tucu l'a clutsăiaşti." – "Am o biserică plină cu cai albi şi în mijlocul lor este unul roşiu, care îi tot ghionteşti (loveşte cu piciorul). Ghici, ce este?"

(Eng. "I have a church full of white horses and in the middle of them is a red one that keeps nudging (kicking) them. Guess what it is?") (the tongue),

with the variant:

"Ań amună triuşă plină cu cal' albi, sandi un roş; tse-i?"
(Eng. "I have a yard full of white horses, only one is red; what is it?")

The textual organization must be related to the context in which the riddles were originally uttered, with their purpose and social role, described by Gheorghe Vrabie in the following words: "they were uttered at the wool spinning group work gatherings or when peeling the corn, they accompanied these immobilizing, difficult, tiring works with their humour. Those gathered here, in order to «not fall asleep», used conundrums as a refreshing tonic." (Vrabie, 1966: 287). We thus understand that these short texts are species related to the ludic genre, which were characterized by brevity, subtlety, according to which the ilocutionary performance of the anonymous author was evaluated.

However, conundrums are not only limited to the transfer of imaginative content, but the creative process approaches, through intention and ways of expression, the particularities of poetic language. Thus, as a folk artistic creation and "object of reflection and wisdom", riddles and conundrums capitalize on multiple means of metaphorical expression, in which we find: comparison, personification, metonymy, synecdoche, hypotyposis, antanaclasis, etc. The metaphorical projection must also be connected, in the case of riddles, with one of the characteristics of the artistic (poetic) discourse, the "intentional" ambiguity (Coteanu, 1985: 24), by which "a double meaning is knowingly attributed: one visible, the other suggested". The confusion is sometimes maintained by minimal changes of focus, which allow the identification of several semantic equivalents (the reel, the day, the night):

"Ań am patru suror, /Tucu si tsăpes şi nu pot si si jungă. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am patru surori, /Mereu se gonesc /Şi niciodată nu pot să se ajungă."
(Eng. "I've got four sisters, / They're always chasing each other /And they can never catch up.") (the reel).

"Am dọu̯ suror /Tucu si putires, nu pot si si muibă nitsi unạu̯ară. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am două surori /mereu se gonesc şi nu pot să se întâlnească niciodată. Ghici ce este?"
(Eng. "I have two sisters /they're always chasing each other and can never meet. Guess what it is?") (day and night).

Moreover, associative patterns employ particularities that defy the logic of thought and become attractive through nonsense. In this case, the "creation of signifiers" that Coșeriu refers to is announced by rhythmic expressions or signal-*words*, as Gheorghe Vrabie (1966: 287) called them, used with stylistic intent:

> "Scadala mandala/Pana la Domnu. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Scandala mandala, /Până la Dumnezeu. Ghici, ce este?"
> (Eng. "Scandala mandala, /Up, towards God. Guess what it is?" (the smoke).

1.2. We therefore note, so far, regarding the relations of the linguistic sign at the discursive level, that they can be contained, as we have observed, in the categories called by Coșeriu "the relations between signs and «things»" (Coșeriu, 2013: 123) and circumstantiations. We can also invoke the type of relationship that is established between "signs and «knowledge of things»" (Coșeriu, 2013: 132), considering that the selection of elements on the basis of which the transfer of meanings takes place within the designation process is carried out through a selection of elements from the spectrum of lexical possibilities available to the speakers, in direct connection to the way they relate to things within the cultural community.

It is known that shepherding was the most famous occupation of the Megleno-Romanians before their partial conversion to Islam. This change in religious orientation resulted in their transformation into «beys», about which Theodor Capidan (Capidan, 1925: 13) stated that they were "common murderers who occupied themselves with looting property and snatching lands from the Romanians settled in the villages closest to Nânta […] Later, growing rich with foreign wealth, they came to be «bey» in the newer meaning, the one that is common throughout European Turkey, of a swindler, who, without working, is content with the little income that he receives from the small piece of land his parents left him". This explains why the configuration of riddles found only in Megleno-Romanian bears the imprint of cultural specificity by referring, for example, to signifiers that are missing from riddles in other dialects (the reel, the pruning knife, the candle, *ghiumul* – the large brass jug):

> "Ań am patru suror, /Tucu si tsăpes și nu pot si si jungă. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am patru surori, /Mereu se gonesc /Și niciodată nu pot să se ajungă."
> (Eng. "I've got four sisters, /They're always chasing each other /And they can never catch up.") (the reel).

> "An am un trandafil, /An mejlocu di nari. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un trandafir /În mijlocul (unei cantități) de miere. Ghici ce-i?"
> (Eng. "I have a rose /In the middle of (a quantity of) honey. Guess what?") (the candle);

> "Ań am un dead, /Cu'nn dintili gorb. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un moș, /Cu un dinte-n spate. Ghici, ce este?"
> (Eng. "I have an old man, /With a single tooth in the back. Guess what?") (the pruning knife);

> "Un rap cu ună mọnă. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Un arap cu o mână."
> (Eng. "An Arab with one hand.") (*ghiumul* – the large brass jug).

Other cultural peculiarities, found in the metaphorical projections, refer to the presence of terms specific to the Megleno-Romanian geographical space (măgură – "hillock", rodie – "pomegranate", etc.) or refer to violent events in their history:

"Ań am, a̧ń am un pul'i, /Amnă di pri tumbă, tumbă, /Nits con nu zastà. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Îmi am, îmi am un puiu, /Umblă de pe o *măgură* pe alta, /Niciodată nu se opreşte/ Ghici, ce este?"
(Eng. "I've got, I've got a baby, /Walking around from one hill to the other, /Never stopping. Guess what it is?") (the razor);

"Cōti steali la Dōmnu, /Cōti tsapi ăn pimint. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Câte stele sunt la Dumnezeu /Atâtea ţepi sunt în pământ. Ghici, ce este?"
(Eng. "As many stars there are in the sky /Such are the thorns in the ground. Guess what it is?") (the stubbles);

"Am un urcior,/Plini cu rubini roşii" – "Am un urcior,/Plini cu rubini roşii"
(Eng. "I have a pitcher /Filled with red rubies") (the pomegranate);

"Am un cupilaş răsădit /din zur ăn zur tot cu răvoĺ şi cu butšašti. Ugudeà, tse-i?" – "Am un flăcău împodobit de jur împrejur numai cu revolvere şi tot bubuie."
(Eng. "I've got a boy decked out in nothing but revolvers and he keeps banging.") (the mill wheel),

with the variant:

"Am un cupilaş cu 40 de pistol'i ăn bro̧n" – "Am un flăcău cu 40 de pistoale la brâu."
(Eng. "I got a lad with 40 guns on his belt.").

Conclusions

In conclusion, the evaluation of strategies for articulating meaning by interrogating evocative relationships, symbolic and textual functions, highlights the superiority of the integral semantic model, its openness in terms of the practical investigation of the ways in which meaning is substantiated in the case of enigmatic textual achievements called riddles.

We highlighted, in our approach, the fact that, in the case of riddles, "metaphorical knowledge" presupposes the orientation of the receiver towards the signified, through "the suggestive description of objects or of the being through typical correspondences" (Vrabie, 1966: 302), with the association of "a scheme that has a symbolic task, with a culturally constructed value, but also with an affective one, linked to a certain intuition in relation to the respective signified" (Tomoioagă, 2016: 86). The designation of objects by means of riddles and conundrums is not foreign to a rhetorical intention, reflected in the employment of expressiveness and figurativeness, motivated by usage, by the circumstances in which speakers uttered the riddles. That's why the messages offer more possibilities to identify the solution, putting the interlocutor in a difficult situation through the uncertainty of the intuition of the intended designated. The linguistic support requires a simple interpretation, but it is challenging through the variety of possibilities and through the surprise that the solution to the question offers.

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