ON THE NECESSITY OF COMPILING AN ASSOCIATIVE DICTIONARY OF THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE

Gheorghe POPA, Professor PhD, "Alecu Russo" State University of Bălţi

Abstract: The compilation of associative dictionaries is one of the main directions in contemporary linguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic studies. The great interest towards this type of dictionaries is explained by their main role in radiographing current speech. Unlike other types of dictionaries (especially analogical ones), which are based on the lexical units supplied by the existent dictionaries (explanatory, or of synonyms), regardless of whether these units are used or are not used by speakers at a certain period of time, the associative dictionary operates with units that are used at a certain period of time, regardless of whether these units are or are not registered in dictionaries. In other words, an associative dictionary is presented as a "mirror" not only of the "physiognomy of language" as a whole, but also as a "mirror" of the speaker's mental and emotional state.

Keywords: contemporary linguistic; associative dictionaries; Romanian language

1. It is an axiom that the process of interpersonal communication is possible due to the word. In reality, we do not speak using separate words, but using communicative units, which are superior to the word – simple sentences, complex and compound sentences, etc. Being the main language unit from a static perspective, in the relation world-thought-language the word names and means something in isolation and passive. To put it differently, in the process of human communication the word becomes an active element only by being placed in a syntactic structure. From a dynamic perspective, the main unit of language in action (or speech unit, in F. de Saussure's terms) is the utterance (the linguistic unit of communication, the discursive unit): based on the denominative and meaningful character of the words and on the meanings that derive from their syntagmatic organization, the utterance *communicates* something (see [Irimia, 327]). "We usually, do not speak using isolated signs, wrote F. de Saussure, but using groups of signs, using organized masses that are themselves signs" [Saussure, 139]. As a rule, the process of combining "isolated signs" in "groups of signs" takes place without much difficulty, because "the word never comes to mind isolated, but always accompanied by a rich cortege of relatives" [Philippide 1894: 88].

2. We consider it worth pointing out here that in the process of human communication some lexical units which in language may be incompatible in terms of their semantics, may become tolerable or even normative in speech. It is known that language, which "exists only in speech, as a dimension of speech" is always "a system open to future, a system of possibilities, partly achieved and partly achievable" [Coşeriu 1996: 139].

2.1. In this context, we should mention one of Coseriu's precepts which refers to the above-mentioned future dimension of any language. Romanian, for example, "is not only what was said before, but it is everything that was said *and what can be said from now on* (emphasis - Gh.P.,)" [Coşeriu 1994: 26]. Things become clear if we consider that on the one hand, language is constantly subject to some persistent and multifaceted pressures, depending on a variety of factors, and on the other hand, language, in its turn, has a great influence on its

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

speakers through the new words and meanings that appear, through new mobile relations of meaning between words, through new relationships, established between the language and the extralingual area. Therefore, we must take into consideration the fact that a word is presented as a "hermit", as a "foreigner" only in a lexicographical work (i.e. in language), but in reality (i.e. in speech) it tends, in every way, to establish "family" links ("blood" links, "alliance" links, "adoption" links) with the most diverse words, whether they belong to the same semantic, derivational, associative field, or whether they belong to different fields. It is easy to understand, if we think that language, by virtue of its natural tendency to be a "mirror of reality" cannot reflect the surrounding reality continuum in a distorted way: the lack of the world discontinuity justifies and determines, undoubtedly, the continuity or the interference, or the overlap of lexical units.

2.2. Regarding the combinatory possibilities of words, we should mention that due to their " sociability" and "generosity", the words ma risk of erring with the "relatives", as it generally happens in everyday life. This detail must be taken into consideration especially when referring to Romanian, which is "full of meanings and nuances of meaning, tasty and playful, deep and serious, alive and up-to-date, yet, friendly with her sisters from other realms. In brief, a language like no other in the world" [Dumitrescu, 5]. These very features of the Romanian language give its speakers multiple opportunities to use various combinations of words in interpersonal communication. Naturally, any speaker can enjoy this luxury, yet, at the same time we must not forget that these possibilities should be operated with caution and thrift, for, referring just to one "temptation" - " the daily bombardment of press, radio and television with various modern language weapons, led many to capitulate to the attacks and to side with the enemy. So nowadays, few are those who try to resist this "assault" [*ibidem*]. In short, the danger of an "assault" of arbitrary, bizarre, illogical, loud combinations, etc. should not be excluded.

3. The things that have been mentioned so far point clearly to the necessity of compiling a lexicographical work that would include word combinations which have the highest frequency in speech. An eventual Associative Dictionary of the Romanian Language (hereinafter – *ADRL*) would represent the Romanian language in a somewhat unusual form, since it will be presented not as a finite text, but as a combination of words or groups of words which in turn can serve as building material for communicative units. For example, the reactions to the word-stimulus *student* could be *diligent, to read, examinations, scholarship etc*. If these words were analyzed as entries in classical dictionaries, they could only be interpreted as virtual signs, and only within the communicative units they function as real signs, since they are able to communicate information: *A diligent student reads a lot during the examination period in order to have a scholarship.* Thus, the *ADRL* records the words-reactions, i.e. word pairs that are easily reproducible. These words-reactions were provided by speakers' testing.

3.1. The word combinations included in the *ADRL* are not only easily reproducible, but also easy to understand. Starting from the idea that speakers know the meanings of the words included in the dictionary, we must admit that any individual combination of words used by the speaker is usually understood by the receiver (we say "usually" because, as already noted, one cannot exclude combinations that are built artificially and strangely, etc.). Their intelligibility is explained by two reasons which cannot be separated.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

3.1.1. The first reason: the sender – we admit he is a Romanian language speaker – speaks *like the other one*, i.e. like his interlocutor (who speaks Romanian, too). In other words, both participants in the communication process have the same adverbial perception of the used language, i.e. they speak *Romanian*[1]. E. Coşeriu mentioned that "language consists in speaking *like the others*, the most important here being *like the*, being always historically determined and determinable.

In a somewhat paradoxical way, it can be said that conceptually, language is a substantivized adverb, the Latin *latine* [*loqui*] turned into *lingua latina*, as [the fact of walking] *rapidly* can be transformed into *rapidity* [of walking] " [Coşeriu 1997: 44].

3.1.2. The second reason: the semantic transparency of possible combinations is determined by the fact that these combinations (according to the linguistic vision of E. Coşeriu) exist both concretely, i.e. as real combinations, and virtually, i.e. as potential combinations (in speakers' consciousness): the combination from the speaker's consciousness exists in the receiver's consciousness, too. Moreover, in the receiver's consciousness there are not only the signified (designated "things"), but also the *associated* nuances of these signified which are updated by the speaker. Thus, if someone uses the combination *şoimul Patriei* with the meaning of "octombrel " (from the communist regime), then the value of the same combination exists in the conscience of the reader or listener, too. The alterity, which is "one of the few universal language features " is manifested in this way. „This «being- with-the-other» – the fact of recognizing oneself in others, the fact of recognizing in «you» another «me» – , mentions E. Coşeriu, is namely what is called human "social" dimension (or «political-social» dimension) and coincides with the original intersubjectivity of consciousness, with the fact that human consciousness is open to other consciousnesses with which it establishes **communication**, i.e. it recognizes in them the same abilities of feeling, thinking, signifying and interpreting" [Coşeriu 2002: 26-27].

3.2. Undoubtedly, each pair of words (stimulus-reaction) included in *ADRL* does not represent a complete sentence, but only a necessary component of it, i.e. a part of the communicative unit that is going to get a perfect shape. Thus, the *ADRL* does not represent speech, but language on its way to becoming speech; such a dictionary illustrates both the way language is "stored" in the social and historical memory of the Romanian speaker, and the level of his/her linguistic competence.

4. As we know, language can be characterized from different points of view (social, physiological, semiotic, cultural, philosophical, logical, etc.), but in reality it includes four distinct components: physical, because language manifests itself in sound and/or graphic format; biological, since language is related to specific organs that are involved in the speech activity; psychic, because language is kept in the human psyche in the form of a system and due to this fact it ensures the speech activity of the speaker and of the receiver; cultural, because, according to E. Coşeriu, language is "on the one hand, the basis of the whole culture and, on the other hand, [...] a form of culture " [*ibidem*, 102].

[1]By the way, due to this adverbial perception, a Romanian native will say that his interlocutor speaks *Romanian* even in the situation when he hardlydiscerns the meaning of words, or *French*, even in the situation when French is superficially "familiar" to him.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

4.1. With reference to the last component, we would like to point out that language is "a c r e a t i n g activity, so we have this universal dimension of creativity and, in this dimension of creativity, language shows an unlimited variety" [Coşeriu 1996: 38]. In this context, it should be noted that "culture is, no doubt, an objectified creativity, but at the same time, it is the objectification of the creativity of the historical person, which means it is done in a certain community and at a period of time determined by a determined situation"[*ibidem*, 178]. Starting from these premises, it is easy to understand why "culture cannot be national and should not be national as o b j e c t" [*ibidem*, 176].

4.2. Obviously, the hierarchical dominance of language components is based on the methodological and epistemological vision of the researcher, on the scientific orientation of the linguistic trend, on the aims of the given school etc., but no one would dare to contest the dominant and privileged position of the cultural side of the language in the hierarchy of the mentioned issues. For these reasons, linguistics reclaims legitimately its right to be considered a culturological science: ethics, art, methodology, sapientology (sapientia "science"), etc. being its closer "relatives" and philosophy, psychology, biology, logics, etc. – its more distant "relatives".

4.2.1. The dominant and privileged role of the cultural aspect of the language is determined by the fact that linguistic signs are a natural product of culture, a creation of the cultural activity of the individual. There is no doubt that the reasons as well as the technology of creating the multitude of cultural products are different, however one thing is certain: beginning with the bow and the first carved objects and ending with the spaceship or the computer – all this is a result of the manifestation of the same type of human activity and namely of the creative and cultural activity, due to which our ancestors walked the path of "humanisation" (personification).

4.2.2. The idea that has to be reiterated in connection with the issue under discussion relates to the fact that the system of lingual signs, in relation to other cultural products, definitely detaches itself from other systems in terms of their complexity, importance and implication. Language is the primary condition and the essential means that helps culture to perform without difficulty its basic functions: a) of cognition and transformation of the surrounding reality; b) of communicating social important information; c) of lingual modeling (by signs) of the world picture; d) of collecting and storing information; f) of influencing; g) of adaptation, i.e. of ensuring harmony between the "collective I" (ethnolingual community) and the surrounding environment [Алефиренко, 270].

4.3. The examination of the relation language-culture requires elucidation of the concept of *culture*. For E. Coşeriu culture "is the historical objectification of spirit in forms that last, in forms that become traditions, in forms that become historical forms which describe an individual's own world and the individual's own universe . What do we call *spirit*? It is the creative activity, it is creativity itself, it is not something that creates, but creative activity itself, *enérgeia*, it is the activity which comes before any learned or experienced technique. And man creates culture, he is creative, he has energeia to the extent that goes beyond what has been learned, what has been gained through experience through the two sources of learning, namely through study and experience, by mathesis and by empeiria. These forms of activity [...] are language, art, religion and myth, science and philosophy.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

These forms are what we call culture, to the extent that these forms are realized in history, as products of man's creative activity" [Coşeriu 1994: 173] .

In this sense, culture is presented as a means by which an ethnic group adapts itself to the real world. It mediates the relationship between man and the world, representing a similar coordinate system in which the bearers of culture exist and act. Each representative of a culture bears in his/her conscience fragments of the common picture, having at the same time, a strong feeling that he/she knows just parts of the whole picture. In the process of evolution of ethnicity some aspects of the world picture may change, but the fundamental structural elements of the ethnic collective unconscious remain intact. It is through this prism that man sees the world (for further details, see also [Цивьян].

5. Having the association as a foundation, an *ADRL* includes words-stimuli and words-reactions which return in the speaker's consciousness the realia that have previously acted on his senses. The source of the image of these realia is the information provided by the sensations and perceptions, but its objective basis is the memory capacity of the brain.

For example, in the former Soviet area everything that refers to Europe and to the derivatives of this word (European, europeanize, europeanisation, europeanized etc.) denotes a positive content, meaning all that is *modern, fair, good, beautiful, valuable , democratic, sustainable , perfect etc*. In short, *European* represents today "the linguistic expression of a national ideal" [Druţă , 83]. *Asia* and the derivatives of this word (*Asian*, for example), on the contrary, denote an opposite content, i.e. a negative one, meaning everything that is *outdated, anachronistic, ephemeral, repulsive*, etc. (by the way, the word combination *Eurasian consciousness* which appeared in contemporary scientific vocabulary, refers to the consciousness that is open to different languages and cultural values). This example allows us to conclude without hesitation that mentality, consciousness, national culture are determined by the geographical position of the country, by the climate, by the flora and the fauna, etc. of the place where people live.

6. From the perspective of dictionary classification into (a) *dictionaries oriented to the language system* and (b) *dictionaries oriented to anthropology*, the associative dictionary falls in the latter category. This type of dictionaries reflects best of all "the lexical diapason" of the simple speaker and is oriented to what is referred to in linguistics as "the man and his language". In other words, this type of dictionaries is oriented to the active acquiring of a language.

6.1. We are aware of the fact that the compilation of an associative dictionary entails various difficulties and risks, determined by the heterogeneity of the material to be included in it, by the perspectives from which this material is analyzed, by the objective affinities between an associative dictionary and other lexicographical works such as, for example, analogical and ideographical ones, by the "open" character of any dictionaries, and especially of the associative ones etc.

6.2. The existing associative dictionaries can be characterized and classified according to several criteria: a) the number of languages in which the associative experiment was done; b) the number of words-stimuli on which the experiment was done; c) the field the selected words-stimuli belong to; d) the structure of the lexicographical article; e) the number of entries in the dictionary; f) the form of the dictionary; g) the social-biographical data of the informers.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

6.2.1. As we noted, among the difficulties related to the compilation of the *ADRL* are those which refer to the affinities between the dictionary in question and the analogical dictionary. Undoubtedly, these two types of dictionaries are similar in many ways and, certainly, it is not easy to draw a clear demarcation line between the "analogical" and the "associative" interpretation of one or another lexicographical article. The confusion of these two types of dictionaries is, in a way, imminent because both have *the similarity* as a foundation point.

However, the subtleties regarding this concept relate to the fact that in an "analogical" interpretation the similarity refers to the appearance of a word with a certain form and with a specific content under the influence of a form or of a content of another word, and when speaking about the "associative" interpretation, the similarity concerns the emergence of a similar (verbalized) representation under the influence of another representation (which is also verbalized).

6.2.2. Without getting into polemics with the authors of analogical dictionaries, we consider, however, that the so-called "analogical group" which consists of words related through the ontic and semantic relations between author and action (such as *pupil – to learn*), between action and object (such as *to build –building*), between action and tool (such as *to plough - plough*), between action and place of action (*to learn - school*) refers, mainly, to association realities and not to analogy relations. Moreover, if an analogical dictionary is indeed a dictionary of synonyms, as some experts say, (of course, with a different structure from that of traditional dictionaries of synonyms), an associative dictionary has nothing to do with the phenomenon of synonymy (we abstract from the fact that in reality, beginning with the systemic character of the language, we can identify intimate or discreet links between all language units, regardless of their importance in the language system, of their functional, stylistic "habits " etc.).

In addition, analogical dictionaries, as they are currently designed, use the linguistic material from the existing dictionaries (explanatory, of synonyms, etc.), but the associative dictionaries use the linguistic material taken directly from the language users. In other words, in the case of analogical dictionaries, we operate with facts, registered by dictionaries, regardless of whether they are used by speakers or not, but in the case of associative dictionaries, we operate with facts that are used by speakers, regardless of whether they are registered or not by dictionaries (analogical, of synonyms etc.).The purpose of an associative dictionary is, therefore, to radiography the current speech of native speakers, without taking into consideration what was or what may be in language. In a word, unlike other types of dictionaries (including analogical and of synonyms), which claim to be an "impartial" mirror of the language state, the associative dictionary is, on the contrary, "biased" at most: it also presents itself as a kind of a "mirror", but already not of the " language state " in general, but of the mental and emotional state of the common speaker –a state which is characteristic of a particular moment or a period of his life (and, implicitly, of the society life) and it has been reflected in his language, i.e. in his associative and verbal network [Караулов, 775-776].

We do not contest the possibility of compiling some really "analogical" dictionaries of the Romanian language, however starting from the described reality, we ascertain that the existing analogical dictionaries of Romanian fall into the category of associative dictionaries

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

rather than in the category of analogical ones. The authors of such dictionaries were compelled not to stop at the field of analogies, but to "overfly" the field of synonyms.

7. The need and the relevance of compiling and of publishing an *ADR*L is based on certain reasons:

a) *investigational*: such a dictionary would diversify the types of dictionaries (such a diversification implies the involvement of new perspectives of examining the lexical system of the Romanian language); it would serve as an effective source of linguistic and paralinguistic information (on the basis of such information some mathematical calculations or verification of statistical hypotheses can be made), it would illustrate not only "the way we speak now", but also "what we prefer to speak about and to think about" [Караулов].

b) *didactic*: such a dictionary would facilitate learning Romanian as a mother tongue and as a foreign language; it would optimize the verbal communication with both the man and the computer (nobody contests the verbal influence in intracultural and intercultural communication); it would provide instructive data on the "speaking" experience of native speakers; it would facilitate the study of national and cultural specific of lingual consciousness.

Bibliography

Coşeriu, Eugeniu, *Prelegeri şi conferinţe (1992-1993)*, în „Anuar de lingvistică şi istorie literară. T. XXXIII, 1992-1993). Seria A. Lingvistică, Iaşi, 1994.

Coşeriu, Eugeniu, *Lingvistica integrală. Interviu cu Eugeniu Coşeriu realizat de Nicolae Saramandu*, Bucureşti, Editura Fundaţiei Culturale Române, 1996.

Coşeriu, Eugeniu, *Sincronie, diacronie şi istorie. Problema schimbării lingvistice*, Bucureşti, Editura Ştiinţifică şi Enciclopedică, 1997.

Coşeriu, Eugeniu, *Limbaj şi politică*, în *Identitatea limbii şi literaturii române în perspectiva globalizării*, Iaşi, Editura Trinitas, 2002.

Druţă, Inga, *Tot mai ... europeni?,* în *Limba română azi. Lucrările Conferinţei Naţionale de Filologie „Limba română azi".* Ediţia a X-a, Iaşi-Chişinău, 3-7 noiembrie 2006, Iaşi, Editura Universităţii „Al. Ioan Cuza", 2007.

Dumitrescu, Dumitru, *Dicţionar analogic şi de sinonime al limbii române*, Bucureşti, Editura Sanda, 2009.

Irimia, Dumitru, *Gramatica limbii române*, Iaşi, Editura Polirom, 2000.

Philippide, Alexandru, *Istoria limbii române. Vol. I: Principii de istoria limbii*, Iaşi, Tipografia naţională, 1894.

Saussure, Ferdinand de, *Curs de lingvistică generală*. Traducere şi cuvînt înainte de Irina Izverna Tarabac, Iaşi, Editura Polirom, 1998.

Алефиренко, Н. Ф., *Современные проблемы науки о языке*. *Учебное пособие,* Москва, Изд-во «Флинта» – «Наука», 2009.

Караулов,Ю. Н., *Русский ассоциативный словарь как новый лингвистический источник и инструмент анализа языковой способности,* в*Русский ассоциативный словарь***.**Книга 1. Прямой словарь: от стимула к реакции. Ассоциативный тезаурус современного русского языка. Часть I / Ю. Н. Караулов, Ю. А. Сорокин, Е. Ф., Тарасов, Н. В., Уфимцева, Г. А., Черкасова,Москва, Изд-во «Помовский и партнеры», 2011.Цивьян, Т.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)

В., *Модель мира и ее лингвистические основы*, Москва, Изд-во Книжный дом «Либроком», 2009.

BDD-V466 © 2013 Arhipelag XXI Press
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.217.142 (2026-11-14 08:54:16 UTC)