# THE SYNONYMIC EXPANSION FIELD OF THE VERB *A BATE*. THE SERIES OF THE MEANING "TO STRIKE"

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*Abstract: This research aims to carry out a study of the synonymic paradigm of the verb a bate (with the meaning "to strike"), which is extremely expressive in Romanian. It contains a large number of verbs and phraseological units, seen as entities encapsulating "information" referring to the Romanian language and civilisation. Many verbs and expressions belong to the colloquial-slang or popular language; many of them have entered the common language, still preserving that stylistic "load".*

*Key words: synonymic series, term, expression, usage, verb.*

It is agreed that "synonymy is the best known form of semantic organization of the vocabulary" [1]; two or more words in a relation of synonymy are synonyms, and "synonyms must have as many common and as few different semes as possible"[2]. Lexico-semantic fields (subcategories) make use of the organization "forms" of polysemy. In the case of polysemantic verbs (*a bate* "to beat" belongs to this category), they "break" into several subcategories (according to meaning), thus offering a rich semantic "fluorescence".

In Romanian, the synonymic paradigm of the verb *a bate*, with the meaning "to strike" is extremely rich, containing verbs and expressions from different registers of the language. The core of synonymy and constant renewal lies in the colloquial-slang language, but many words and expressions migrate from this language to common usage.

We have selected 104 verbs and expressions from the numerous correspondents of the verb (excerpted from DEX and MDA); we have eliminated the verbs indicating that the subject is the recipient of the action performed by another person (since this is the topic of another study).

*A bate* (*pe cineva*) "to beat (somebody)" involves the punishment/sanctioning of a person considered to be guilty. The one who performs the action (he beats somebody) is, generally, stronger, and the recipient of the action (he is beaten) is weaker, younger of shorter. At the same time, the verb *to beat* is also used to denote an action taking place by use of force against somebody, aiming to impose the aggressor's will on the one who is attacked. In order to carry out these actions, one uses: a) slang terms: *a cafti* "to beat" (MDA, I, 2001: 357), *a mardi* "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 459), *a lua la poceală* (*pe cineva*) "to beat somebody black and blue, to disfigure somebody by beating him" (MDA, III, 2003: 1121); b) regionalisms: *a jnăpăi* "to strike with a stick" (MDA, III, 2003: 251), *a otânji* "to beat or strike somebody with a rod, a heavy stick" (MDA, III, 2003: 861), *a toroipăni* "to cudgel" (MDA, IV, 2003: 947), *a tupungi* "to pummel; to beat with the fists" (MDA, IV, 2003: 1022); c) funny, sometimes ironical words: *a netzi* "to hit, to strike" (MDA, III, 2003: 744), *a peria* "to beat" (MDA, III, 2003: 1002); d) neologisms: *a flagela* "to strike with repeated strokes, as with a strap or rod; to lash; to whip" (MDA, II, 2002: 429), *a maltrata* "to treat somebody in a rough or cruel way; to cause physical or moral pain by beating, brutalizing somebody" (MDA, III, 2003: 448); e) popular expressions: *a căra* (*cuiva*) (*la*) *pumni/palme* "to beat with the fists/palms" (MDA, I, 2001: 427), *a chelfăni* "to thrash" (MDA, I, 2001: 484*), a lua la măsurat* "to beat somebody, to jump at somebody"

[1] Toma, 2000, p. 55.
[2] Cf. DŞL, 2001, p. 482.



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(MDA, III, 2003: 408), *a muştrului* "to beat" (MDA, III, 2003: 664), *a smotoci* "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, IV, 2003: 518), *a tăbăci* "to beat somebody within an inch of his life" (MDA, IV, 2003: 843), *a tăvăli* "to beat somebody by throwing down and dragging" (MDA, IV, 2003: 860).

Some expressions, the synonyms of the verb *a bate*, contain certain anatomic parts; they indicate either that part of the body which is beaten, or those parts of the body which help beating (fists, palms, elbows, feet): *a căra* (*cuiva*) (*la*) *pumni/palme*, *a face* (*cuiva*) *coastele/pântecele/ spinarea/tobă*, *a face* (*cuiva*) *pielea tobă*, *a lua* (*pe cineva*) *la pumni*, *a-i muta* (*cuiva*) *ceafa*, *a rupe* (*cuiva*) *oasele/ciolanele*, *a rupe* (*cuiva*) *urechile*.

Beating involves both one's own "means" (fists, palms, feet etc.) and instruments by which the action is performed: *a ciomăgi* (< *ciomag* "cudgel") "to cudgel; to strike somebody with a heavy stick" (MDA, I, 2001: 530), *a toroipăni* (< *toroipan* "cudgel, heavy stick") "to cudgel" (MDA, IV, 2003: 947).

In Romanian, there are also two homonymic verbs: *a părui*[1] (< *păr*[1] "hair" + *-ui*), which has, in the common language, the meaning "to beat somebody by pulling his/her hair" and *a părui*[2] (< *par*[2] "pole, stick" + *-ui*), used in certain regions, in Transylvania, with the meaning "to beat, to strike, as with a pole" (MDA, III, 2003: 953).

The verbs indicating striking may be accompanied by words denoting peasant clothes or things belonging to a rural universe: *a întinde* (*pe cineva*) *ca pe o opincă scurtă* (popular language) "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 833), *a petici cojocul* (*cuiva*) "to beat somebody soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 1024), *a bate* (*pe cineva*) *furcă/preş* "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 1242).

Allusive expressions are, in turn, numerous; they may refer to: a) dishes, some of them made by movements similar to beating: *a face* (*pe cineva*) *piftie/pilaf/chiseliţă* "to beat soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 919, 1047), *a bate* (*pe cineva*) *de-i merge untul* "to beat somebody soundly" (MDA, IV, 2003: 1129); b) some agricultural products obtained, when harvesting, by beating: *a bate ca la fasole* (popular, familiar language) "to beat somebody mercilessly (methodically)" (MDA, II, 2002: 383).

There are also expressions containing a comparison to objects involving striking: *a face* (*pe cineva*) *tobă de bătaie*, *a face* (*cuiva*) *pielea tobă* (MDA, IV, 2003: 932).

Some verbs are borrowed from certain semantic registers: a) household and craft activities: *a petici cojocul cuiva*, *a cârpi* (figuratively) "to slap somebody" (MDA, I, 2001: 450), *a croi* "to beat somebody" (MDA, I, 2001: 728), *a scărmăna* (popular, familiar language; its object indicates beings) "to pull someone's hair", by generalisation: "to beat somebody soundly (by pulling hair, scratching, tearing clothes)" (MDA, IV, 2003: 354), *a tăbăci* (popular, figurative language) "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, IV, 2003: 598); b) agricultural area: *a altoi* (familiar language) "to strike somebody, with a hard blow" (MDA, IV, 2003: 932).

Another series of verbs and expressions belong to a specific area (the denotative meaning of verbs makes reference to sharp objects: scissors, razor): *a bărbieri* (familiar, figurative language) "to beat somebody" (MDA, I, 2001: 239), *a pieptăna* (familiar, figurative language; its object indicates persons) "to beat soundly" (MDA, III, 2003: 114), *a rade* (*cuiva*) *o palmă* "to slap somebody" (MDA, IV, 2003: 114), *a tunde* (*pe cineva*) *bine* "to thrash somebody soundly" (MDA, IV, 2003: 1021).

The verb *a agresa* "to attack, assault" (somebody, physically), a loan translation of the Fr. *agresser*, with the meaning "to strike somebody", "to attack, thus causing (physical) injury", is mainly used, lately, in media language; it occurs (with this meaning) only in *Noul dicţionar universal al limbii române/ The New Universal Dictionary of the Romanian Language* (2006: 51).



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The verb *a boxa* "to box" comes from the sports register, the meaning "to hit as if boxing" being added to the initial meanings "to practice boxing", "to fight by the boxing rules" (MDA, I, 2001: 309).

A separate category is that of reciprocal reflexive verbs: *a se bate ca orbii/chiorii* "to fight" (MDA, III, 2003: 840), *a se bate în parte* "to fight with no victory on either side" (MDA, I, 2001: 220), *a se încăiera* "to start fighting" (MDA, III, 2003: 141), *a-şi scoate ochii unul altuia* "to fight" (MDA, IV, 2003: 376).

What we have presented so far may be illustrated in the table below[3]:

| in general | to strike, hit (somebody) | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | with a certain part of the body (palm, fist, elbow, foot etc.) | | | with a (blunt) object | to strike and to be struck (simultaneously) |
| | in the fore part (of the body) | in the back part (of the body) | to hit in the head/ to hit in the face | | |
| *a altoi* (fam.) | + | + | + | + | - |
| *a aplica* (fam.); *a aplica* (cuiva) *o corecţie* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a arde* (fam.; fig.; with *fists*, *palms* etc.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a adrde* (cuiva) *câteva* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a articula*; *a articula o palmă* | + | - | + | - | - |
| *a atinge* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a bate ciobăneşte/cobză/furcă/măr/preş/zdravăn/ca pe hoţii de cai/ca la fasole*; *a bate* (pe cineva) *de-i merg fulgii/peticele/untul* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a se bate ca orbii/ca chiorii* | - | - | - | - | + |
| *a se bate în parte* | - | - | - | - | + |
| *a bărbieri* (fam.; fig.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a biciui* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a boxa* | + | - | + | - | - |
| *a bumbăci* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a burduşi* (fig.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a buşi* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a cafti* (slang) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a călca* (pe cineva) *în picioare* | + | + | + | - | - |

[3] Cf. Radu-Golea, 2007, p. 587-590.



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *a căra* (cuiva) (*la*) *pumni/palme* (pop.; fam.) | + | + | + | + | - |
| *a cârpi* (fig.) | + | - | + | - | - |
| *a chelfăni*; *a trage cuiva o chelfăneală* (pop.; fam.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a ciomăgi* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a ciufuli* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a cocoşa* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | - | + | - | - | - |
| *a cotonogi* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a croi* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a desfigura* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a face* (pe cineva) *bucăţi/bucăţele/pulbere/zob* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *coastele/pântecele/spinarea tobă* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *pielea burduf* (*de cimpoi*) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *pielea tobă* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a face* (pe cineva) *tobă de bătaie* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *pielea cojoc* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *chica topor* (*morişcă din chică*) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a face* (cuiva) *divan pe spinare* | - | + | - | - | - |
| *a face* (pe cineva) *piftie/pilaf/chiseliţă* (fam.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a desfigura* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a flagela* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a-i frânge* (cuiva) *turta* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a izbi* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a* (*se*) *încăiera* | - | - | - | - | - |
| *a-i îndrepta* (cuiva) *spatele* | - | + | - | - | - |
| *a înghionti* | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a întinde* (pe cineva) *ca pe o opincă scurtă* | - | + | - | - | - |
| *a învineţi* | + | + | + | (+) | - |
| *a jnăpăi* (reg.) | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a lăsa* (pe cineva) *lat* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a lipi* (pe cineva) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a lovi* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a lovi/trăsni* (pe cineva) *la mir* | - | - | + | (+) | - |



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|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *a lua* (*înhăţa*) *de gât* (pe cineva) | + | - | - | - | - |
| *a lua la măsurat* (pop.; fam.) | + | + | + | (+) | - |
| *a lua la pocealã* (pe cineva) (slang) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a lua* (pe cineva) *la pumni* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a maltrata* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a mardi* (slang) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a muştrului* (pop.; fam.) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a-i muta* (cuiva) *fălcile* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a-i muta* (cuiva) *ceafa* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a netezi* (in joke) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a omorî* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a otânji* (reg.) | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a păli* | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a pălmui* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a peria* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a petici cojocul* (cuiva) (fam.) | + | + | - | (+) | - |
| *a pieptăna* (fig.; fam.; the object indicates persons) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a plesni* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a părui* | - | - | + | + | - |
| *a pocni* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a prăpădi* (pe cineva) *în bătaie/cu bătaia* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a rade* (cuiva) *o palmă* (fam.) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a rupe* (cuiva) *oasele/ciolanele* (pop.) | + | + | + | (+) | - |
| *a rupe* (cuiva) *urechile* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a-şi rupe pumnii şi picioarele pe cineva* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a scărmăna* (pop.; fam.; the object indicates beings) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a scărpina* (fam.; fig.; the object indicates beings/parts of them) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a-şi scoate ochii unul altuia* | - | - | - | - | + |
| *a scutura blana/cojocul/nădragii cuiva* (pop.) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a scutura de pureci* (pe cineva) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a sminti* (*în bătăi*) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a smotoci* (pop.) | + | + | + | - | - |



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| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *a snopi* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a stâlci* (often determined by *în bătaie/în pumni*) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a stinge/ucide în bătaie* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a şterge* (cuiva) *o palmă/un pumn* (pop.; fam.) | + | - | + | - | - |
| *a tăbăci* (pop.; fig.) | - | + | - | - | - |
| *a tăvăli* (pop.) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a târnosi* (the object indicates persons) | + | + | - | - | - |
| *a toroipăni* (reg.) | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a trage* (the object indicates a stroke) | + | + | + | - | + |
| *a trage* (*da*, *arde*) *scatoalce* (cuiva) (pop.; fam.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a trage* (cuiva) *una în numele tatălui* | - | - | + | (+) | - |
| *a trage* (cuiva) *o mamă de bătaie/un toc de bătaie/o bătaie soră cu moartea* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a trage* (cuiva) *câteva să-i trosnească urechile/fălcile* (pop.; fam.) | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a trânti* (pop.; fam.; the object indicates *a fist/nudge*) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a tunde* (pe cineva) *bine* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a tupăi* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a tupungi* (reg.) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a toroipăni* (reg.) | - | - | - | + | - |
| *a umple* (pe cineva) *de sânge* (or in joke), *de borş* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a urechea* | - | - | + | - | - |
| *a usca* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a zdrobi* (în bătaie) (about beings, especially people) | + | + | + | - | - |
| *a zvânta* (pe cineva) *în bătaie* | + | + | + | - | - |

The synonymic series of the verb *a bate* contains verbs and expressions from various registers/areas of language. Thus, there are verbs specific to this action (*a lovi*, *a ciomăgi*), but there are also verbs "borrowed" from other actions (*a croi*, *a scărmăna*, *a tunde*).

*A bate* involves the action of hitting, striking, performed by one's own (human!) means, but also with objects. Certain verbs in the list of synonyms designate the beginning of the action (*a lua pe cineva la bătaie*), some others express the complete action (*a snopi în bătaie*), and another category presents the end of the action (*a lăsa pe cineva lat*, *a omorî în bătaie*). As a consequence of the action denoted by the verb *a bate*, the human body in its entirety (*a lua la măsurat*) or only part of it (*a părui*, *a urechea*) may be affected. The



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degrees of intensity of the beating/striking may vary (*a bate ca la fasole*, as compared with: *a atinge*, *a şterge cuiva o palmă*).

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