Rhetoric and psychology: an attempt to define the psychological profile of the Romanians

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Résumé : Notre objet d'investigation est la composante psychique de l'identité ethnique et cherche plus précisément à identifier la spécificité de la psyché roumaine en analysant certains faits de la langue qui ont résisté au temps par des caractéristiques telles que la stabilité, la fixité, l'expression et l'unité des sens. Les résultats des analyses lexicologiques ont été confrontés aux observations faites par les spécialistes des recherches en ethnopsihologie et en imagologie et ont validé le fait que les types de tempérament dominants des Roumains sont colériques et sentimentaux.

Mots-clés : *phraséologie, psychologie, rhétorique, mental, roumain.*

0. The rapport between language and culture has been noted by multiple categories of specialists belonging to multiple fields of knowledge, the unanimous conclusion being that the two realities are interrelated and therefore cannot be studied separately (Capidan, 1943: 29).

1. The Purpose of the Research

Starting from Jean Caune's observation, according to which "culture can be seen as the instrument through which man expresses his thoughts, feelings, emotions, it exerts its influence and supports the influences of other people from the community that it belongs to" (Caune, 2000: 26), the present paper aims to verify the degree to which the results of the research in the field of ethno-psychology can be validated by a lexicological linguistic analysis. We specify that the material that we have selected, which comprises proverbs and fixed phrases is relevant for the investigation, since these are linguistic facts that have stood the test of time and are characterized by fixity, stability, unity of meaning and expressivity. We will therefore pursue the singularity of the Romanian psyche by confronting the results that have been obtained in the wake of the investigation of the

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lexical fields with the features that have been emphasized by the research into the fields of ethno-psychology and imagology through specific methods.

2. The analysis of the latest research and publications that tackle the issue

As we mentioned above, in its quality of repository of culture, i.e. "the ensemble of symbolical systems, in which language occupies the first rank" (Caune, 2000: 26), language underlines, among others, the ethno-psychic universe of the nation, and when the facts of language were imprinted profoundly in the memory of the community and were granted landmark status, they generated a system of material and spiritual values and painted a relevant picture of its ontological universe.

A retrospective glance to the history of this theme highlights the fact that the preoccupations that pursue the description of the psychology of the peoples, in general, and especially of the psychological profile of the Romanians, as well as the description of the *psychic component of the ethnical identity,* can be found in the works of illustrious researches from the 19th and 20th centuries, all throughout the European cultural area (Iacob, 2003: 9-53).

2.1. The ethnical identity of the Romanians has been a constant in both the profile and the intercultural research conducted in the Romanian linguistic and cultural space, the modern studies being marked by interdisciplinarity and a wide variety of standpoints. Most of them highlighted either the *psychological self-reflection,* the quantitative and qualitative analysis or "the analytical research of folk literature, habits, customs and tradition, on direct observation" (Iacob, 2003: 9-53), the most important representatives being: A. Liiceanu, A. Drăgulescu, N. Turliuc, I. Radu, S. Chelcea, M. Toma, M. Gârlan and others. The preoccupation tasked with providing answers to questions like "Who are we, the Romanians?" or "What is it that characterizes us?" through which the psychological profile of the Romanians was contoured has been, as L. Iacob puts it, "consubstantial to our culture" - the variety of answers proving that this aspect was indeed a privileged one. For instance, Eminescu opined that the Romanian "has the reasonableness of the peoples that have suffered plenty, the reasonableness of the man that has come through many misfortunes", for A. Candrea the *stupid man* is subjected to public opprobrium the most frequently, for A. Drăghicescu – indifference and fatalism characterize the Romanians, for M. Ralea it is the lucidity, critical spirit, and common sense, for Ovid Densusianu – goodness, for Emil Cioran – the Romanian is "a creature with a lot of water in its blood", for D. Stăniloaie – the Romanian is merciful and for R. Vulcănescu, - "the Romanian is a type of stoic, brave, restless and sincere man" (*Românii,* 2003: 53-54).

2.2. After Gh. Zapan published his study, *Systematizations in the theory of temperaments*, in 1940, the temperamental picture of the Romanians, obtained by testing a number of 2850 subjects, underlined the fact that there are two predominant types of temperaments: the choleric – 30% of the population, and the sentimental – 25%. The effects of such a configuration would reflect, as the aforementioned specialist said, on the type of society, more exactly: "in addition to the qualities they present, they have some defects, as well: the former does not have a long-lasting activity and the latter does not even activate all that much. The predominance of these two types in a society leads to a certain lack of organization" (Zapan, 1940: 20-21, apud Iacob, 2003: 61). Starting from these results, we will attempt to recreate the onomasiological field of the two terms, after which we will analyze the phraseological representation of the other temperamental types in order to observe whether or not the lexicographical analysis confirms or refutes the results that the said specialist reached. This fact implies, for starters, defining the temperamental types that were subjected to investigation.

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2.2.1 The *choleric* temperament is defined, according to Larousse, as "a type of personality characterized by a strong sensibility, a serious need for activity and immediate reactions […], the vivacity of the reactions, exuberant activity, vitality and impatience" (*DP*, 2000: 70). Taking this definition as our starting point, we have followed the phraseological field circumscribed to this temperament and tackled both the marginal sememes and those marked positively within the field: ***violence*** (physical and verbal), ***vivacity, nervousness, joy***. Such an approach as the proposed by us is hampered by the fact that in the phraseological dictionaries, the recording of the construction is usually made after a key-lexeme and not at the level of the significance of the set phrase, which made the collection of the representative sample quite difficult.

2.2.2.1. The analysis of the semantic field that corresponds to *violence* emphasizes two subfields: *physical violence and verbal violence*. For a genuine identification of the field and a good illustration of the multitude of nuances that the signification is built around, we provide the complete signification of the expressions, excerpted from dictionaries, all the more so as the structures belong to multiple stylistic registers:

2.2.2.1.1. The phrasemes that describe *physical violence* are constructed, from an ontic and structural standpoint, on four directions:

a) around the term that names the object with which the action is perpetrated: **to raise one's hand above someone,** "to threaten someone with a beating; to be aggressive", **to grab chests** (or **heads**) **with someone** (folk term), "to be belligerent, to brawl with someone violently", **to pass** (**someone**) **through the edge of the blade**, "to kill with a sword; to kill with weapons; to kill by violent means", **to wash one's knife** (**sword** or **arm**) in **someone** (or in **someone's blood**), "to pierce someone with the knife", **to get someone with the club** (or **bludgeon, axe, broom**) (folk term), "to attack someone with the club, bludgeon, axe broom, etc.", **to bump fists** (colloquial term), "to knock one's fists together, to make one miserable", **to make a scourge out of one's slap**, "to hit or beat someone", **to hit one on the head**, "1. To hit, to attack someone violently, 2. To kill someone, 3. To destroy someone (either verbally or in writing), **to rain fists on someone** (folk and colloquial term), "to hit one multiple times with the fists, the whip, etc.)";

b) around the term that names the object that suffers the action: **to have one's jaws** (or **rafters**) **displaced** (colloquial term), "to be hit powerfully on the cheeks (so powerfully that one's maxillary is thrown out of its joint", **to twist one's jaws** (regional term), "to beat someone severely", **to bloody** (someone), "to beat one to a pulp, to reduce one to silence, to embarrass someone", **to machinegun one a few**, (colloquial, familiar and figurative term), "to hit someone with fast, powerful hits";

c) as an analogy: **to be wasp-like**, "to be restless (and aggressive), **to be all fire and sword**, "to be enraged, to be violent".

d) in structures in which the terms are metaphorised: **to see sparks in front of one's eyes**, "said when someone gets a powerful physical or moral hit (and sees stars or sparks", **to extinguish one's lamp**, "to hit someone in the eyes", **to hit one upstairs** (familiar term), "to hit one over the head";

e) in constructions that express the result of the action: **to be the center of all beatings**, "to be beaten by everybody" (figurative term), **to knock-out** or **K.O. someone**, to make one unconscious with one blow or leave one speechless, **to leave one on the floor** (popular and colloquial term), "to hit someone until they fall down".

2.2.2.1.2. The phrasemes that describe *verbal violence* are numerically more scarcely represented and are characterized from a semantic point of view by a higher degree of abstraction and metaphorization: **to jump on one's head**, "to rebuke at someone with

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violent, critical remarks", **to make a scene to someone**, "to reproach someone with violent, critical remarks, public crying, **to grab chests with someone** (folk term), "to be belligerent, to brawl with someone violently", **to cast the stone at the gypsy camp**, "to hit someone verbally from afar, to hint toward someone or something".

2.2.2.2. Another term that belongs to the conceptual field of the term *choleric* is *nervous*; the analysis of the constructions that are fixed with this meaning leads to two distinct directions: a) on one hand we find expressions built on the principle of analogy or which are "copies of reality" (Dumistrăcel, 1980: 136-137): **to feed the fire with straws** or **to put the fire out with straws**, "to incite someone who is already angry, to worsen an already difficult situation; **to have one's maw burst out**, "to be nervous, easily irritable" and, on the other hand, we identify "imaginary expressions", "terms for unreal comparisons, characterized by a high degree of expressivity, motivated by the value of figure of speech that they are granted the very moment they are created and derived from "the nonsense of the association between the described elements or facts" (Dumistrăcel, 1980: 136-137): **to have dwarfs on one's brain** (slang), **to be in nerves**, **to have the devil fry snakes on one's heart** (term primarily used in the region of Muntenia), "to be angry".

As far as the phraseological representation of the term *energetic/lively* is concerned, we notice the presence of the metaphorised lexemes or those with value of symbols, which can be explained if we take a look at the stylistic registers that the following expressions belong to: **to be all steel** (obsolete), "to be energetic", **to have sucked goat's milk** (folk term), "it is said about an excessively lively person", **to have found one's/to have stumbled upon one's godfather** (restless children or capricious persons), **to break the cat** (**from the very start**), "to be lively, to know how to impose his/her will", **to meet one's match**, "to meet another lively person that knows how to dominate, command him/her, **to put one's foot** (**or feet**) **on the threshold**, "to take a steadfast decision, to make someone do something".

The other term at stake is *joyful*, included in this category due to the affiliation of sense and the common sememes concerning intensity and exteriorization, encompasses the phrasemes built around the fundamental lexeme *heart*: **to make one's heart good,** "to become joyful", **to avenge one's heart**, "to become joyful, to like the situation one is in", **to have one's heart romp** (folk term), "to be extremely joyful, to be in the mood for partying", **to have a green heart**, "to be gleeful, to be brave". Other phrasemes have situational terms that rebuild the context in which the feeling is expressed: **to be cheerful**, "1. To be in good spirits, thankful and 2. To be slightly tipsy", **to make fun**, "to be gleeful, to make fun at someone's expense".

2.2.2. With respect to the description of the semantic field that is circumscribed to the other dominant temperament of the Romanians, *sentimental*, the inventory of the phraseological representations will tackle the following sememes: **woe, love, to hold dear, to fall in love, mourning.** They have been included in our analysis due to their semantic kinship, and the signifiers **nostalgia**, **reverie**, attributed to the significant that were are analyzing. These features can be found in the definition that specialty literature has brought forth: "type of personality that is defined by sensitivity, a deficit of activity and secondarity" (*DP*, 2000: 284).

The dominant terms as far as phraseological representation goes are **woe** and **love**, and within the field we can observe the presence of certain lexemes that originate in nouns and refer to affectively-invested parts of the physical or spiritual body (*heart, lips, eyes, soul*) or express the feeling through the keyword around which the field is built: **to have woe**, "to yearn", **to please one's woe** (folk term), "to satisfy one's wishes", **to have one's**

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heart on fire (folk and figurative term), "to want something very badly", **to have one's eyes go green**, "1. To feel intense pain and 2. To miss someone", **to look at something with yearning in one's eyes**, "to want something more than anything else", **to be glued to something**, "to want something very badly", **to feel** or **to lack** (persons), "to miss someone or something", **to have one's eyes glow from afar**, (folk, colloquial term), "to have one want something else that what he/she was offered", **to die from yearning for someone or something**, "to want something very badly", **to have one's lip sparkle** (for something), "to want, to need someone".

The word **mourning** is related to the term **woe** when it comes to meaning; the phrasemes that are encompassed in the field are built around suggestive lexemes for implying meaning (tears, mourning, pain, soul: **to be embraced or taken by mourning** (obsolete folk term), "to miss someone, to be sad", **to mourn someone** (or **something**), "to miss someone, to empathize with someone", **to have one's heart or soul broken** (by **compassion**, **pain**, **mourning**, etc.), "to empathize, to feel great spiritual pain, to feel a strong emotion".

In the case of the expressions from the semantic field of the term **love**, we recognize the same situation that we have seen in the case of the word *woe*: **to have too much heart** (figurative), "to be overly sentimental", **to have someone in one's heart** or **around one's heart**, "to love someone", **to hold someone dear**, "to love someone", **to wish one good**, "to love someone", **to have love**, "to love", **to get along with someone** (folk), "to be in love with someone", **to have someone dear** (folk), "to love someone", **to wither**, (to **end** or **die**) **of love** or be **mad with love**, "to love someone enormously".

The other phrasemes from the structure of the subfield reproduce specific images of the domestic environment: **to live** (**or to love**) **like pigeons** (**or like two pigeons**), "to live in love and concord", **to live** (or **get along, love**) **like the cat and the dog** or **to eat each other like dogs** (obsolete and rare), "it is said about two or more persons that do not get along at all and argue constantly, **to sip** (someone) **in a spoon** or **with the spoon** (or **in a glass**) of water**,** "to loathe someone, to love someone".

The semantic configuration of the field will be completed by analyzing the subfield that signified **to fall in love**, which has emphasized, as a stylistic note, the high degree of expressivity, generated by the abstraction of the terms from the structure of the construction: **to have someone on** (or **in**) **one's heart** (colloquial, figurative), "to hold someone dear, to sympathize someone", **to have one's heels light up** (**for someone**), (colloquial), "to fall madly in love with someone", **to have eyes only for…**, "to be in love with…", **to fall for someone**, "to hold someone dear, to fall in love with someone out of the blue".

Finally, the phraseological representation of the marginal morpheme *indifferent* is relatively good, the best structures having as a fundamental lexeme the word *heart* or being built through the exploitation of certain objects (*wood*), which are then transferred to humans: **Lo doesn't hear, Lo doesn't see** (**Lo! the weight of the earth and the lightness of the wind**), "1. Name with which the hero of the fairytales calls for his animal aides, the wolf, the fox (the bear and the rabbit), so that the border between the interjection *lo!* and the negation is blurred. 2. (*pex.*) He does not want to hear or know anything. He is completely indifferent to outer impressions", **to have a hard heart** (or **of stone**) or **to have one's heart turn to stone** (figurative), "to be or to become indifferent to any feeling, pain, joy, etc.", **to have one's heart tied with belts** (figurative), "to be indifferent", **to be wooden** (or **like wood**), "to feel nothing" (figurative), to be indifferent to something, to be immovable".

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3. Conclusions. New perspectives and options

The results of the research concerning the configuration of the semantic fields circumscribed to the terms *choleric* and *sentimental*, which correspond to the dominant temperamental types of the Romanians, as they were underlined by the studies in ethno-psychology, allow the formulation of certain observations. Even though the specialty exegesis shed light, in the second half of the 20th century, on the fact that the applications that pertain to the description of the onomasiological fields are limited, they can be very advantageous when it comes to the relevance that concerns the description of certain realities that belong to human knowledge (Chermeleu, 2003).

In the case of the linguistic material that we selected, this has a high degree of relevance due to the fact that it encompasses facts of language that belong to the "repeated discourse" (Coşeriu, 1994: 53), therefore structures that were passed on from generation to generation and were fixed thanks to the character of validity they were granted in time. Beyond the linguistic advantages resulted from the analysis of the semantic relations that indicate the dynamics within the fields and cover a scarcely-investigated area, we appreciate that the lexicological research, especially the phraseological one, can be extended successfully to other comparative endeavors that will eventually complete a series of intercultural research efforts and will confirm the results that were obtained in other fields that target human knowledge.

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