# *A TERMINOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONCEPT OF VIOLENCE*

**Raluca Maria GÎJGĂ (TĂNĂSESCU)**[*]

***Abstract:*** *This study aims to be a precise terminological mirror of the concept of violence.We focus on the semantic and structural analysis of the terms that we encounter in the semantic field of this concept.*

***Keywords****:semantic field, subconcept, semantic anlysis.*

The concept of *violence* comprises a linguistic reality whose features haven't been clearly defined neither by the common language nor the specialized language. Its complexity is established by the multitude of different meanings and images on this concept, depending on the scientific field to which they circumscribe. The fact is that this term is used when "talking about facts associated with harmful phenomena in the society" (Sîrbu, C., Dincă, C., 2009 : 15). Placing this concept in the social area, we will necessarily associate it with a discipline deeply rooted in the reality, social assistance. Whether it is a moderate violence (delinquency, sects activity, kidnapping, actions of recuperators, domestic violence or child abuse) or greater violence (trafficking in drugs and persons, crimes against humanity committed during the armed conflicts), the terms that gravitate around the semantics of this concept will find their place of extreme importance in the hierarchy of the terminology system of social assistance.

Even referring to a single discipline, the concept of *violence* as described above has several meanings which may depend on the situation of specialized communication in which it is used. Its simple use in conjunction with other terms in the field of social assistance do not clearly ensure its mono-referential, unequivocal and precise nature, prerequisites for a word to gain specialized character and be considered within a particular area, this being due to the large semantic area which is difficult to synthesize in one word. The term, as a linguistic expression of the concept, is therefore difficult to use without giving rise to ambiguities, and to avoid polysemantism, the general concept should be broken into subconcepts that will bring as linguistic representation a single term. The relationship between the term and the concept must be unequivocal and precise. The cleavage of this concept into subconcepts ensures precisely this accuracy and this uniqueness of meaning which is essential for the terminological system of social assistance. *Violence*, in general, is defined by MDA as "incontinence of personal reactions or feelings reflected in words and in actions, violation of legal order, deed characterized by brutality and disregard for the rights and will of someone", while *verbal violence*, a subconcept subordinated to the concept of violence in the terminological system of social assistance is defined as "addressing through an offensive, brutal language, and the use of insults, threats, degrading or humiliating words and expressions". Breaking the concept into less substantiated units of meaning impacts on the semantic area. The semantic area is significantly reduced, but this has a positive impact on the mono-referentiality and monosemantism, these newly formed terms becoming more transparent, clear and precise. These terms gain a

[*] University of Craiova, ralucagijga@yahoo.com



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strong conventional nature and an intense specialization. Their extension to common language, even if it exists in the context of secularization of knowledge, is relatively limited, and if is is performed, it presents a high risk to tilt toward the ambiguisation of the significance and to lose the specialized semantic load.

The ISO 704 norm mentions the importance that the specialized language must have in the study of a specific science, emphasizing that it must be focused "on the concepts and their representations" which should be indispensable tools of knowledge of the respective domain. Specialized language should really be looked as a true code meant to ensure both communication between specialists and by imposing a strict standardization to achieve uniformity of perception regarding representations of the concept under research within the social assistance field. In the case of the concept of *violence*, the mental construction that provides the connection between the linguistic reality and its definition within the terminological triangle, is one difficult to achieve as according to ISO 704 because this concept represents an abstract entity that enters the area of social phenomena. From this point of view, especially for the legal-administrative language on social assistance, one should establish clear traits of this concept.

From this perspective, it is essential to describe the concept of *violence* both in its intension and in its extension. It can be considered a very general nucleus, around him being organized all other subconcepts which are in a relationship of subordination to the core concept. In terms of intention, *violence* is an absolute term because it can be understood independently of other terms, its contents can be set by individual characteristics that can be considered in isolated contexts. We pointed out above that in order to highlight the specialization of this term, it has been divided in language units with a narrower semantic area. The newly formed terms by this cleavage are relative terms that can not exist independently, they are bound to the nucleus by a semantic subordination relationship. These secondary concepts are expressed typically by terminological collocations, they being mostly compound terms. Characteristic to these collocations is that while the semantic area is restricted, the linguistic form expands. In these collocations, the most important in terms of meaning is the secondary term. It is the one ensuring the monosemantism of the term, erasing any trace of interpretation or polysemantism, which is specific to the specialized language. The term *emotional violence* restrains the act of violence to the emotional sphere. The term has the following structure: adjective + noun. Although the adjective is the secondary term of the terminological collocation, it is the one that emphasizes and clearly shows its meaning. Its semantic area, by restraint, becomes more precise, and possible confusion arising during specialized communication is removed.

Another aspect that we need to discuss is that not all the time in the terminological collocations the core term that is kept is violence. In case of violence committed against minors, the term used is *child maltreatment*. The term violence is replaced by maltreatment, but the meaning is the same. This replacement may be due to the trend of dividing the social assistance discipline into sub-fields. Another fact that we should bring in question is that all forms of abuse and neglect committed against children were not considered violence, but rather education until a few decades ago. Romanian social assistance must therefore fight, at a terminological level too, this traditionalist mentality because "culturally, in Romania the different forms of violence are well tolerated by society" (Neamţu, 2003: 697). Imposing these new terms that circumscribe the semantic field of violence is an innovation both at the level of terminology and methods and techniques with which this science is forced to operate.



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By analyzing the term of violence in its extension, we will note that it is a general term, i.e. its extension includes several elements revolving around the core term. It is also distributive, that is, everything is true for the core concept is applicable subconcepts resulting from the need for accuracy of the specialized language. The extension of this term is considerably the specialized language of social assistance, displaying some 20 terms that may be associated to the terminological scope of the concept of violence.

If we wanted to represent the terminological board of this concept, we would hit its very general sense which often may print a vague and ambiguous character. If this is acceptable in common language, in specialised language this may raise numerous problems because the terms must be an exact mirror of the linguistic reality it expresses. We can compare this concept with what Angela Bidu-Vrăceanu called "supra-assembly" (Bidu-Vrăceanu, 1984: 164). The common sign of the supra-assembly /violence/ can be considered as belonging to the semantic metalanguage, its interpretation being very general, consisting of a variety of actions employing brute force. Even the etymology of the term borrowed from French (violence = brutal force), where it came from lat. "Violentia", refers to this semantic feature suggesting the idea of constraint that is defined as the use of superiority over a fellow creature in order to impose a certain behavior. The same seme also indicates the lexical-semantic category the terms of this supra-assembly belong to, namely: noun. This multiplicity of terms that revolve around the concept *violence* provides "the conceptual coherence and hierarchical reporting" (Bidu-Vrăceanu, A. 2007: 58) that we must consider when we refer to the social assistance domain.

We can note that this supra-assembly consists of two fields that suggest the idea of intensity / moderate / and / great /. They cannot be defined by components and they group around them other terms that make up together a paradigm. These two main fields must be subject to two distinct analyzes because they present more specific differences.

Of the two fields, the largest and the one that particularly is of interest in social assistance is marked by the seme /moderate/ as it relates to social issues that are the subject of this discipline. Variable semes in this field could be structured as follows: /generation/ with the values /adult/ and /minor/. In other words, we must take into account that violence committed on adults is referred to by a different term of the one committed on children. In case of the value /adult/ we will have a value / general / and one / particular /. Also, for the value / minor / we will present a value where the minor is /victim/ and another where he is /aggressor/. Within the value /victim/ there will also be the value /active/ or /passive/.

The oppositions that make up the board of *moderate violence* could be rendered by the following table:



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| | Variabile semes | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Adult person | | | Minor person | | |
| | Intrafamiliar | | Extra-familiar | Intrafamiliar | | Extra-familiar |
| | General | Particular | Break-in, robbery, murder | Victim Maltreatment | | Aggressor Juvenile delinquency |
| | | | | Passive | Active | |
| Semes common to the field /violence/ + /moderate/ | Domestic violence | physical violence, physical violence emotional violence, economic violence sexual violence, verbal violence social violence, spiritual violence | | Emotio-nal neglect, Physical neglect, Sexual neglect | Emotio-nal abuse Physical abuse, Sexual abuse | |



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The field of designations of violence crimes that can be correlated with great violence is difficult to fit into a semantic matrix if it meets the semantic criteria of the supra-assembly of violence by the presence of common semes /violence/ +/great/.

First of all, even if in the scholarly literature it is used the sign of / great / due to the polysemy of this adjective, we shall emphasize from the very beginning that in this context is used with a *global* meaning. The seme / violence / will also have a semantic load that will refer to an increased brutally, brutally manifesting their effects both on an individual level, by injuring the person, and on a collective level by the negative effects it will have on the social plan in certain communities. The variable semes, although generally referring to the purpose for which violence is produced, vary from one term to another and illustrate the various representations that violence has in modern society. The definitions of these terms shall be substantial and descriptive to create images as clear as possible on the phenomena under discussion. The conceptboard of this semantic field may have the following composition:

| Common semes /violence/ +/great/+/produced by an organization/ | Variable semes<br>Purpose | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | To obtain material benefits<br>- human trafficking<br>- drug trafficking<br>- trafficking in minors | To change the form of government<br>-terrorism<br>-war | To create a climate of insecurity<br>-terrorism |

In conclusion, we should note that within the social assistance terminology the term violence is well defined, clear and concise, and this is underlined by the structuration of the concept into subconcepts. These subconcepts are expressed through a vast number of terms which leads to the creation of a true terminological field around the core concept of *violence*. Analyzing this terminological field, one should note that it is trying to present in a fair manner the numerous representations that violence has in the contemporary society, removing any remaining lack of inaccuracy off the specialized language of social assistance.

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