# ABSTRACT LINGUISTIC FIELDS. CUVÂNT – BINECUVÂNTARE – IUBIRE – MULȚUMIRE (WORD – BLESSING – LOVE – GRATITUDE)

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***Abstract:*** *In the interpretation of the sense of the abstract concepts, there intervenes a series of subjective elements which have been analyzed from a linguistic perspective, proposing a referential interpretation on several levels in relation with the linguistic context. The studies have shown that despite the subjectiveness and variability in the interpretation of the abstract concepts, there is always a semantic core or a semantic average or a predictable sense that makes it possible for the locators to understand one another from a linguistic perspective; the specialists insisted on the need to make the sense of the abstract concepts tangible (or to reify it) trough diverse contextual situations (note 1). Developing through a process of abstractization, the lexeme WORD acquired a large array of significations, of which the most important is, of course, the one of "linguistic unit, utterance, term". In Old Romanian, WORD was used more frequently thantoday and its meanings were more numerous. Especially in the* ***vocabulary of affectiveness*** *(of which we have selected for analysis the terms GRATITUDE, LOVE) there are difficulties in the delimitation and the definition of the senses, difficulties given by the polisemy of the words in this domain.*

***Key words:*** *abstract linguistic field, word, blessing, love, gratitude*

## 1. Introduction

Polisemy is considered a very important aspect for the definition of the abstract concepts. Some support a hypothesis according to which, in the beginning, the abstract names had a vague meaning, because during the first stages of development of the language, man did not dissociate the thing from the effect produced on him or did not distinguish the cause from the effect; the changes of interpretation, connected to the social-historical interpretation, led to developments of meanings on determeined patterns: "action" and its "result", constituting:

- a definite polysemy based on the distinction abstract/concrete and
- a less certain polysemy (with figurative meanings not always lexicalized) from the "names of qualities".

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## 2. *CUVÂNT* (WORD)

Term by excellence abstract today, CUVÂNT comes from the Latin *conventus*, meaning "gathering, reunion" (from the verb *convenio* "to gather, to reunite; to relate well with", a derivative of *venio* "a veni"). This semantic evolution is as logical as possible: the gathering together of several people is a chance for *conversation*, for... *word*. So, we can say that this term bears, in a visible way, even since its birth, the mark of the social nature of the language, considered as a means of communication among people. At the same time, the *word*, in the sense of "*sermo*", is "a gathering" of ideas, "a reunion" of some particular ideas into an idea of general value. The primary meaning of *conventus* is recognized in the Romance language descendants: Fr. *couvent*, It. *convento* etc.

In some languages, the two meanings coexist, as in the case of the Albanian *kuvënd*, coming from Latin as well, which means both "gathering, reunion" and "conversation, word". Both of these senses appear as well in *cantio, -onis* "gathering of people; sermon, discourse", which seems to be, etymologically, a particular form of *conventio*. In Greek, *omilia* (*ὸμιλία*) also has the same meanings as Lat. *cantio*, Alb. *kuvënd*.

In Romanian there are as well other words with similar evolutions to the Latin *conventus* (see *taifas*, a synonym with the meaning "familiar, pleasant, intimate conversation" (note 2)).

In the Aromanian dialect, *sobor* "reunion" (in Dacoromanian: *sobor preoţesc*), from the Old Slav *sŭborŭ* "reunion", lies at the basis of *zbor* "word, discourse, gathering", from which the verb *zburăscu* "to speak" derives (note 3); compare as well the Serbo-Croatian *zbor* "gathering; word", *zboriti* "to speak, to give a speech"; Bg. *sbor* "gathering", from which the old and regional dacoromanian *zbor* comes, meaning "market, fair, annual fair", and less often "public market", while in Banat it can also mean "conversation" (note 4).

The logical connection between "gathering of people", then "reunion of ideas" and "word, conversation, discourse" is highlighted by many other examples from different languages (note 5).

Developing by means of a process of abstractization, *cuvânt* has acquired a rich array of senses, of which the most important is, of course, that of "linguistic unit, utterance, term".

In Old Romanian CUVÂNT was more frequently used than today and had more numerous meanings.

Compared to *vorbă*, its most important synonym, *cuvânt* has aquired the nobility of written language; it is adequate for the language of culture and science, while *vorbă* characterizes the popular aspect of the language and its affective areas. This distinction, made, of course, with all the approximation, can be illustrated by a

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large number of expressions and idioms based on the term *vorbă*, in which the substitution of this by *cuvânt* is not possible:

- *vorbe de clacă* "flecăreală" (gossip) ;
- *lasă vorba!* "tăcere!" (silence!);
- *din vorbă în vorbă* "din una în alta" (from one thing to another);
- *nici vorbă* "negreşit, desigur; nici pomeneală" (sure; not at all);
- *nu-i vorbă* "fără îndoială, fireşte" (naturally);
- *a umbla cu vorba* "a bârfi" (to gossip);
- *a face vorbe* "a peți" (to ask for marriage);
- *a ține de vorbă* (to keep sb. talking) and many others (v. DEX).

The lexeme *vorbă* has aquired even a "derogatory nuance", highlighted in expressions such as:

- *a-şi auzi vorbe* (to hear someone speaking ill of you)*; a-i ieşi* (cuiva*) vorbe; a scoate* (cuiva) *vorbe* (to speak ill of someone).

Even derivatives and compound words such as *vorbărie, vorbăreț, vorbă-lungă* have a pejorative value.

*Vorbă* (and the verb *a vorbi*) gradually became part and parcel of the popular and familiar vocabulary. The neological significations, determinated by modern influences, have gone to *cuvînt* and to the verb *a cuvânta*, integrated in the cult variant of the language. Actually in the old language as well *cuvânt*, along with the verb *a cuvânta*, the noun *cuvântare*, and the adjective *cuvântător* were used mainly in cult religious texts: "*La început era Cuvântul şi Cuvântul era la Dumnezeu şi Dumnezeu era Cuvântul /* In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1, 1).

So, we are dealing with a sinonimic pair (*cuvânt – vorbă*) constituted of a term of Latin origin and another term of Slav origin, which the language, in its evolution has distinguished stylisttically: the Latin one has become dominant in the cult area of the language, while the Slav has become prominent in the popular area of the language. Examples of this kind concern, in essence, the relationship between the Latin and the Slav vocabulary of the Romanian language.

### 3. *BINECUVANTA* (BLESS)

One can rarely find the indicative present variant BINECUVÂNT – coming from the reunion of the adverb *bine* and the noun *cuvânt* (note 6). The sense of the adverb *bine* is so abstract, that it can indicate "noțiunea de bine" (the notion of good): *un bine, binele* (note 7).

CUVÂNT is present as well in the expression *A pune un cuvânt bun* "a interveni (favorabil) pentru cineva" (to intervene in favor of someone) (note 8).

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BINECUVÂNTA (to bless) < *bine* + *cuvânta* is a compound realized according to the pattern of the Slav *blagosloviti* ; this transitive verb of the first conjugation is used:

- with reference to God: "a revărsa harul divin, a blagoslovi" (to pour divine grace, to bless),
- with reference to priests: "a revărsa harul divinității asupra unui lucru sau asupra oamenilor ; a blagoslovi" (to pour the grace of the divinity on a thing or on people, to bless). By analogy, "a dori prosperitate şi fericire cuiva (invocând adesea numele lui Dumnezeu)" (to wish prosperity and happiness to someone, invoking the name of God often);
- with reference to people, who glorify the divinity, through their words: "a lăuda, a slăvi pe Dumnezeu" (to praise God); by analogy, it also mans "a lăuda, a preamări pe cineva în semn de recunoştință" (praising someone as a sign of gratitude).

BINECUVÂNTARE (blessing) – a compound term made up of *bine* + *cuvântare* – refers to the "action, formula or gesture of *a binecuvânta* (blessing)".

The term is present in the expression: *A (a-şi) da binecuvântarea* = "a fi de acord (cu ceva); a aproba" (to approve of something) (note 9).

Synonyms: 1. (churchly) *blagoslovire*, (bookish) *benedicțiune*, (popular) *blagoslovenie*, (old) *urăciune*;

2. see *preamărire* (note 10).

## 4. *IUBIRE* (LOVE)

Most of the senses of the words considered polysemantic in the vocabulary of affection belong to the same domain, which, according to some researchers, makes the existence of the polysemy questionable. New senses develop according to a quite uniform model, in the case of the present term through the metonymy whole / part:

IUBIRE = s.1 "sentiment de afecțiune în general" (feeling of affection in general),

s.2 "sentiment de afecțiune pentru o persoană de sens opus" (feeling of affection for a person of the opposite gender).

**4.1. The lexicographic** definitions increase the ambiguity of the interpretation of the sense as "sentiment of *affection*" (creating the impression of a semantic identity with: AFECȚIUNE (affection) = main term of this class in the dictionaries of other languages, such as the Robert, for French).

The access to the sense of the abstract words is difficult in the absence of the context; the importance of the context in the analysis of the abstract words must be correlated to their lack of referential autonomy, a feature considered as fundamental.

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(A) *Contextual compatibilities,* by means of which distinctive paradigmatic values are designated, are, in the case of the noun IUBIRE also adjectives such as *puternică, mare, nemărginită* (strong, great, unlimited) etc.; such contexts explicitly express a **"very great intensity"**;

Some adjectives determining the respective noun designate values expressed in isolation from a paradigmatic viewpoint, like **"exteriorization"**, for instance: IUBIRE *fățișă / ascunsă* (overt/hidden love).

(B) *Contextual restrictions / incompatibilities* are much more relevant from a semantic viewpoint:

• (a) a series of adjectives, such as *maternă, frățească, divină* (maternal, brotherly, divine) combine only with the noun IUBIRE, expressing explicitly an important semantic distinction for disambiguating the senses of the polysemantic word ;

• (b)other adjectives, such as *ardentă, dulce, duioasă, curată, sinceră, gingaşă* (fiery, sweet, true, sincere, delicate) combine, as well, only with IUBIRE, expressing supplementary (virtuale) semantic features compared to those that can be distinguished paradigmatically;

**4.2. Definitions related to the actants** in the vocabulary of affection (note 11)

Justified by theoretical arguments, the definition related to the actants has grown and adapted to a part of the vocabulary of affectiveness, a thing that can be useful from a semantic perspective as well. The premise of such a solution is constituted by the fact that for some **denominations of sentiments** (first class terms: AFECȚIUNE, PRIETENIE, IUBIRE, AVERSIUNE, URĂ, .../ affection, friendship, love, aversion, hate…), the lexicographic definitions consistently mention *the actant-patient (A2)*, which can be *"animate"* (for someone) or *"inanimate"* (for something). *The actant-subject (A1)* is always *"animate-human"* for the words of the **vocabulary of affectiveness**, which only has an implicit semantic importance.

In the situations in which the *Actant-subject (A1) is God and actant-patient (A2)* is individualized through the the *Son* or through a man or through the *world*, the definition related to the actants has a semantic definition for the precise definition of certain names of sentiments:

*Tatăl iubeşte pe Fiul şi toate le-a dat în mâna Lui* / The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in His hands (John 3, 35) ;

*„... Dumnezeu aşa a iubit lumea, încât pe Fiul Său Cel Unul-Născut L-a dat ca oricine crede în El să nu piară, ci să aibă viață veşnică* / …God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life*"* (John 3, 16) – (God – the Divine Person – makes the supreme sacrifice out of love for His Creation);

„*Iubite-voi Doamne, vârtutea mea"* ("I shall love You, God, my strength") (Psalm 17) – (man's love for his Creator).

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**4.3.** *Other contextual ways* of analyzing the **vocabulary of affectiveness**

The specialized literature dealing with abstract words from a morpho-syntactic perspective proposes numerous contextual solutions, yet their importance for the identification of the meaning is low. We are thinking about the highlighting of combinations with certain verbs, specific either for the **names of sentiments**, or for the **names of attitudes**.

The specialists consider that the *names of sentiments* are a very well delimited syntactic class (note 12). There are contexts allowing the differentiation of the "sentimentului" from „attitude": a simți, a avea IUBIRE (to feel, to have love); a manifesta, a arăta IUBIRE (to manifest, to show love). The possible combinations of these names of sentiments with the verbs *a arăta / manifesta* (to show, to manifest) can be considered a form of exteriorization and implicitly of reification of these feelings. A "gliding of the sense" occurs, which makes it even more difficult to to draw the line between sentiments / attitudes / states.

A more complex contextual way of studying the behavior of **abstract words** concerns their presence in *evaluative phrases or in phrases of identification*. Leaving aside certain syntactic goals, the objective pursued from a semantic viewpoint is the identification through context of a referent able to make the sense of the abstract words more tangible and, implicitly, accessible. Reification via the construction of a concrete referent is possible in such contexts as:

IUBIREA *şi hazardul sunt doi* ***copii.*** (Love and hazard are two children.)

***Liniile curbe*** *semnifică* MELANCOLIE. (Curved lines signify melancholy)

The analysis of several types of texts and contexts (note 13) shows that, in numerous situations, reification is disputable, the relation being established with yet another **abstract word**: IUBIREA ***este un ideal / un scop / o stare*** ... (Love is an ideal/ a purpose / a state…). At the same time, it results a very large, varied, heterogeneous array of combinations that do not favor stabile or categorical semantic distinctions (except for the recognition of a predictable sense of the affective term). This situation can be observed:

• both in the case of *evaluative phrases*:

IUBIREA *adevărată / lumească / pământească / completă*... (True/worldly/earthly/complete love)

• and in the case of *phrases of identification*:

IUBIREA *este un ideal / un scop / o stare sufletească / o himeră*... (Love is an ideal/ a purpose / a condition of the soul / a chimera)

The contextually-built referent of both types of phrases can nevertheless contribute, in each case in turn, to the identification of some aspects of the meaning (or to the activation of certain semantic features).

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## 5. *MULTUMIRE* (GRATITUDE, CONTENTMENT)

Polisemantic word of the vocabulary of affectiveness, the term MULȚUMIRE (gratitude) develops new meanings according to a quite uniform model, through the relation (metaphor) abstract / concrete:

MULȚUMIRE = s.1 "sentiment" (feeling),

s.2 "forma concretă de manifestare a lui" (its concrete form of manifestation);

"The gliding of the meanings" characteristic for the abstract words, complicates even more the exact interpretation of the meanings. There where explicit and clear definitions are given, where there appear distinctions between "sentiment / atitudine / stare" (feeling/attitude/state), the dictionaries represent an auxiliary for the analysis of the semantic features.

MULȚUMIRE (NEMULȚUMIRE) (contentment/discontentment) designate "states" (according to the lexicographic definitions, valid as well for (NE)FERICIRE, VESELIE, TRISTEȚE (unhappiness, happiness, merriment, sadness) – terms belonging to the second clas of the vocabulary of affectiveness), unlike the less numerous terms (BUCURIE, SATISFACȚIE, MÂHNIRE, namely joy, satisfaction, blue) which are defined as "feelings".

The intensity of the affective state is rendered using a lexicographic metalanguage: "high intensity" is designated using different elements: *din suflet, adâncă*... (from the soul, deep…)

### 5.1. Definitions related to the actants in the vocabulary of affection

As it has already been shown, justified by theoretical arguments, the definition in terms of actants has been extended and adapted to a part of the vocabulary concerning affection; this definition can be useful from a semantic perspective as well. The premise of such a solution is constituted by the fact that for some denominations of feelings (terms of the first class: AFECȚIUNE, PRIETENIE, IUBIRE, AVERSIUNE, URĂ, .../ affection, friendship, love, aversion, hate, …), the legicographic definitions consistently mention the *actant-patient (A2)*, which can be *"animate"* (for someone) or *"inanimate"* (for something). *The actant-subject (A1)* is always *"animate-human"* for the words of the vocabulary of affection, which only presents an implicit semantic importance.

The terms of the second class do not admit definitions in terms of actants, with some exceptions: for example (NE)MULȚUMIRE (discontentment, contentment) concerning something (for instance, concerning the situation created / concerning the realization of the work etc.). Under these circumstances, it results that, in the second

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class of the vocabulary related to affection, the definition in terms of actants has limited applications both concerning the "sentiments", and concerning the "states".

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The lexical-semantic analysis of the biblical texts supports the prominence of a characteristic **affective matrix**. Feelings are grouped methodically on types of actants and situations. So, feeling genres are lexicalized, according to actant types: **God the Father – love** (for the Son, for mankind and for the entire creation); the **Savior Jesus Christ – love** (for manking, for whom He sacrifices His life); **man – love** (for God, for his fellows, for himself: *Să iubeşti pe Domnul Dumnezeul tău din toată inima ta şi din tot sufletul tău şi din toată puterea ta, iar pe aproapele tău ca pe tine însuţi* / Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself (Luke 10, 27)).

So, as one can see, LOVE is the feeling that, by means of the WORD, binds together all the actants of the Holy Scripure and affectively defines the entire biblical text.

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