

Romanian and Spanish *Verba Dicendi*...

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The aim of this review essay is to highlight the main research findings and relate them to the available scientific scholarship on compared linguistics having at the core verbs that define speech itself, i.e. verbs of speech. In view of it, the review will consider the relevance of the most important issues related to the analysis of these particular verbs underlying the findings that bring novelty in the field.

Verba dicendi în limbile română și spaniolă: privire comparativă [Verba dicendi in Romanian and Spanish: a comparative approach], edited by Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj – Napoca, represents a significant contribution to the growing literature on comparative linguistic approaches to speech verbs, bridging the gap between the Romanian and Spanish studies on the issue thus imposing itself as one of a kind research in the realm of linguistics.

This is essentially a book about the status of the *verba dicendi*, a more comprehensive term for what has been known in the literature as *verba declarandi*, *verbs of speech*, *verbs of communication*, and even *verbs of quotation*, with their Romanian and Spanish counterparts: rom. *verbe ale zicerii*, *verbe de vorbire*, *verbe ale rostirii*, *verba declarandi*, *verbe de declarație*, *verbe ale citării*, *verbe ale zicerii*, *verbe ale comunicării*, and sp. *verbos de habla*, *verbos de decir*, *verbos de sonido*, *verbos de comunicación verbal*, *verbos de lengua*, *verbos de transferencia comunicativa* or *verbos dialogales*. It was, though, high time for a more restrictive terminology to be implemented and a definition to be provided to suit better such a thorough comparative and contrastive approach. According to it, *verba dicendi* is referred to as “orice verb în a cărui semnificație este prezentă referirea la limbajul articulat uman”, a term that “are avantajul de a fi general ca sens și universal ca uz” (p.29), and which still leaves a door open for the other terms to be considered whenever a contextual analysis requires it.

As stated in the introduction to the study, the aim of this paper is to provide a broader perspective on the treatment of the verbs for the act of communication in the two Romance languages, which are discussed within the frames of Metalinguistics, Semantics, Pragmatics, Stylistics, Lexicology, Discourse analysis and Sociolinguistics, with a special

focus on “inventarierea, contextualizarea și descoperirea multitudinii de cadre comunicaționale al unei clase de verbe esențiale pentru lexicul unei limbi” (p. 13).

Structured in seven well-balanced sections, the book invites the readers to (re)discover and acknowledge the pragmatic, semantic, stylistic, and lexical richness and the linguistic versatility of the verbs of speech. The author's excursion into the realm of comparative linguistics applied to verbs of speech begins with an elaborate survey of the universal contribution to the development of the theme under research, pointing out the former papers, mostly articles and essays, to set out the guiding lines of the current research and also mark the boundaries within which the topic has previously been tackled. The introductory chapter, *Argument. Premise. Istoricul problemei* [*Argument. Premises. The history of the problem*] casts a critical eye on the disparate treatment of *verba dicendi* with a view to delineating the original and innovative aspects of the paper under discussion.

The second section, entitled *Verbele zicerii ca elemente ale metalimbajului* [*The verbs of speech as elements of metalanguage*] comprises the theoretical background against which the author projects her further scientific endeavour. The author assumes that the verbs of speech “function in the lexicographic discourse only as construction elements for the metalanguage, as they help introducing information regarding linguistic characteristics of the observed elements: pronunciation, specific field, area of circulation or combinatory possibilities” (p.387). The chapter also deals with the verbs of speech that have the same Latin etymons and have originally been circumscribed, together with their corresponding nouns, to the literary terminology while others still belong to the metalanguage of the literary theory, which leads to the conclusion that the inherited verbs and the early borrowed or created ones have had a divergent evolution. Only the ones derived from the nouns they are related to are now highly polisemantic verbs and can combine with extremely various elements.

The theoretical framework is continued in the third section, *Morfosemantica verbelor zicerii: privire diacronică și sincronică* [*The morphosemantics of the verbs of speech: diachronic and synchronic approach*], with the concept of *verbum dicendi* as it was first coined in the Latin Grammars, where the classification on semantic grounds was motivated by the peculiar behaviour of some verbs according to either the syntactic rules of *consecutio temporum* or the verb complementation. The morphosyntactic behaviour of such verbs of speech refers to their ability to introduce reported speech, i.e. to bring someone's formerly stated words, ideas up-to-date, in other words, to turn direct speech (*oratio recta*) into indirect speech (*oratio obliqua*), the author laying a particular emphasis on the sequence of tenses. The behaviour of *verba dicendi* within a discourse is marked by their ability to introduce a reported discourse either anaphorically or cataphorically, irrespective of their transitive or intransitive nature. Moreover, there is a certain correspondence between the transitivity of such verbs of speech and the type of reported discourse they introduce: the transitive verbs are followed by an Object direct clause or other subordinate clauses, so they have the ability to introduce indirect speech, while intransitive verbs can only report direct speech.

It is also in this chapter where the author of the study chooses to treat the pragmatic behaviour of the verbs of speech. Following J.L. Austin's and John Searle's theoretical frameworks concerning the *performative* and the *constative* speech acts and demonstrating that an illocutionary speech act is quite impossible to build without a verb of speech, the author of the study considered it necessary to combine the classifications of the two linguists and bring additional information in order to create a more rigorous taxonomy applied on *verba dicendi*.

Together with a brief outlook on the semantics of the category of mood and aspect, the last subchapter paves the way to the semantic traits of the verbs of speech identified on the lexical level, an aspect to be dissected in the fourth section of the research paper, entitled ***Semantica verbelor zicerii*** [*The semantics of the verbs of speech*].

The research developed herein tackles an aspect that has been left unexplained, namely the semaseological approach to the *verba dicendi*. The verbs of speech are, from a lexico-semantic point of view, a thematic series of lexemes that have a common semantic feature in that they express the action of using the articulate language in order to transmit objective, subjective and affective information, so they gravitate around the archilexemes of *a zice* and *a vorbi* (engl. *say* and *speak*).

The most outstanding part of this chapter, and of the whole research - we might say -, is the original approach on the comparative and contrastive analysis of the verbs that are only occasionally *dicendi*, that is verbs from the sphere of animal communication, psychological processes, natural phenomena, certain human activities, musical interpretation, as well as onomatopoeic verbs normally perceived as *non-dicendi*. They activate new meanings only when placed in a certain context. In addition, it is well worth a careful lecture on the five basic *dicendi* verbs such as the Romanian *a zice*, *a spune* and *a vorbi* and the Spanish *decir* and *hablar* that unfold, in context, their peculiar morphosyntactic, discourse, semantic or stylistic values. Surprisingly enough, even if they are used in speech with a certain frequency, some of the meanings rendered here are not registered in dictionaries, a fact that, once again, adds to the originality of the study.

The fifth section, entitled *Dimensiunea lexicală a verbelor zicerii* [*The lexical dimension of the verbs of speech*] aims at analysing the paradigmatic relations established among *verba dicendi* that come analysed in semantic fields around some nuclei functioning as archilexemes for the respective groups. The prolificacy of the fundamental *dicendi verbs* in Romanian and Spanish alike is highlighted in subchapter 5.2. with a view to estimating the extent to which the verbs in question give birth to new lexemes by means of derivation, composition, conversion or loan translation.

Thanks to the uniqueness of the findings, to the original approach and to the great care for the essential detail, the following section, the sixth chapter, namely *Verbele zicerii în frazeologie* [*The verbs of speech in Phraseology*], is equally important. The chapter is an outstanding comparative and contrastive analysis of the Romanian and Spanish phrases, collocations and proverbs from the sphere of speech that turn the spotlight on the fact that notwithstanding the differences, there is a great deal of similarities between the two Romance languages at this level. The chapter also adds weight to the phraseology of the *dicendi* verbs within the frame of *discourse markers* [fr. *marqueurs discursifs*, *mots de discours*, rom. *mărci ale conversației*, port. and sp. *fórmulas interlocutorias*] which are herein largely debated from a discourse analysis perspective.

Last but not least, and perhaps the most important of all, the seventh section of the study, *Structura etimologică a inventarului de verbe dicendi* [*The etymological structure of the inventory of dicendi verbs*] is built by the means of componential analysis in order to determine aspects related to lexical synonymies, levels of expressivity, grammatical meanings and categories, and to identify the common and the divergent evolutions of the meanings of the verbs of speech that have roots in a common Latin etymon.

We truly believe that such a detailed analysis would have been quite impossible without a careful and sustained research on the large corpus of language material provided by the Spanish and Romanian dictionaries, data that has been classified and grouped in a rich inventory in the Appendices which almost outnumber the study.

It is, in our view, important to underline that never before has such an outstanding linguistic endeavour been made. It is the newest and most comprehensive study on Romanian and Spanish *verba dicendi* and also one that not only fills a gap in the linguistic research but also revives a concept of great importance to human utterances.

All things considered, *Verba dicendi în limbile română și spaniolă: privire comparativă* is a must-read book addressed to those interested in Linguistics, be they researchers in the fields of Applied Linguistics, Social Sciences and the Humanities, translators or students willing to improve their knowledge of both Romanian and Spanish. Reading its well-ordered chapters may turn into a fascinating exercise thanks to the relevance and the accuracy of the information provided in the study.

Alina-Viorela PRELIPCEAN, *Verba dicendi în limbile română și spaniolă: privire comparativă*
[*Verba dicendi in Romanian and Spanish: a comparative approach*],
edited by Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2015.