Applying Eugenio Coseriu's Linguistic *Organon* to Synonymy

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Key-words: *synonymy*, *linguistic "Organon"*, *competence*, *norm*, *system*

0. We proved in another paper (Munteanu 2009), *in extenso*, with numerous arguments, that Eugenio Coseriu's *integral linguistics* can be considered the very *Organon* for the research on language. Just as Aristotle's *Organon* (a real *logica perennis*) represents the very instrument of the correct thinking (a *modus scientiarum*) that scientific demonstration cannot do without, Coseriu's linguistic theory offers the basis for a correct and efficient approach of each aspect of language. This Coserian *Organon* or this *linguistica perennis* is made up of a series of fundamental distinctions which refer both to the reality of language and to the linguistic methodology. In the field of research, these distinctions prove to be of great use when applying them to concrete matters.

1. Coseriu's theory may sometimes seem difficult (to some people), since it is based on so many distinctions, but this is required by the complexity of language in itself. A minimal form of this *Organon* refers to the distinctions concerning *linguistic knowledge* / *competence* (*saber lingüístico*) which meant to Coseriu himself "a helpful epistemological frame of reference":

> And I consider this distinction to be important, as it enables as to assign a precise position to the different problem areas of linguistics and to its various questions with respect to the complex object language. It has been, for me at least, a helpful epistemological frame of reference for the interpretation not only of the various linguistic problems ranging from that of linguistic change to that of translation and of linguistic correctness, but also of the structure of linguistic disciplines themselves and of recent developments in linguistics (Coseriu 1985: XXV).

Since we will use Coseriu's distinctions, we think it necessary for us to present them briefly. Eugenio Coseriu distinguishes within language, on the one hand, three levels: the universal one (the level of designation), the historical one (the level of signification[1]) and the individual level (that of sense), since "*language is a universal human activity which is done individually but always following some historically established techniques* («*langues*»)" (Coşeriu 2000: 233 – our translation). The language is generated, on the other hand, according to some

[1] *Significado* (*signifié*) was translated either by *signification* (see Coseriu, Geckeler 1981: 54), or by *meaning* (Coseriu 1985: XXXIV).

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acquired knowledge and is presented as some objective facts, that is why Coseriu adopts, just as W. von Humboldt did before, the terms used by Aristotle: *érgon* (product), *enérgeia* (creative activity), which goes beyond the *learnt* technique and *dýnamis* (competence – found only with Aristotle). Language is not essentially *érgon*, but *enérgeia*, *creative activity.*

Points of view / Levels	***enérgeia*** Activity	***dýnamis*** Competence / Knowledge	***érgon*** Product
Universal	Speaking in general	Elocutional competence	Totality of utterances
Historical	Concrete particular language	Idiomatic competence	(Abstracted particular language)
Individual	Discourse	Expressive competence	Text

One can clearly see from the table above[2] what means *activity*, *competence* and *product* for each of the three levels to Coseriu. However, it is worth mentioning the fact that at the universal level, the *elocutional competence*, as a technique, means *to be able to speak, in general*; at the individual level, *expressive competence* refers to the knowledge regarding the way discourses are made, while at the historical level, the *idiomatic competence* refers to language as traditional knowledge of a community. The *érgon*, seen at the historical level, is also worth mentioning: *product* can only refer here to the *abstract language*, that is the language "deduced from speech and materialized in a grammar book or in a dictionary" (Coşeriu 2000: 237).

2. We have tried in various personal contributions to prove not only the validity, but also the benefits of Coseriu's theory. In this paper we will try to synthesize our conception on synonymy, which is based on Coseriu's distinctions we mentioned above, whose importance we emphasized and proved mainly in our doctoral dissertation, *The Phraseological Synonymy in the Romanian Language from the Integral Linguistics Point of View* (defended in 2006 and published in 2007 – see Munteanu 2007)[3].

Starting from the brilliant manner in which Coseriu comprehends the general structure of language (see the grid below), we drew a few distinctions in the field of synonymy. With reference to its occurrence, we distinguish *grosso modo*, first of all, a *synonymy* ***in actu***, a *real* one, corresponding to "speech" and a *synonymy* ***in potentia***, *virtual* or *potential*, corresponding to "language". But, since things are not that simple in language, using Coseriu's distinctions, we are forced to draw some new distinctions in order to be more precise. In short, our opinions are rendered in

[2] Taken and adapted from Coseriu 1985: XXIX.

[3] We presented an outline of our opinions on synonymy, starting from Coseriu's ideas on the structure of language as a whole in 2005 in a paper (see Munteanu 2006a), even if we applied these ideas before, starting with the beginning of our research, in 2002.

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the following grid, aiming to organize the study of synonymy. In addition, the grid comprises all dimensions of synonymy, for each and every compartment.

Theoretically speaking, one can say that the synonymy *in actu* corresponds to the language seen as *enérgeia* at all levels, while synonymy *in potentia* corresponds to the language seen as *érgon*. What would thus be the role of competence (*dýnamis*) in this analysis of synonymy? That it operates both on the real synonymy and on the virtual one, and we will later see how; up to then, the table presents this by the fact that the drawing line between the two important types of synonymy crosses the competence (be it elocutional, idiomatic or expressive).

<table>
<tr><td>Synonymy
as it occurs</td><td colspan="2">synonymy in actu
(real)</td><td colspan="2">synonymy in potentia
(virtual/potential)</td></tr>
<tr><td>points of view
levels</td><td>enérgeia
(activity)</td><td>dýnamis
(competence)</td><td colspan="2">érgon
(product)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">UNIVERSAL

(level of designation)</td><td>speaking in general</td><td>elocutional competence</td><td colspan="2">totality of utterances</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">[synonymy as a possible linguistic universal]
“cognitive synonymy”</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">HISTORICAL

(level of signification)</td><td>concrete language</td><td colspan="2">idiomatic competence</td><td>(abstracted language)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">internal variety synonymy:
1. diatopic synonymy
2. diastratic synonymy
3. diaphasic synonymy
4. diachronic synonymy</td><td colspan="2">synonymy as inventory:
the synonymy existing in dictionaries of synonyms of a certain language (e.g. DSLR by Mircea & Luiza Seche)</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">INDIVIDUAL

(level of sense)</td><td>discourse</td><td colspan="2">expressive competence</td><td>text</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">synonymy in praesentia</td><td colspan="2">synonymy in absentia</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">1. synonymy in contact/juxtaposed
2. distanced synonymy</td><td>latent synonymy:
the synonymy of the units excluding each other in context</td><td>synonymy as inventory
(for instance, that taken from a writer's work)</td></tr>
</table>

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2.1. The universal level

We agree with the fact that synonymy is established only between the units of the same language[4]. To consider that there can be a relationship of *interlinguistical synonymy* between the terms belonging to different languages is a mistake, which is generally rejected by linguists and accepted by some logicians and philosophers. This would lead to the idea that a polyglot lexicon of technical terms, for example, would thus become a dictionary of synonyms. The synonymy at the universal level is worth talking about only if it represents one of the linguistic universals. At the same time, taking into consideration the fact that Eugenio Coseriu distinguishes the essential universals, the necessary universals and the possible universals (Coseriu 1987: 151-152), one can claim that *synonymy is one of the possible universals of language* (cf. Bucă, Evseev 1976: 118). Although it goes beyond the lexical or phraseological synonymy, if wanted, the so-called "cognitive synonymy" can be placed here.

2.2. The historical level

As we already know, Coseriu draws the distinction between *architecture of language* and *structure of language* or between *historical language* and *functional language*:

> The synchronic technique of discourse within a *historical language* (i.e. a language as for example German, French, etc.) is not of a homogeneous nature. It exhibits three types of internal differences which can be more or less far-reaching: [a] differences in geographical space: *diatopic* differences (i.e. dialectal differences); [b] differences conditioned by the socio-cultural classes of the linguistic community: *diastratic* differences (concerning language levels or 'niveaux'); [c] differences in the intention of expression: *diaphasic* differences (concerning language styles) (Coseriu, Geckeler 1981: 52).
>
> [On the other hand, *the functional language*] presents a *syntopic* (i.e. without differences in space), *synstratic* (i.e. without differences in the socio-cultural layers) and *symphasic* (i.e. without differences in the intention of expression) technique of discourse" (*ibid*.: 53).

The things presented so far refer only to the structural description, since it deals with the language seen as a syncronical technique of speech, but, as to what we are concerned, we cannot leave aside the study of diachronic synonymy, since, after all, in a language of culture (mainly in the written one, but also in the spoken one)

> […] even the real diachrony can be syncronical, that is it can be present at any time, since these older texts are known and can be resumed anytime, not only as texts,

[4] Also in accordance with John Lyons' principle: "all the meanings recognized by a given language are unique to that language and have no validity or relevance outside it" (Lyons 1968: 55). See also Munteanu 2006b: 106-111. It is obvious that synonymy is a semantic relation established between words and not (only) between meanings [cf. Lyons 1968: 444 – "Just as 'having the same length' is a relation which holds between two objects (and not between the 'lengths' inherent in them), so 'having the same sense' – or synonymy – is a relation which holds between two lexical items (and not between the 'senses' associated with them in the minds of the speakers)"].

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> but also as elementary functions, meaning that there is some kind of coexistence of diachrony in syncrony for these languages (Coşeriu 1994: 56-57 – our translation)[5].

The *synonymy of internal variety* will be made up of *diachronic*, *diatopic*, *diastratic* and *diaphasic synonymy*. It also corresponds partly to a traditional classification of synonyms (according to the time, place and circumstance of their usage) into *chronological*, *geographical* and *stylistical synonymy*. Before dealing with the synonymy of internal variety, further explanatory notes are worth mentioning. The distinction between *synonymy in actu* vs. *synonymy in potentia* can also be applied at the historical level. Following Coseriu's distinctions, the first type of synonymy (the real one) is linked to the concrete particular language (which is characterized by dynamism and variety), the second type belongs to the abstract language, deducted or taken out by the linguist from *texts*, language which can be found, according to Coseriu, in a grammar book or in a dictionary (as *érgon*). We should at this point mention the *synonymy as inventory*, product of many linguists' research, who are interested in drawing up dictionaries of synonyms. An excellent example in what lexical synonymy is concerned is the lexicographical work of the couple Luiza and Mircea Seche[6], which also illustrates the internal variety of the Romanian language, since it catalogues archaisms, regional terms, colloquial terms, words used in their connotative meaning, stylistically marked, etc.

Seen from the point of view of language as activity (*enérgeia*) at this level, synonymy is highly rich, since "even if synonyms designate the same reality, they do it, more often than not, from very different varieties of language" (Seche, Seche 1982: VIII). The research done by Narcisa Forăscu proves the fact that very few synonyms succeed in passing so many restrictions and really be synonyms in *system*[7]. However, according to the same linguist, the perfect synonymy is the least interesting in point of research and even of the speakers of a language, while the imperfect one, as a language fact, points out to the gentle and at the same time complicated mechanism of language, by the fading out of differences[8].

Each and every speaker knows more than a functional language. In his *passive* knowledge there are facts specific to other dialectal varieties, apart from the dialect used by himself, which he brings to life on different occasions. For example an old woman from the village of Ogradena, the county of Mehedinți, observes that in neighbouring villages the «brake shoe» [i.e. a cart device] has different names:

> We call it *mîță*... the ones from Dubova call it *śovată*... the people from Işelnița call it *oćic*. So, you see, we are from three villages and we are all Romanians, but those people call it *śovată*, we call it *mîță*, the others call it *oćic*[9].

[5] At the same time, there are diachronic differences between the youngsters' speech and that of the elders.

[6] See Seche, Seche 1982.

[7] Actually, Narcisa Forăscu uses the term *system* as seen by L. Hjelmslev, and not by E. Coseriu.

[8] Although Narcisa Forăscu read some of Coseriu's works on lexematics, she didn't apply Coseriu's ideas so much in the structural analysis of synonymy. See Forăscu 2007, so as to get a general perspective of her contributions in this field.

[9] „Noi i zîśem *mîță* […]. Dubova-i ziśe *śovată*… Işelnița-i spuńe *oćic*. Iacă, sînt'em trei saće, aiiśa şî sînt'em rumîń toț, ăia-i spun *śovată*, noi spuńem *mîță*, ăia zîc *oćic*" (*apud* Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 1999: 22).

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The famous writers use regional terms which are synonyms only at the level of literary language, not in that of the dialects where we usually find only one. Sadoveanu distinguishes in his work the regional terms *nea*, *zăpadă* and *omăt* 'snow': "*nea* = light snow from the beginning of winter; *zăpadă* = the usual snow of winter; and *omăt* = heavy snow"[10].

In this respect, Eugenio Coseriu's statement: "The language of the famous poets [or writers] seems to coincide with the historical language, as a fulfillment of the possibilities already given in this"[11] is perfectly valid. That is why we still claim that there is such thing as diatopic synonymy. Even if not so obvious, the same thing is true for the diastratic and diaphasic synonymy and even for the diachronic one. Liliana Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu also analyses the informers' observations from the maps of the linguistic atlases in which they distinguish between the terms used in the rural/urban environment by villagers/bourgeois, youngsters/elders, women/men, denoting similar realities.

As to the relation between idiomatic synonymy and competence (*dýnamis*) at this level, Coseriu's distinction within idiomatic competence between *norm* and *system* of language is really useful[12]. When it is said that one infringes the use or practice of speaking, despite the possibility of neglecting (by neutralizing) some differences, it is this very norm which is taken into consideration. What is more, people sometimes say that there are synonyms in a language just for the purpose that their usage is almost never indifferent in norm: *to gather* is not the same thing with *to unite* (cf. Coşeriu 2004: 89)[13]. The speaker has to know the semantic differences between words, as John Lyons said:

> […] the practical utility of reference works such as *Roget's Thesaurus* depends upon a prior knowledge of the language on the part of the person using them. Unless he can himself distinguish correctly between the hundreds of 'equivalents' that he is given for *nice* he can hardly be said to have them 'at his disposal' (Lyons 1968: 447).

The same is true for the lexicographer when he draws up a dictionary of synonyms – in the case of synonymy as inventory.

At the same time, one should point out that the figurative meanings, the metaphorical synonyms used by poets are facts of system, since they come out of new associations regarding the signification (images) possible in system (that is

[10] „*nea* = zăpadă uşoară de la începutul iernii; *zăpadă* = zăpada obişnuită a iernii, iar *omăt* = zăpada mare" (M. Sadoveanu, *Ceva despre meşteşugul scrisului*, *apud* Istrate 1970: 350-351).

[11] See Coseriu 1991: 205 – "La lengua de los grandes poetas parece coincidir simplemente con la lengua histórica, como realización de las posibilidades ya dadas en ésta".

[12] Coseriu defines the *norm* "as the level of what is merely traditionally fixed and not necessarily functional" and the *system* "as the functional (or distinctive) level of language […], system understood as system of what is already realized in the language and as system of possible realizations" (Coseriu, Geckeler 1981: 54).

[13] See also: „Esto es aplicable, por ejemplo, a la distinción entre significados principales y secundarios, pero también para la elección entre «sinónimos», i.e. entre contenidos en oposición neutralizable: así, por ejemplo, en el caso de *perro* y *can* sólo *perro* corresponde a la norma; en alemán, de *Pferd* y *Ross* sólo *Pferd*" (Coseriu 1992: 299); or: "La frecuencia relativa en el caso de la selección entre los términos «sinónimos» (términos en oposición neutralizable) es tambien un hecho de norma. Así, al. *aufmachen – öffnen*, *zumachen – schliesen* son intercambiables en la mayoria de los contextos, pero *aufmachen*, *zumachen* son preferidos por la norma" (Coseriu: 1977: 128).

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virtually existing), but new in norm. That is why we consider worth mentioning the situations when no selection from a synonymic series is done, but when a new term is coined occasionally by using a metaphor. This aspect is highly important since it leads to the drawing up of occasional synonymic series which can, in time, turn into constant series. Neutralization is also worth mentioning within the system (in Coseriu's terms), since, although it is a *speech fact*, the possibility of performing neutralizations belongs to language (*langue*).

In order to prevent possible misunderstandings, we assert that, since the historical language is a collection of functional languages, at this level (of the idiomatic tradition from a community), the "situation" of synonymy is born at the meeting point of techniques (competences) on whose basis the homogeneous languages function. Competence, as virtual technique, includes the system and the norm. The functional languages partly coincide, mainly in what concerns the system. Diversity, however, is to be found in the group of norms. On the other hand, the system (as open technique / group of possibilities) leads to the birth of new synonyms.

2.3. The individual level

At this level, to the three points of view: *enérgeia* (activity), *dýnamis* (competence) and *érgon* (product) correspond the discourse, the expressive competence and the text. The real synonymy is made up in speech; it is, as shown before, dependant on the context, as a result of the suppression of the semantic differences between words. Before going further, we should, at this point, accept as useful the distinction between *synonymy in praesentia* and *synonymy in absentia* (cf. Zugun 2000: 243).

2.3.1. *Synonymy in praesentia*, seen as creative activity in this dimension of language, is materialized in speech / discourse. According to the place a synonym gets to another, one can differentiate between: [1] *synonymy in contact* (or *juxtaposed*), which, according to O. Vinţeler, refers to that case when two synonyms

> […] are found in the same sentence, next to each other and usually the second synonym is a determiner of the first, pointing out to its meaning (Vinţeler 1983: 19);

and [2] *the distanced synonymy*, referring to those synonyms which

> are to be found usually in sentences or even in different texts, which can be used with different nuances or even with a similar meaning, so as to avoid repetition within a given context (*ibid*.: 21)[14].

2.3.1.1. *Synonymy in contact* is quite old in the Romanian language. Here is an example from Coresi (*Carte cu învăţătură*, „Predislovie", 1581):

> Dereptŭ aceaia şi noi, *greşiţii* şi *nedestoinicii* şi *ticăloşii*, carii ne-amŭ truditŭ acicea, noi ne *rugămŭ* şi ne *milcuimŭ* fiecărora carei veţi citi acicea, sau veţi propovedui altora […]. Că ne-amŭ *nevoitŭ* şi *truditŭ*[…];

[14] The distinction was taken, probably, from rhetoric, being related to the classification of repetition (see Lausberg 1998: 274-281, who mentions *the repetition in contact* and *the repetition at a distance*).

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and one from B.P. Hasdeu (both a linguist and a writer): „Lumea totuşi de departe ne numeşte cu fiori / *Ucigaşi*, împuşcă-n lună, *hoţi*, *tâlhari*, *omorâtori*." (*Răzvan şi Vidra*).

2.3.1.2. As to what the distanced synonymy is concerned, here is an example from Creangă, *Punguţa cu doi bani*, where he alternates, on two pages, *clonţ* with *plisc* and with *cioc* 'beak':

> Boierul se uită cu băgare de seamă la cucoş, vede în *clonţu*-i o punguţă şi zice vezeteului: – Măi! ia dă-te jos şi vezi ce are cucoşul cela în *plisc*.[...] fuga la fereastra boierului şi începe a trânti cu *ciocul* în geamuri...

The creative activity of language (*enérgeia*) is achieved on the basis of an acquired technique (*dýnamis*), the competence. How is the juxtaposed synonymy linked to this technique? Obviously, it is connected to the expressive competence, the one which dictates how a discourse should be made in a certain circumstance. Tudor Vianu refers to this as *the technique of accumulating synonyms*, considering it as specific to rhetoric: "The rhetorical poets simply love the accumulative synonyms" (Vianu 1968: 108–109).

Moreover, the term *tò prépon* used by Coseriu as a synonym for the norm of adequacy comes from Aristotle's rhetoric. On the other hand, the piling of synonyms may somehow also belong to the idiomatic competence since it frequently appears in speech (as a possibility of the system) and, according to Vianu, it proves *the rhetorical genius of language.* A further proof is given by the phrases which include synonyms in themselves (*praf şi pulbere*, *foc şi pară*, *mici fărâme*, *întuneric beznă*, *pe rudă şi pe sămânţă*). The synonymy in contact (in binary or tertiary structures) does not annul correctness, since the idiomatic norm frequently accepts tautologies and pleonasms. All the functions identified for the synonymy in contact (of intensification, explanation, etc.) have to be studied within this expressive competence (see Munteanu 2005: 291–298).

The usage of the distanced synonymy itself is linked to a certain tradition or technique which gets within the expressive competence. As to what correctness is concerned, the usage of the same word in a discourse each and every time it is required by designation is not a mistake; however, some circumstances impose the variation of the phrase. For instance, writers such as Flaubert or Arghezi recommended (and tried to put in practice) the principle of not repeating the same word or phrase on the same page. Furthermore, the tradition of the sonnet required the same thing in its composition. We considered that the distanced synonymy is relevant within discourse, since it can be noticed *in fluxu*, at a first reception of a message. Discourse (just as text as well) is characterized by coherence and cohesion. The shorter it is, the shorter the distances between synonyms and easier to get to the synonymy of this type.

Writers are prone to use distanced synonyms in order to make the linguistic expression more varied. The distance between synonyms can be shorter (of a line or two in the text, if the second synonym is used in the next sentence), or longer (of few pages), as long as the group of sentences in which they are found is interrelated. It is, however, more often than not, difficult to establish where synonymy (very distanced) ends and where the synonymy as inventory starts, just as we do not know, paradoxically, how many grains of wheat it takes to make up a pile.

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By *érgon* we mean here "text", seen as product. As for synonymy, the distinction between «discourse» and «text» is meaningful, since the realization of juxtaposed and distanced synonymy is done within discourse, while the analysis of the phenomenon depends on texts. That is why for Coseriu the discourse linguistics or the text linguistics is the same thing.

2.3.2. The *synonymy in absentia* refers to the selection in a discourse of only one term from a synonymic series, by leaving out all the others. Obviously, at this level, this type of synonymy is included, as a technique, within the expressive competence, since it presupposes (at least theoretically) that the most adequate word for the discourse should be chosen in some circumstances.

We think that the functions of synonymy within this type are linked to this very competence. Synonymy *in absentia* also implies the idiomatic competence by the fact that speakers have to know / be aware of the differences between words, differences which sometimes fade in the context, by neutralization, as seen in Narcisa Forăscu's research. This type of synonymy concerns, in our opinion, the text (seen as *érgon*) and not the speech / discourse. We accepted the existence of *synonymy in absentia*, starting from Petre Zugun's definition, but within this category we drew a further distinction, differentiating between the *latent synonymy*[15] (suitable to Zugun's definition) and *synonymy as inventory* (which can also be found at the historical level). Both types owe that to the linguist (and not necessarily to the speaker, mainly to the writer), who infers it, guesses the first and catalogues the second.

We can speculate as regards the units which a speaker (or writer) gives up in order to use only one, the most appropriate one, in a given context, but how sure could we be regarding certain things that cannot be seen? The synonymy as inventory can be useful in such a case since it can establish, for example, how many expressions Mihail Sadoveanu uses for the verb *a muri* 'to die'[16]. But still, we will not be able to pretend that we have the whole series of phraseological synonymy that Sadoveanu knew. As to the *latent synonymy*, one can mention those situations in which some terms are fully justified, which have an evocative function. For example, the fact that archaisms are required by those literary works with a historical content is generally accepted, since they evoke a certain epoch, or the fact that some words are used in poetry for the sake of rhyme, rhythm, etc.

The distinctions we have drawn or accepted and varied so far are not groundless, especially that the types of special synonymy, as well as the various values of synonyms were partly intuited since Antiquity (see Munteanu 2008). As to the framework of analysis drawn here concerning lexical synonymy, it holds true in

[15] A quote from M. Bréal suggested this type of synonymy to us: «Une question qui concerne plutôt le philosophe que le linguiste serait de savoir comment cette répartition se fait en nous, ou, pour dire les choses de façon un peu grossière, mais intelligible, si nous avons dans notre tète un dictionnaire des synonymes. Je crois que chez les esprits attentifs et fermes ce dictionnaire existe, mais qu'il s'ouvre seulement en cas de besoin et sur l'appel du maître. Quelquefois le mot juste jaillit du premier coup. D'autres fois il se fait attendre: alors le dictionnaire latent entre en fonction et envoie successivement les synonymes qu'il tient en réserve, jusqu'à ce que le terme désiré se soit fait connaître.» (Bréal 1897: 42).

[16] For this type of synonymy (as inventory) studied mainly in Sadoveanu's literary work, see Iliasa-Frigură: 1980. Another good case in point of the synonymy as inventory is the competent stylistic analysis of synonymy (not just lexical) from Ion Creangă's work drawn by G.I. Tohăneanu.

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many respects both for the phraseological synonymy and for the lexico-phraseological one.

3. In his *Lecciones de lingüística general*, Eugenio Coseriu stated that it is difficult not to owe anything to Saussure in the world linguistics. In the present-day context, Coseriu's own words characterize the Romanian scholar and his work, without whose apprehension nowhere in the world can linguistics be studied. Similarly, we dare anticipate the fact that the Romanian linguistics of the XXIst century will be Coserian (or it will cease to be?). It does not mean that, in the future, the researcher has to be a *homo unius linguistae* (*vel linguisticae*). On the contrary, according to what the same linguist declared, the real researcher has to have freedom of mind, while creatively turning the acquisitions of our field to good account. It is, however, vital that the epistemological basis on which the whole research is developed should be a firm one; otherwise, all our efforts are in vain.

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Applying Eugenio Coseriu's Linguistic *Organon* to Synonymy

Taking as a starting point Eugenio Coseriu's coherent and unitary linguistical theory (also called *integral linguistics*), we have tried to apply, within the general study of synonymy (lexical, phraseological and lexico-phraseological), distinctions such as: language as *activity* [*enérgeia*], *competence* [*dýnamis*] and *product* [*érgon*] to its three levels (*universal*, *historical* and *individual*); *norm* and *system*; *historical language* and *functional language*, etc. From this point of view, the Romanian language (as a historical language) is seen as *a "collection" of functional languages*. As far as we are concerned, we were interested in pointing out, for each of Coseriu's levels in turn, the difference between *synonymy in actu* (the real one) and *synonymy in potentia* (the virtual or potential one). We also aimed at drawing attention to the importance of competence (mainly the idiomatic and expressive ones) in the analysis of different types of synonymy as "knowledge" in using the synonyms.

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