



Cooking through the Centuries

A Linguistic Approach to the Hungarian–Romanian
Translation of the *Szakátsmesterségnek könyvecskéje* Published
in Cluj / Kolozsvár by Miklós M. Tótfalusi K. in 1698

Maria Augusta SZÁSZ

Technical University of Cluj-Napoca

Faculty of Industrial Engineering, Robotics and Production Management

Department of Foreign Languages and Communication

augusta.szasz@gmail.com

Abstract. The aim of this study is to explore the challenges inherent in the translation of archaic literary texts, focusing on the linguistic choices, constraints, and strategies involved in this process. The linguistic analysis is based on the author's Romanian translation of *Szakátsmesterségnek könyvecskéje*, a 17th-century Hungarian cookery book published in Transylvania during the early era of printing. This article argues that when the source and target languages and cultures of an archaic text have historically been in contact, the resulting translation can be more accurate, more reflective of its historical context, and ultimately more engaging for contemporary readers. The paper begins with a general overview of this hypothesis, followed by a discussion of the book's printer and the presumed authorship, providing essential background for the reader. The final section presents the translation strategies adopted by the author, with particular attention to maintaining both the historical accuracy and stylistic flavour of the original text, but also emphasizing the archaic feature of this important artefact of Transylvanian culture.

Keywords: translation, languages in contact, archaic and regional vocabulary

1. General overview

In early 2025, the author has been commissioned the Hungarian–Romanian translation of the *Szakátsmesterségnek könyvecskéje* (hereinafter referred to as the Cookbook) published in Cluj/Kolozsvár by Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis in 1698. The book was transposed into modern Hungarian by Dr András Varga, who added

appositives to the obsolete terms and also provided us with a three-page glossary of archaic words no longer in use and their respective current counterparts or explanations. The bilingual version was published in October 2025 with the title *Szakácsmesterségek könyvecskéje / Cărticica meșteșugului de bucătar*.¹

As the original we worked on was published over 300 years ago, the linguistic challenges regarding terminology, grammar, and sentence structure were inevitable. Therefore, we chose to address these translation-related challenges in a dedicated research article, where we explain the linguistic decisions made throughout the translation process. Our choices are supported by relevant bibliography in the fields of translation studies and history. The goal was to produce a version that is both accessible and engaging for contemporary readers, while preserving, as far as possible, the original text's archaic character.

The challenge of ensuring accuracy was even greater, as Hungarian and Romanian have been languages and cultures in contact for centuries. This contact is perceptible in the Transylvanian Romanian and Transylvanian Hungarian language varieties, therefore a more precise match of terms would be expected than in the case of random languages that have not been in contact. As is common in all instances of language contact, the circulation of goods, ideas, and concepts plays a natural and integral role in the contact process. Typically, when an object is introduced into a new cultural or linguistic context, its name is also transferred and subsequently localized in the receiving language (Moric 2001: 57).² In our case, these concepts were gastronomy-related, including names of ingredients, dishes, and fruit varieties. This idea guided us and is traceable, almost palpable in the case of our translation. Furthermore, we argue that the interaction between the two languages has served not only as a challenge but also as an asset. It has facilitated the translation of culturally specific concepts, resulting in a version that is both vivid and engaging for the Transylvanian Romanian reader, who is likely already familiar with many of the borrowed terms, phrases, and ideas.

2. On the book and authorship

2.1. The book

The *Szakácsmesterségnek könyvecskéje* cookbook was published by Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis, known in the English international literature as Miklós Kis Tótfalusi, or Nicholas Kis (1965–1702),³ a Transylvanian typeface designer,

1 Ed. Electro Sistem (István Blaskó).

2 Also available online at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/23800/23882/23882.pdf> (downloaded on 06. 25. 2025).

3 <https://journals.uc.edu/index.php/vl/article/view/5403/4267>.

typographer, and scholar who dedicated his life to spreading religion and knowledge via printing (Stauffacher 1985: 61). After completing his studies, he became the headmaster of a school in Făgăraș/Fogaras, which he left for Holland to pursue his studies in Calvinistic Theology, and eventually become a minister, for which apparently he had no calling (Tevan 1985: 223). At the same time, he was entrusted by the Reformed Church in Transylvania with helping supervise the printing of the Hungarian Bible in Holland, as the church of the time did not have the necessary technology to produce it locally. He abandoned his theological studies to dedicate his life to printing so that he could eventually print the Bible by himself (Stauffacher 1985: 61). He eventually managed to revise it and print it in Holland in 1685. In order to finance it, he cut a variety of types for other foundries and presses around Europe and Asia. The absence of differentiated book printing in Europe made Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis an advocate of intellectual work and craftsmanship in 17th-century Transylvania (Jakó 1974: 5).

In 1689, he returned to Transylvania to establish his own printing shop and type foundry. Eighty-four publications are known from his printing activity in Cluj/Kolozsvár (Tevan 1985: 225), including works of physics, religion, literature, and medicine for the general public, as well as textbooks and cookbooks (Stauffacher 1985: 61).⁴ He was not only concerned with the outward appearance of his books in terms of types and binding but always placed great emphasis on the accuracy of the language. He would supervise, stylistically and grammatically review the works he printed (Tevan 1985: 223), placing his work in public service. However, the self-awareness arising from public service and the moral and value system he acquired in Holland clashed with the backwardness and economic constraints of traditionalist feudal Transylvania (Jakó 1974: 35).⁵

The original version of the digitized Cookbook we received for translation was published in Cluj/Kolozsvár by the typographer in 1698 according to the subtitle. Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis added the subtitle describing briefly the dishes the book contains for the “ease and convenience of housewives”,⁶ that is of the commoners and minor nobility, not necessarily high nobility courts. The publisher mentions that it is a revised and extended version, and therefore there must have been an earlier version. During our documentation phase, we came across an existing Romanian edition of the Cookbook, published in 2019 by GastroArt Publisher. The translation, introductory study, and notes belong to historian József Lukács. The historian translated the edition of 1695, which was also a revised version. His

4 <https://journals.uc.edu/index.php/vl/article/view/5403/4267>.

5 His aim was to promote the education of the younger generations through Calvinistic schools. In his type foundry, he carefully supervised the spelling, grammar, and content of the books to be published. He introduced linguistically innovative grammatical solutions and contributed suggestions to the Bible translation. However, these efforts eventually provoked mockery and hostility from some members of the Calvinistic academic staff and clergy.

6 In the original text: *gazdasszonyoknak nagy könnyebbségekre*.

introductory study presumes, therefore, that the first edition might be dated 1693, and, as the Cookbook became popular, further editions were published later on in 1698, 1745, 1755, 1771, 1785, and 1793 in Cluj/Kolozsvár (Lukács 2019: 9).

The book features four parts that might have been the original, to which further extensions were added as indicated by the table of contents. The overall length of the version we worked on is 25,000 words divided into six parts. As we noticed, the style of the last addendum referring to jams is more intricate – the recipes were longer, more detailed, and contained quantities as well –, whereas the first four parts make no mention of quantities whatsoever. Lukács, therefore, presumes a different authorship for the latter parts (Lukács 2019: 35).

2.2. Authorship

From the title page of the Cookbook, it becomes clear who printed it, but there is no mention about authorship. There are several theories about the author's identity. András Varga states that the Cookbook written for commoners, as it mentions, was written by the cook of a larger community, a court or a friary. He assumes the Catholic authorship of the book, possibly a Franciscan friar in Șumuleu Ciuc / Csíksomlyó, but as it was considered too lay and worldly, it was sent to Cluj/Kolozsvár to be printed.⁷

In an article in *Múlt-kor*, a history magazine, Noémi Saly references historian András Józsa (Saly 2021),⁸ who speaks about a manuscript cookbook found in the Teleki–Bolyai library in Târgu-Mureș / Marosvásárhely that had been copied upon Countess Susanna Bethlen's request in 1772 after the 1692 Cookbook by Zsófia/Soffia Dobos (Tofeus). In his introductory study for Cărticica, Lukács supports the same idea, stating that it had been written in Târgu-Mureș / Marosvásárhely by Soffia, whose husband was a Reformed minister appointed to the city. But it could not have been printed in the city, as there was no printing shop at the time (Lukács 2019: 27). She must have been acquainted with Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis from his time in Făgăraș/Fogaras. Her authorship is also supported by József Szinnyei⁹ in his anthology of 19th-century Hungarian writers. Irrespective of the debated authorship of the cookery book, our Cookbook is the first printed Hungarian

7 <https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00021/00379/Ksz2008-3-kozl01.htm>.

8 <https://m.mult-kor.hu/szerzeteseknek-szolgalt-utmutatoul-az-első-magyar-nyelvu-szakacs-knyv-20210206?fbrcMR=mobile&pldx=2>.

9 In the original language: Dobos (Tofeus) Zsófia, D. Mihály rokona vagy talán nővére. Szakácskönyvet irt, mely Vásárhelyen 1692-ben és másodszor 1693-ban jelent meg. 'Dobos (Tofeus) Zsófia (Soffia) 'A relative or perhaps sister of Mihály D. She wrote a cookery book, which was published in Vásárhely in 1692 and a second time in 1693.' Szinnyei, József, *Magyar írók élete és munkái*. HTML version: Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár. Downloaded on 05.31.2025; available at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/index.htm>.

cookbook in Transylvania dated as early as the 17th century, information which we relied on in our linguistic approach and the translation strategies we adopted.

3. Our approach to the text, translation strategy, and linguistic choices

We approached our text from the perspective of contact linguistics. This subfield of linguistics demonstrates that no known language and culture has remained entirely unaffected by neighbouring language(s) or culture(s). This is particularly evident in the case of Hungarian and Romanian in Transylvania, where the historical cohabitation of the two ethnic groups has led to sustained linguistic interaction. Hungarian, i.e. Middle Hungarian (from 1526 to 1772), the original language of the Cookbook, and Romanian, the target language, and the two cultures have been languages in contact characterized in many geographical areas by collective bilingualism that has given room and fertile ground for transfer and interference phenomena (Szász 2008: 83). In our translation, we aimed to preserve the visibility of these phenomena in the target text, thereby reflecting the historical and cultural depth of the original context.

The commissioning publisher's explicit request was to keep an archaic touch in the Romanian translation without sounding too obsolete and still remaining understandable for today's readers while also maintaining the specificities of the gastronomic content.

From the perspective of the translational task, we opted for the domesticating as well as the mildly foreignizing translation strategies, as theorized by Lawrence Venuti (1995) in *The Translator's Invisibility*. The author argues that the process of "domesticating" the foreign original means to inscribe the domestic linguistic and cultural values on foreign texts with the aim of achieving fluency (Hale 1995: 47). This typically entails the localization of idioms and cultural references. The opposite of domestication is foreignization, which emphasizes the cultural differences between the source text and the target version (Hale 1995: 48). In this case, the translator shall retain source words, use explanatory footnotes and also transliteration. In our case, this dual strategy allowed for a balanced translation that remained accessible to modern Romanian readers while subtly preserving elements of the source language and culture.

As previously mentioned, the Cookbook was the first Hungarian cookery book in Transylvania, an important artefact of Transylvanian typography. Therefore, our initial research aimed at finding the first cookery book published in Romanian in Transylvania. Apparently, it belonged to Zotii Hodoş, who published *Poftă bună!* at Tipografia Diecezană, Caransebeş in 1899-1900. Gudrun-Liane Ittu affirms that in the belle époque there was sufficient gastronomic literature in Hungarian

and German in the Transylvanian cities, but hardly any in Romanian (Ittu 2018: 575). The author of the Romanian cookery book was a well-educated upper-class woman who could speak Romanian, German, Hungarian, and French. This information is relevant from the perspective of her language use and familiarity with the concepts borrowed from these languages.¹⁰

As both cookery books were the first of their kind in their respective times, we decided to get inspiration from the Romanian cookery book by Zotii Hodoş for certain terms (such as the translation of the Hungarian *torta* ‘cake’ as *tortă* in Romanian instead of using the standard Romanian *tort*).

Another way we sought to preserve the booklet’s archaic feel was through the use of regional terms that also carry an archaic nuance, which the translator has been familiar with by personal experience and transliteration. Below, we outline some of the most significant linguistic choices we have made, along with their explanations and justifications for our choice.

As previously noted, András Varga provided a glossary of 234 archaic Hungarian terms and their respective explanation or contemporary equivalent. The glossary contains nouns denoting food, dishes, spices, verbs, and adjectives no longer in active use. We translated the digitized version of the book containing explanations of some of the archaic terms, added as appositives explaining the meaning of dishes or ingredients, thereby enhancing the comprehensibility of the text. Varga consistently inserted these appositive explanations immediately following each occurrence of the corresponding archaic Hungarian term. In cases where the obsolete terms referred to ingredients, we either employed the modern Romanian equivalent or transliterated the original term when no archaic or contemporary Romanian counterpart existed.¹¹

3.1. Archaic terms

The Cookbook lists 69 sauces, gravies using the terms *lé*, or the archaic *lév* ‘broth, sauce’ or *sása*, the latter meaning a kind of sauce thickened with bread served with venison. Soups as we know them started to be cooked thanks to Western influence only later, at the beginning of the 18th century.¹² The translator had to be aware of this relevant aspect in order to truthfully render the meaning. Had we translated *lé*, or the archaic *lév* by the modern *supă* ‘soup’, the meaning would have been lost, as the original does not mean ‘soup’ but still means a liquid sauce-

¹⁰ <https://biblioteca-digitala.ro>.

¹¹ *Tyúkmány*, the archaic term for ‘egg’, for example, was translated into Romanian as *ou* since there is no other older or archaic term available for it.

¹² An overview of the Cookbook referencing András Varga is available online at: <https://www.nagybanya.ro/regi-nagybanya/misztotfalusi-kis-miklos-az-else-magyar-szakacskonyv-megalkotoja>; accessed on 10 March 2025.

like dish. Therefore, we chose the Romanian *zeamă*, which translates as ‘broth’, ‘gravy’, or even ‘soup’.

Another archaic counterpart that we decided upon is the Romanian archaic and regional *fărină* meaning ‘flour’, occurring in the text 74 times. Its counterpart in modern Romanian is *făină*. Although the Hungarian *liszt* is not an archaic word, we still decided to use the Romanian archaism ‘*fărină*’ for a more archaic touch to our translation. The Romanian word ‘*fărină*’ comes from the Latin ‘*farina*’ with the same meaning and a clear etymological lineage. Romanian preserved this Latin term, with the phonetic evolution over time. The change from *farina* → *fărină* → *făină* shows regular sound changes typical to Romanian, including vowel centralization and reduction. ‘*Fărină*’ though, both archaic and regional, is still widely understood today and will not hinder the comprehension of the text.

The jam recipes in the Cookbook contain as follows:

- (1) **nádcukor, nádméz vagy másféle méz** [Source: original *Szakáts-mesterségnek könyvetskéje*]
- (1a) **zahăr de trestie, miere de trestie sau altfel de miere** [Source: our translation of the Cookbook]
 ‘cane sugar honey, cane honey or any other kind of honey’

Some of the recipes described the process of making cane ‘honey’, which involved mixing cane sugar, rose water, and egg whites. This combination resulted in what was referred to as *másféle méz* ‘another kind of honey’. One possible conclusion is that in Middle Hungarian *méz* may have denoted any other sweetener made of honey or sugar by adding any other ingredient. From the translator’s perspective, we excluded the Romanian word *îndulcitor* (‘sweetener’), as it is a neologism and would not reflect the archaic wording of the source text. Furthermore, the original Hungarian text does not use the modern equivalent *édesítő* but rather *méz*. For this reason, we opted for the archaic and regional *miere* (literally ‘honey’) to convey the meaning of ‘sugar’ or ‘sweetener’. Notably, the Romanian *miere* is still in use today in some parts of central and northern Transylvania to denote ‘sugar’ or ‘sweetener’.

3.2. Regional words and phrases

After the battle of Mohács (1526), the Renaissance style could not really unfold. This was also true of art, architecture, and certainly gastronomy. At a time when Europe was enjoying its finest “late Renaissance”, Hungary was experiencing the Turkish wars and invasions, and the country’s division into three parts: Royal Hungary, Transylvania, and the part annexed to the Ottoman Empire. A threefold influence can be noticed due to Transylvania’s geographical position. In addition

to the existing Transylvanian Hungarian cuisine, which also incorporated significant Balkan influences (e.g. the use of garlic), the influence of Western food styles, dishes, spices, and fruit, especially Italian, German, French, Polish, etc., was intensified. This is obvious in our Cookbook in the names of gravies and sauces (e.g. *lengyel lév*, *lengyel cibre*) ‘Polish sauce, Polish borsch/borş’¹³ *olasz makaróni* ‘Italian macaroni’, *olasz kolbász* ‘Italian sausage’.

As we said, new varieties of fruit also made their way into Transylvania through these same routes: Ottoman, Western, or Balkan. Fruits such as apricots or sour cherries spread in the region starting with the 16th century, bringing along their names, being naturalized and adopted in the local kitchen. The Cookbook contains several peach jams. The apricot (*Prunus armeniaca*) was called *tengeri barack* in Hungarian to distinguish it from peach. Romanian borrowed the term, clipped the first part (*tengeri*) as a phonetic loan (Szász 2008: 87) and pluralized it with the Romanian plural suffix *-e*, the fruit becoming *tenghere*. It is still used in regional Romanian today. We decided to use it in our translation, as both the Hungarian *tengeri barack* and the Romanian *tenghere* meaning ‘apricot’ are obsolete today, thus reflecting the archaic character of the Cookbook.

Another debatable term raising issues and questions during the consultation with academic peers and the available bibliography was *duráncai barack* in the following context:

- (1) A **duráncai barackot** ne hámozd meg. [Source: original *Szakács mesterségnek könyvetskéje*]
 (1a) Folosește **piersici dronțoase**, ce nu se iau de pe sâmburi. Nu le curăța de coajă. [Source: our translation of the Cookbook]

As the term in question is archaic and no longer in use, we sought to identify its Romanian equivalent by investigating its etymology, initially hypothesising that the fruit had been introduced via a Western trade route. In his footnote to the term (Lukács 2019: 219), József Lukács explains that it refers to a clingstone variety of peach that arrived to Transylvania via Durrës, the Albanian port city to the Adriatic Sea, hence its name. However, we did not find this etymological pathway convincing for two main reasons. First, as historian Paska Rudolf¹⁴

13 *Borş* is a liquid ingredient consisting of water in which wheat or barley bran, sometimes sugar beet or a slice of bread, have fermented. After decanting, the result is a yellowish, sour liquid, which is used for sour soups. It is also used in some Hungarian-speaking regions. It has the same etymology as the Ukrainian *borshch*, which is a sweet and sour red beet soup. Although the etymological origin of the Romanian *borş* and the Ukrainian *borshch* are the same, the two are different in meaning.

14 The Renaissance heritage lasts longer in Transylvania, and later trends and influences reach the region later. Available at: <http://erport.ro/tobbszemkozt/erdely-az-elhatarolható-gasztroregio> (accessed on 30. 09. 2025).

referencing Péter Apor's *Metamorphosis Transylvaniae* (1736) puts it, the Transylvanian elite was highly "internationalist" and followed the French or Italian gastronomic trends that eventually reached Transylvania. And second, because the Transylvanian process maintained active contact with the Italian cities well beyond the end of the Renaissance in Western Europe. As a result, imported goods often retained names reflecting their place of origin. Consequently, we pursued further etymological research, hypothesising that the term may have originated in either French or Italian. Both hypotheses might be correct and closer in spelling and pronunciation to the Hungarian *duráncai*. The French origin could be supported by the French toponym Durance, the main river in the Southern French Alps, known for its rich soil and bountiful agriculture. An alternative explanation could be the Italian origin of the term, as in Italian *pescaduracina* is a variety of firm-fleshed, clingstone peach (cf. Latin *duracina*). Both the French and the Italian version are closer in pronunciation to the Hungarian *duráncai*. However, we settled neither for József Lukács's translation of the term nor for the French or Italian counterparts, as we did not find any similarity with any Romanian variety.

The fourth option was the most adequate in our view, which we came across in the Klein Samuelis *Dictionarium Valachico-latinum*¹⁵ dictionary, published in Budapest in 1944. The dictionary entry explains the Romanian **droantza* with the Hungarian *durántzai* referring to the variety of peach, originating it from Latin, and stating that this clingstone variety of peach is known regionally in Sălaj County / Szilágyság as *piersets drontsose*, using archaic Romanian spelling¹⁶ (Klein 1944: 175). Although the term is specifically regional and archaic, and no other references were found, we still opted for it, as it was the closest in pronunciation to the Hungarian original. In order to render the term understandable to the reader, we inserted an appositive in the translation (*ce nu se iau de pe sâmburi* 'clingstone'), which is an explanation for the variety of peach.

Due to the same Italian influence, we decided to render the Hungarian *fenyőmag* as 'sâmburi de pin', 'pine nuts', edible seeds of pines. Historian József Lukács also adopts the same Romanian counterpart although he references a recipe in *Bornemisza Anna szakácskönyve 1680-ból / Anna Bornemisza's Cookery Book from 1680* (Lukács 2019: 124) that used seeds of common juniper as a spice to confer juniper flavour to regular grape wine.¹⁷

The Cookbook was published short after the Age of Discovery when the new crops had not yet been adopted and acclimatized in Europe, let alone in Eastern

15 The digitized version of the Dictionary is also available at: https://adatbank.ro/html/cim_pdf1074.pdf (accessed on 2. 04. 2025).

16 The current spelling is *piersici dronțoase*.

17 Brewing juniper berry wine, recipe 214 in *Bornemisza Anna szakácskönyve 1680-ból / Anna Bornemisza's Cookery Book from 1680*.

Europe, where the discoveries, any crops, technologies, produce, and products always arrived later.¹⁸ Therefore, the booklet does not contain dishes made with tomatoes, potatoes, cornmeal, or corn flour. But wheat flour and ground cereals (wheat, barley, millet) existed and were widely used both for deserts alongside almonds and to thicken sauces with or make porridges (rice, semolina, barley, oat, and millet porridges). We translated *rizskása* ‘rice porridge’ into Romanian as *rișcaș*, the term still being used in rural Transylvania meaning ‘rice’ as well as ‘cooked rice’, and *köles-kása* got translated as *coleşă* ‘millet porridge’. It is obvious that the regional Romanian *coleşă* is a phonetic loan from Hungarian. Today, it has nothing to do with millet, where it draws its name from, but it means ‘polenta’ made of corn in some remote, rural settlements (Szász 2008, vol. 3: 49). Due to the archaic character of the Cookbook, we decided upon the regional and archaic Romanian counterparts of the two terms.

3.3. Transliteration

As mentioned before, transliteration is a key technique in the foreignizing translation strategy in order to highlight the cultural origin of a concept or to underscore cultural differences. It is commonly employed in translated cookbooks, where the objective is to preserve the specificity and authenticity of a dish rather than substitute it with an approximate equivalent from the target language or culinary tradition.¹⁹

For certain dish names – those that sounded foreign or had already fallen into obscurity, often transliterated into Hungarian by the original author – and for preparations that no longer exist or lack a clear counterpart in contemporary cuisine, which were included in the accompanying glossary, we opted to transliterate them into Romanian. This choice was made instead of providing a more descriptive or interpretive translation, in order to preserve their historical and cultural specificity. *Kutkusa* got transliterated as ‘cutcușa’, *kadóc* as ‘cadoț’ (Petre 2021: 203), accompanied by the appositive provided by historian András Varga in the glossary. We decided to transliterate *karbonáta* as ‘carbonata’, *pikáda* as ‘picada’. The two dish names are still known today as Italian specialties, sharing, however, very few ingredients with the recipe in our original 1698 Cookbook.²⁰ Another illustrative example is *piroska*, which is pasta filled with jam or cheese, similar to the Italian ravioli. In this case, the translator had two options: either use the modern Romanian ‘colțunași’ or the more obsolete and

18 <http://erport.ro/tobbszemkozt/erdely-az-elhatarolhato-gasztroregio> (accessed on 30. 09. 2025).

19 See, for instance, the French *cassoulet*, which is basically a stew. The French name is maintained in order to keep the specificity of the recipe. Available at: <https://www.curdhome.co.uk/recipes/pdf/Cassoulet-II.pdf>.

20 The original *karbonáta* ingredients and today’s *carbonara* share only eggs, while the original *pikáda* and today’s ‘picada’ share chicken.

regional ‘piroște’, which etymologically derives from the Hungarian *piroska*. Had we used the Romanian ‘colțunași’, we would have domesticated the name of the dish, as the term is more widely understood by contemporary readers; the translation would have been accurate, fluent, but it would have lost the archaic touch. Instead, we decided to use the archaic ‘piroște’²¹ in transliteration, mildly foreignizing the recipe and retaining the archaic nuance of the text.

3.4. Tackling the reminiscence of dual grammatical number

The dual grammatical numbers existed in Proto-Indo-European and referred to two entities that belong together and form a unit (Gabbiadini 2015: 633)²² but has been lost in most modern Indo-European languages, being absorbed into the plural. Hungarian as a Finno-Ugric language historically also featured a dual grammatical number, besides singular and plural, which no longer exists in the modern language. The remnants of the dual grammatical number are reflected in Hungarian in the existence of the numerals *két* and *kettő* (both denoting *two*) and the nouns used to denote double body parts used only in the singular (*szem* ‘eye,-s’, *fül* ‘ear,-s’, *láb* ‘leg,-s’ or ‘foot/feet’). Unlike the case of Indo-European languages where dual was absorbed by the plural, probably under the influence of the other languages it came in contact with, the Hungarian dual number disappeared, and the nouns denoting “pairs or couples” such as body parts or clothing (*nadrág* ‘trousers’, *kesztyű* ‘gloves’) were absorbed into the singular. In order to denote just one piece of the pair or couple, Hungarian uses the word *fél* ‘half’. Hence we have *fél szemű*, literally ‘half-eyed’, or *fél lábú* ‘half-legged’. The absorption process of the dual number occurred before the earliest written texts were produced in Hungarian, so we do not have a textual example of its usage.

This becomes relevant in the following example reflecting the reminiscence of the dual grammatical number in the unit of measurement *marék* expressed in double body parts:²³

- (2) Végy **egy marék** mondolát [Source: original *Szakács mesterségnek könyvetskéje*]
 (2.a) Ia **doi pumni** de migdale [Source: our translation]

The original would literally translate ‘take two handfuls of almonds’, which turned into our Romanian version *Ia doi pumni de migdale* since *marék* in Hungarian actually means ‘two handfuls’ or ‘the cup of one’s hands’, and

21 <https://dexonline.ro/definitie/piro%C8%99c%C4%83>.

22 The author discusses Humboldt’s *Über den Dualis* at: <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-etudes-germaniques-2015-4-page-633?lang=fr>.

23 <https://wikiszotar.hu/ertelmezo-szotar/Mar%C3%A9k> (accessed on 1. 10. 2010).

félmarék is half of the quantity, i.e. one handful. In the translation and study by József Lukács, the historian decided to translate ...*egy marék mondolat*... into Romanian as ‘... în căușul palmelor’, which literally translates as ‘...in the cup of your hands’ (Lukács 2019: 208). There is no difference in meaning between the two translations. Our decisions were based on the more common use of this “unit of measurement” since the Romanian *doi pumni*, i.e. two handfuls, are more widely used in Romanian than József Lukács’s version.

Conclusions

Each language encapsulates, in intricate detail, the history of its speakers and, to some extent, the histories of neighbouring communities and hence cultures. The study of a language cannot be meaningfully separated from the historical context of its linguistic community. This holds particularly true when language is examined in close connection with the history, ethnography, society, and culture of its speakers. Historical texts, regardless of their subject matter, serve as cultural and linguistic artefacts that reflect the societal context in which they were produced. Translating such texts today presents significant challenges, particularly in preserving their archaic nuance and stylistic richness. This task demands not only a deep command of the target language but also expertise in interpreting the original text’s archaic features and rendering them faithfully in translation. The approaches and examples presented herein offer practical strategies for addressing the linguistic and cultural complexities involved in translating historical texts.

References

- XXX. Academia Română. 1998. *DEX*. 2nd ed. Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic.
- Gabbiadini, Guglielmo. 2015. Anthropologia dualis Ein Annäherungsversuch an Wilhelm von Humboldts Rede « Über den Dualis » im Kontext der Goethezeit [Anthropologia dualis. An attempt to approach Wilhelm von Humboldt’s speech “On the Dualis” in the context of Goethe’s time]. *Études Germaniques* 70(4). Available at: <https://shs.cairn.info/revue-etudes-germaniques-2015-4-page-633?lang=fr>. (downloaded on 06. 28. 2025).
- Hale, Terry. 1995. The translator’s invisibility: A history of translation by Lawrence Venuti. [Book review]. *Translation Review* 50(1): 47–49. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/07374836.1996.10523686?needAccess=true> (last accessed on 30. 09. 2025).

- Ittu, Gudrun-Liane. 2018. O carte de bucate din belle époque. Poftă bună! de Zotti Hodoș (tipografia diecezană, Caransebeș, 1899, 1900) [A cookbook from the belle époque. Poftă bună! by Zotti Hodoș (diocesan printing house, Caransebeș, 1899, 1900)]. *Acta Terrae Fogarasiensis* 7. Available at: <https://biblioteca-digitala.ro> (downloaded on 02. 28. 2025).
- Jakó, Zsigmond. 1974. *Erdélyi Féniks. Misztótfalusi Kis Miklós öröksége* [The Transylvanian Phoenix. The Legacy of Miklós Misztótfalusi Kis]. Bucharest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó.
- Klein, Samuelis. 1944. *Dictionarium Valachico-Latinum*. Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda.
- Lakó, Elemér (ed.). 1983. *Bornemisza Anna szakácskönyve 1680-ból* [Anna Bornemisza's Cookery Book from 1680]. Bucharest: Kriterion Könyvkiadó.
- Lukács, József. (2019). *Cărticica meseriei de bucătar – Cartea de bucate tipărită la Cluj în 1695* [The Cook's Book – The Cookbook Printed in Cluj/Kolozsvár in 1695]. Transl., introductory study, and explanatory notes by József Lukács. S. l.: Editura GastroArt.
- Moric, Julianna. 1999. Hungarizmusok a horvát frazémákban [Hungarisms in Croatian phrasemes]. *Colloquia contrastiva* Tomus VII, Kontrasztív nyelvészeti tanulmányok. Available at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/23800/23882/23882.pdf> (downloaded on 06. 25. 2025).
- Petre, Mona. 2021. *Ierburi uitate, Noua bucătărie* [Forgotten Herbs. The New Cuisine]. S. l.: Editura Nemira.
- Saly, Noémi. 2021. Szerzeteseknek szolgált útmutatóul az első magyar nyelvű szakácskönyv [The first Hungarian cookbook to serve as a guide for monks]. *Múlt-kor* Történelmi magazin. Available at: <https://m.mult-kor.hu/szerzeteseknek-szolgált-utmutatoul-az-elso-magyar-nyelvu-szakacs kny v-20210206?fbkrMR=mobile&pIdx=2>, (downloaded on 06. 01. 2025).
- Stauffacher, Jack. 1985. The Transylvanian phoenix: The Kis-Janson types in the digital era. *Visible Language* 19(1). Available at: <https://journals.uc.edu/index.php/vl/article/view/5403/4267> (downloaded on 06. 20. 2025).
- Szinnyei, József. 1894–1914. *Magyar írók élete és munkái* [Lives and Works of Hungarian Writers]. Magyar Elektronikus Könyvtár. Available at: <https://mek.oszk.hu/03600/03630/html/index.htm> (downloaded on 05. 31. 2025).
- Szász, Ștefan. 2008. *Intereferență și transfer în bilingvismul român–maghiar din Uriu* [Interference and Transfer in Romanian–Hungarian Bilingualism in Uriu]. Cluj-Napoca: Clusium.
- Tevan, Andor. 1984. *A könyv évezredek útja* [The Millennial Journey of the Book]. Budapest: Gondolat Kiadó.
- Varga, András. 2008. A Tótfalusi-szakácskönyv forrása [Source of the Tótfalusi cookbook]. *Magyar Könyvszemle* 124(3). Available at: <https://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00021/00379/Ksz2008-3-kozl01.htm> (downloaded on 06. 10. 2025).

Venuti, L. 1995. *The Translator's Invisibility. A History of Translation*. New York: Routledge.

Web sources

<https://wikiszotar.hu/ertelmezo-szotar/Mar%C3%A9k> (accessed on 1. 10. 2025).

<https://www.nagybanya.ro/regi-nagybanya/misztotfalusi-kis-miklos-az-elso-magyar-szakacs-konyv-megalkotoja> (accessed on 04. 03. 2025).

<http://erport.ro/tobbszemkozt/erdely-az-elhatarolhato-gasztroregio> (accessed on 30. 09. 2025).