

# The Digitized Old Books: First Grammar to Teach Romanian Language for Bulgarians

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**Abstract.** The paper offers analysis of digitized copy of the first printed school book to teach Romanian language for Bulgarians published in Bolgrad, Romania in 1865. The related study uses a digital copy of the book which was recently available on-line as a part of the initiative of the Central Library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences for digitizing old and rare printed books of its large collections. The overview of the approach used for the digitization and the teaching methodology with related approaches are presented by analyzing the book's content including its bilingual Romanian-Bulgarian thematic dictionary. The book can be considered also as the first comparative grammar of Romanian and Bulgarian language, since it contains grammar and lexical examples of related parallel bilingual linguistic phenomena. The analysis, focused on the interpretation of both grammar and lexical phenomena of both languages given in the book is presented together with the related pedagogical implementations.

## 1. Introduction

Recent developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offer various approaches to manage, archive, and preserve cultural heritage objects of different kinds. The fact that contemporary ICT techniques offer systems and methods for ubiquitous and remote access not only to museum expositions but also to copies of old and rare printed books stored into the greatest world's libraries is giving unique opportunity for research, analysis and new findings on historical circumstances and their interconnections which have never been studied and discussed before.

The cultural heritage preservation of digitized old and rare printed books and their on-line availability throughout by offering the scanned copies is a fact that allows a multilingual interpretation of that books in a new cultural and nationally-specific contexts. For example, the research in education and history of foreign language teaching and related approaches may significantly benefits from analysing related old and rare school books interpreted in newly European context.

Further, we are going to present the overview of a multilingual approach used in foreign language teaching which was introduced and elaborated by the German linguist Johann Franz Ahn based on the digitized copies of related school books. Later, we shall analyze the digitized copy of the first printed school book to teach Romanian language for Bulgarians published in Bolgrad, Romania in 1865 using that approach. The book was recently offered on-line by the Central Library of Bulgarian Academy of Sciences' digitized initiative.



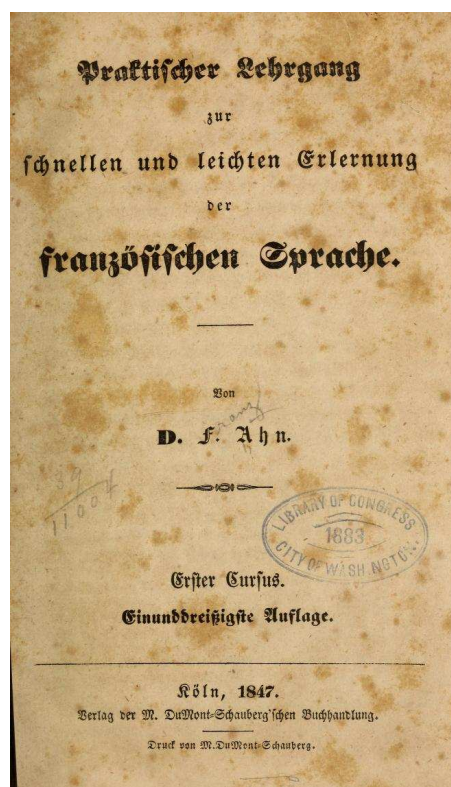
## 2. Johann Franz Ahn (1796-1865) and his works on foreign languages teaching

The works of the famous German linguist F. Ahn are worldwide recognized as to be the basics of what today we would say *methodology of learning foreign languages*. His *practical and easy method of learning foreign languages* follows the same approach as that for learning native language repeating the way the child is acquiring the native language from its mother, and the approach was considered to be with a multilingual application. The final aim is to speak that foreign language with a competence as the native one.

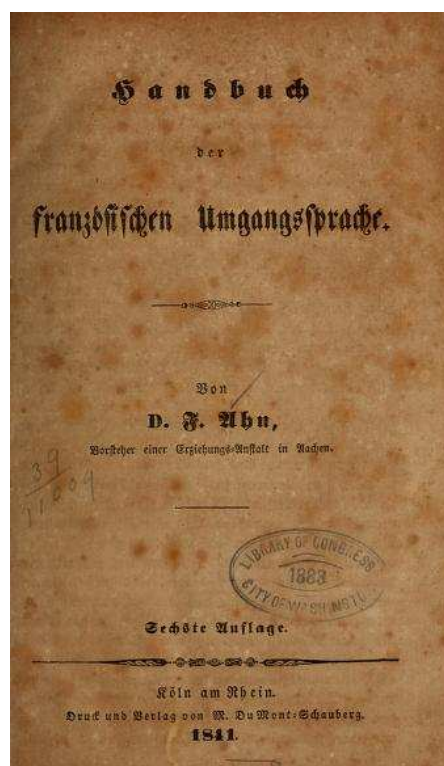
F. Ahn had published during his life an immense quantity of school books in many pedagogical genres and for learning various languages. For example, he prepared grammars, references, text readings and guides for foreign language learning. Also, his method was used additionally by great amount of authors to produce various school books to learn different foreign languages following the *practical and easy method*. The majority of that old and rare printed books can be found in various digital collections of several respectable libraries offering an opportunity to re-evaluate the impact of the author and presenting the analysis on the newly discovered applications of his method.

### 2.1. World's digitized repositories and collections of F. Ahn's works

F. Ahn had published school books to learn French, German, English, Holland, etc. languages contributing to several pedagogical genres. At the same time, his *practical and easy method* was applied to almost all European languages (including Latin language).



**Figure 1.** The title page of F. Ahn's book *Praktischer lehrgang zur schnellen und leichten Erlernung der französischen sprache* from on-line sources of the LC.



**Figure 2.** The title page of F. Ahn's book *Handbuch der französischen umgangssprache* from on-line sources of the LC.

One of the richest repositories of scanned copies of that books are the Library of Congress

(LC), the Harvard University (HU) and the Princeton University (PU). They offer on-line the scanned copies of ones on the first editions of the author. Generally, the beginning of F. Ahn's work was the publication of his school grammars of French [4] (a scanned copy is offered by the HU), English and Holland [1] language.

However, the most famous book of the author is offering a methodology to learn French for German readers [5] (a scanned copy of a later edition is offered by the LC (Fig. 1)). Later, F. Ahn applied the same methodology in his books to learn English and Italian [2] (a scanned copy is offered by the LC) language and to learn German language for French, English [9] (one of the latest editions) and Italian readers improving his methodology as to be with a multilingual application.

F. Ahn also contributed to the genre what today we would say *a guide for conversation*. He published the series of such books for French [3] (a scanned copy of a later edition is offered by the LC (Fig. 2)), German [8] (a scanned copy is offered by the HU), English and Holland language. Additionally, he published a *guide for commercial letter-writer* which contains German, French and English glossary [7] (a scanned copy is offered by the HU). The author also published the series of books with German poetry for English [6] and French readers.

At the same time, there are many authors which had applied the F. Ahn's *practical and easy method* to various languages. For example, C. Marchetti published a book to learn Italian language following that methodology [14], whereas P. Condigiorgi published a book [10] in 1871 in Constantinople using that method as well. The cited works suggest that during the second half of the XIX c. the F. Ahn's method to learn foreign languages was known throughout the Europe including on the Balkans.

### 3. The application of F. Ahn's method for Bulgarian language readers

It was not until recently, that the process of digitization of the books published in Bulgarian language during the period of the National Revival has started. Thus, the National Academic Library and Information System (NALIS) organized the major Bulgarian libraries to start some years ago an initiative for digitizing their rich library collections of old and rare printed books allowing preservation and content management of that sources and offering on-line search.

#### 3.1. The NALIS approach to digitization of old and rare printed books

Generally, the approaches to digitization of old and rare printed books allow to present their content (often written with different graphics for different books) in computer-readable format for on-line reading and searching. The techniques used start from simply scanning the book's content to structuring it by using meta-data annotation schemes as well as linked data for on-line search.

Contemporary library automation uses the electronic catalogues which present a searchable knowledge database. That electronic database uses the encodings and annotations establishing specific technical standards for presenting various types of book's information. Thus, the LC uses Machine-Readable Cataloguing (MARC) standards for electronic representation of bibliographic information [12]. The MARC standards of electronic data representation contain types of information fields which present book's specific numbers and code fields (for example, about the *Title*, *Physical Description*, *Linking Data Fields*, etc.) which allow on-line search.

At the same time, the EUROPEANA (European Commission's digital platform for Cultural Heritage) uses its own data model (EDM) for presenting Cultural Heritage digital content with specific meta-data format annotations combining text, image, video, etc. sources and allowing the use of Linking Open Data (LOD) and common search.

The NALIS uses the approach to annotate the old and rare printed books digital collections which also adopts EDM as well as LOD and is compatible with the standards for electronic representation of bibliographic information of the LC [11] and with the meta-data standards

allowing common fast on-line web-search. The NALIS digital standards use content-oriented approach allowing options for *Navigation* (forward and backward) and *Display* (zoom in, zoom out), and options for *Search* the book content (within full text, chapters, tables, appendices, etc.) by web-based search. The meta-data annotation approaches are compatible to that of EUROPEANA and use common representation of book's *Title*, *Creator*, *Properties*, *Time*, *Provenance*, *References and Relations*, etc. and common on-line web-search.

As a result, some new studies connected to the chronological, geographical and linguistic aspects of the literature from the period of Bulgarian Revival were published [17]. At the same time, the main process of digitization was improved with the application of new standards which take into account the specific features of Bulgarian old and rare printed books from that period [21].

### 3.2. The F. Ahn's method and related grammars of learning French language for Bulgarians

The works related to F. Ahn's method and its application for Bulgarian readers to learn French language are spread through several Bulgarian libraries and are considered as old and rare printed books. They, basically, are included in the Repertoire of Books from Bulgarian Revival [18], which is the main and most representative bibliographic reference source about Bulgarian printed books of that period. However till now, only the Central Library (CL) of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is offering on-line electronic access to all of them. The resource includes two school books and one grammar to learn French language which are published by two authors following the F. Ahn's method adapted for Bulgarian readers.

Chronologically, the book by K. Tarnovsky [19] published in 1864 in Braila, Romania (in Bulgarian language) is a primary school book to learn French language for Bulgarians following the F. Ahn's method (a scanned copy is available by the CL). The translation of its title is *A Practical Method of Learning the French Language* and on its cover page is written that the book is a translation of F. Ahn. The book contains *Preface*, *First part*, *Second part*, *Short texts stories in French language*, and *Vocabulary for texts*.

Secondly, the book *A French Grammar for the Classical Civil Schools* [20] published by the same author in 1869 in Vienna (in Bulgarian language) is the first French grammar for Bulgarians following the F. Ahn's method (a scanned copy is available by the CL). The grammar is a translation of F. Ahn's book for which the German lessons were translated into Bulgarian language. The grammar contains a preface, fourteen chapters, table of content, and corrections. The preface is written by the author and contains methodological instructions how to teach the included grammar topics. Chapters from first to eleven include rules, exceptions, lessons and related exercises developed for the French language grammar categories of gender, number, case as well as for their related part-of-speech inflections. Chapters from twelve to fourteen include study materials on French syntax, orthography and exercises.

Finally, the book by S. Radulov [16] published in 1868 in Bolgrad, Romania (in Bulgarian language) with a title similar to that of K. Tarnovsky's book also uses the F. Ahn's method of learning French language for Bulgarians (a scanned copy is available by the CL). The book contains six parts: *Alphabet*, *Pronunciation*, *First part*, *Second part*, *Short texts stories in French language*, and *Guide for conversation*. The *First part*, the *Second part*, and the *Short texts stories in French language* are following the K. Tarnovsky's book (which is a translation from F. Ahn), however the *Alphabet*, the *Pronunciation* and the *Guide for conversation* are original author's contributions which follow methodology for learning and practice the French language also indebted to F. Ahn's pedagogical approach.

## 4. The first grammar to teach Romanian language for Bulgarians

The book by S. Radulov [15] *A Practical and Easy Method of Learning the Romanian Language* published in 1865 in Bolgrad, Romania (in Bulgarian language) is considered to be the first

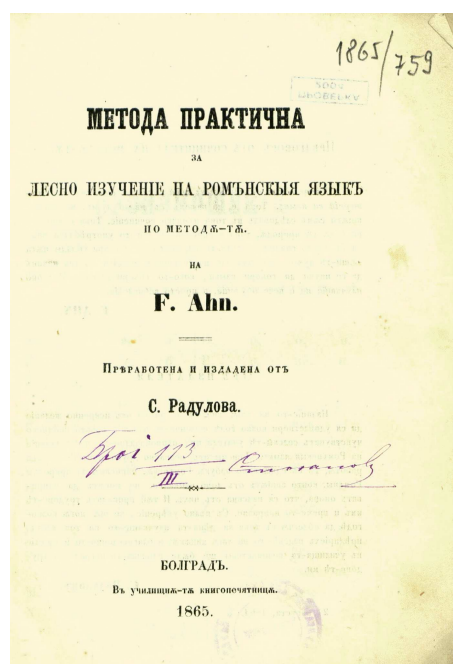
school book to teach Romanian language for Bulgarians, and is an original implementation of its author's pedagogical approach which is indebted to that of F. Ahn's general methodology. The scanned copy of that book which is offered by the CL<sup>1</sup> is still the only available digital resource for on-line search and analysis.

The book contains: *Preface* (from F. Ahn), *Preface* (from the author), *Pronunciation*, *First part*, *Second part*, *Third part*, *Examples with the four conjugations*, *Reading exercises*, *Dictionary*, *Guide for easy conversation*, *List of subscribers* and *Afterword*. That content of the book is similar to the content of [16] published later by the same author and suggests a well established methodology for teaching foreign languages combining the classical pedagogical approaches to grammar and lexical rules acquisition with reading exercises, so to master the ability to speak and understand, which, in fact, follows the F. Ahn's general methodology of learning foreign languages. The Fig. 3 shows the title page of the book.

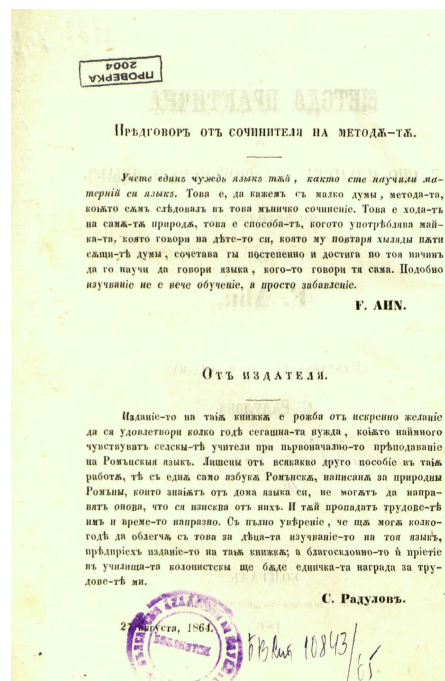
#### 4.1. The two prefaces

The author offers two prefaces of his book (Fig. 4). The first one is a preface which summarize the general pedagogical approach of F. Ahn (a citation) to learn foreign language by repeating and combining language units (following the way the child learns the native language), so to acquire the ability to speak.

The second preface, written by the author, explain the need for a school book to teach Romanian language for Bulgarian readers. Among all other reasons, it points out that the book was intended to be used as a school book in all Bulgarian schools.



**Figure 3.** The title page of S. Radulov's book *A Practical and Easy Method of Learning the Romanian Language* from on-line sources of the CL.



**Figure 4.** The two prefaces of S. Radulov's book *A Practical and Easy Method of Learning the Romanian Language* from on-line sources of the CL.

<sup>1</sup> The copy is from the Library collection of Vasil Stoyanov – a Honorary member and one of the founders of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

#### 4.2. The Pronunciation

The first chapter of the book is the *Pronunciation* which contains the Romanian alphabet related to Bulgarian and accompanied by the pronunciation of all letters illustrated by explanations, rules and examples of all Romanian vocals and consonants.

#### 4.3. The First part

The *First part* of the book contains 56 lessons which include the grammar category of gender, number, case, etc. introducing their part-of-speech inflections and supported by short text examples. The introductory texts are in Romanian language and they offer also the translations of unknown Romanian words. After the Romanian text, the text in Bulgarian language is presented, so to be translated into Romanian language.

#### 4.4. The Second part

The *Second part* follows the same methodology as that presented in the *First part* but includes longer and more complicated texts in Romanian and Bulgarian language illustrated with the longer lists of unknown words and more verbs.

#### 4.5. The Third part

The *Third part* also follows the methodology presented in the *First part* and *Second part* but introduces more verbs in related tenses illustrated with longer and more complicated texts in Romanian and in Bulgarian language.

#### 4.6. The Examples with the four conjugations

The chapter *Examples with the four conjugations* includes example tables with the four conjugations and suitable examples of Romanian verbs (accompanied with their related translations in Bulgarian language). The verbs are presented according to the Romanian verb tenses and examples for: *present*, *imperfect*, *simple perfect*, *compound perfect*, *pluperfect*, *future* and *future perfect* tense relate them to the Bulgarian verb tenses' example translations with respect to the verbal features of *tense* and *aspect*. That presentation relates Romanian to Bulgarian verb also for all four Romanian verb moods: *indicative* (for all tenses), *subjunctive* (for *past* and *present* tense), *conditional* (for *past* and *present* tense) and *imperative* (for *present* tense). Also, the Romanian verbal forms for the *infinitive*, *past participles* and *gerund* are related to their Bulgarian counterparts.

Generally, the chapter presents for the first time an approach and related ideas and implementations for comparative grammar study of Romanian and Bulgarian verb outlining their semantic similarities and differences.

#### 4.7. The Reading exercises

The chapter *Reading exercises* contains five short texts stories in Romanian language which are included for exercising the ability for reading and understanding the Romanian language texts by the Bulgarian readers.

#### 4.8. The Dictionary

The chapter *Dictionary* presents what today we would say a *thematic* or a *conceptual* bilingual Romanian-Bulgarian dictionary which is an original author's contribution to the F. Ahn's methodology. It is interesting to note, that fifteen years after the publication of that book, similar dictionary of Latin Language [13] was published as an addition to F. Ahn's method.

The *Dictionary* is interesting in many aspects and generally, it presents an interesting genre of bilingual dictionary of synonyms which includes eleven cultural concepts (among them are

town, house, furniture, food, human, animal, birds, etc.) described by their related hyponymic attributes for both languages.

That dictionary may be analyzed not only from the linguistic point of view (the meaning and the etymology of the included synonyms) but also from the anthropological point of view of the history of culture relating Romanian to Bulgarian concepts by revealing their new cultural and historical contexts.

#### 4.9. *The Guide for easy conversation*

The chapter *Guide for easy conversation* also is thematically structured and includes twelve thematic areas (among which are *foods and drinks, arriving and departing, questions and answers, age, clock, time, greetings*, etc.) for which the related Bulgarian conversational phrases are presented together with their Romanian translations. That thematical structuring of the guide also is an author's contribution to F. Ahn's method since it did not appear in [16, 19]. The chapter also is very interesting from the point for view of inter-cultural study.

#### 4.10. *The List of subscribers*

The chapter *List of subscribers* includes the names and families of subscribers of the book who lived in Bolgrad, Romania. It also presents a geographically related information (as a birthplace) about the origin of some subscribers as well as about the use of the book and its spreading within the related schools in Bolgrad, Romania.

#### 4.11. *The Afterword*

The *Afterword* section includes acknowledgments of related persons to whom the author express his gratitude for their collaboration and support. That information is included also in the meta-data encoding and is specific to the digitization approach used.

### 5. Conclusion

The above description presents for the first time an analysis of content of the first grammar to teach Romanian language for Bulgarians by using its digitized copy from the on-line electronic resources of the CL of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. It considers the European tradition (the works of F. Ahn) and its implementation presented in the book by the use of related methodology for foreign language learning. At the same time, the author's original contributions are outlined with respect to the first comparative linguistic study of Romanian and Bulgarian verb, and to the inter-cultural aspects of analysis which consider the *Dictionary* and the *Guide for easy conversation* parts of the book as revealing new cultural contexts of the study.

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