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DOCTORAL THESIS

**THE SEMANTICS OF ROMANIAN TEXTEMES.
APPROACH FROM AN INTEGRALIST
PERSPECTIVE**

- SUMMARY -

**DOCTORAL SUPERVISOR
Prof. univ. dr. MIRCEA BORCILĂ**

**Ph.D. CANDIDATE,
SIMINA-MARIA DAN
(married TERIAN-DAN)**

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KEYWORDS: textemes, “repeated speech”, Semantics, Integral Linguistics, speech (in general) – language – text, diasketic – diasemic – diatropic, structure – configuration, “informative” discourse – poetic discourse, reinsertion – reconfiguration, creation of meanings and worlds

Summary: Our thesis is based on the investigation of the semantics of Romanian textemes from the perspective of the Linguistic Integralism founded by Eugeniu Coșeriu. We therefore have structured our approach according to the conceptual framework of Integral Linguistics (more specifically, according to Coșeriu’s tripartition *speech-(historical) language-text*, particularized on the semantic level by the relation *designation-signification-meaning*) and defined the textemes as units of the “repeated speech” characterized by the direct non-derivability of the levels of their “content”. Other definable features of these units we dealt with in our paper refer to their capacity of shaping the cognitive models of a certain idiomatic community, as well as their possibility to contribute to the creation of new meanings and worlds on the discourse level.

The goal of the present paper is to investigate the semantics of the Romanian textemes from the perspective of the Linguistic Integralism. The reason for having chosen the textemes as object of our study is that these units represent one of the most challenging reflection fields of contemporary Linguistics, a field that, due to its diversity and complexity, has succeeded in capturing the attention of most directions and perspectives existing in the current language research. We also dealt with the analysis of the textemes from a semantic point of view because, as we are going to show in the first chapter of the present work, the models of grammatical type are capable of only offering a partial radiography and a debatable relevance of these phenomena. We then focused on the “content” of the textemes of the Romanian language because the semantic study of these units in our “idiomatic” tradition is still in incipient phase. From the very first moment, this situation is accentuated by the absence of a conceptual and methodological apparatus well sedimented, which made our procedure more difficult and also limited the horizon of our research. More exactly, due to the incipient stage of our research in this domain, we were constrained to make a theoretically preliminary and descriptive-selective analysis of the semantics of Romanian textemes even if we recognize the necessity of certain systematic investigations of our research object even from a contrastive point of view. Although we did not avoid the references to other “historical” languages, a systematic descriptive approach from the comparatist perspective of the textemes of the Romanian language still remains a desideratum which we can hopefully deal with in our future investigations. Last but not least, we decided to choose the doctrine of the Linguistic Integralism as guide for our analysis. The Linguistic Integralism associates the Integral Linguistics founded by Eugeniu Coșeriu with the Poetics developed by Mircea Borcilă on the

basis of Blaga's theory, as we believe that this investigational trail can offer us the most appropriate way of deeply understanding the semantics of textemes and, at the same time, of the speech in general.

However, our conviction does not represent an axiom that we want to implement in an apriori manner, but a perspective of approaching that will be confirmed by the reality of the linguistic issues selected and analyzed in the approach developed in this paper. Moreover, we would like to emphasize the fact that Coșeriu's doctrine is not a closed package of concepts and „solutions”, but constitutes a basis of principles and is therefore a *work in progress* which undertakes and even requires various completions, challenges, precision and reformulation, although the Linguistic Integralism still remains a guiding path throughout this research. For this reason, we considered the Integralism to be a prime option and not an exclusivist orientation, and we also accepted suggestions from other directions and perspectives of research (cognitivism, “anthropological poetics”, etc.) if the principles and objects of our procedure legitimated such alliances.

The above statements can be verified by simply reading the work. In this way, after a first approximation of the concept *texteme*, Chapter I deals with a critical presentation of the main directions and perspectives present in the study of the “repeated speech” in the last century: the Phraseology based on Structuralism, the Generative Grammar, the Cognitive Studies, the Paremiology, the Poetics and the Stylistics. The presentation emphasizes not only the merits but also the limits of each direction of research, finally leading to the conclusion that the analysis of the semantics of the textemes requires a new approach angle. Chapter II is focused on the conceptual framework of this new approach, which can generally be identified with the doctrine of the linguistic integralism and particularly with the cardinal trichotomy *speech* (“speech in general”) – *language* (“particular/historical speech”) – *discourse/text* (“individual speech”), which will constitute the conceptual basis for the other chapters. Among these, Chapter III, which aims to be a “theoretical” analysis of the textemes as an „universal” phenomenon, tries to propose a new definition of these units as well as a classification of them from a semantic point of view on the basis of the relation established between the three dimensions of the linguistic “content” (*designation*, *signification* and *meaning*). The three categories defined by this process (*diasketic textemes*, *diasemic textemes* and *diatropic textemes*) will represent the object of some case studies throughout the other three chapters of the thesis. In this sense, Chapter IV focuses on two eloquent cases for the placing the two main subtypes of diasketic textemes (the idiomatic expressions illustrated by analyzing the idiomatic field of ANGER, and the proverbs

illustrated by the analysis of some proverbs referring to the WOLF from the book of Iuliu A. Zanne) on the “historical” level of the Romanian language. Chapter V describes the other two main categories of textemes (diasemic and diatropic) and focuses on their functioning on the „individual” speech level, especially in the “informative” discourse explained by the reinsertion and reconfiguration of Caragiale’s phrases in the Romanian journalistic discourse after 2000. Finally, Chapter VI deals with the behavior of all categories of textemes in the poetic discourse. This phenomenon is illustrated by the case study given by Sadoveanu’s novel “The Golden Bough” (1933). By using this variation of topics and perspectives, we tried to cover the whole “map” of the speech levels defined by Coșeriu’s doctrine and all categories of textemes which are about to be analyzed throughout our research.

At the end of this research, we hope that the main target of the present paper (the investigation of the semantics of Romanian textemes from an Integralist perspective) has been reached. In our view, this can be proved by drawing some theoretical and practical conclusions:

1. As we tried to demonstrate, we believe that the Integral Linguistics founded by Eugeniu Coșeriu offers the most adequate conceptual framework for a semantic approach of the textemes (the Romanian ones, but not only). Even if the founder of the Linguistic Integralism did not have the opportunity anymore to elaborate in detail that “Linguistics of the Repeated Speech” that he claimed in his theoretical writings, the master of Tübingen left behind a set of principles, concepts and methods which are precise and complex enough in order to build, on their basis, a theoretical and analytical device which is more efficient than those offered by the other doctrines and contemporary linguistic orientations (the Phraseology of structuralist origin, the Generative Grammar, the Cognitive Studies, the Paremiology and the “Literary Studies”) for the time being. Due to the numerous problems it would arise, reaching such a goal could not be but the result of a collective effort to which all “Integralist Schools” worldwide will contribute. However, we dare to believe that we succeeded in pointing out some of the coordinates of such an approach in the present work; these coordinates could serve as a guide or, at least, as a reference base for future analysis in this domain.

2. Thus, we mostly focused on the analysis of two main theses of Coșeriu’s Integralism: the primacy of the Semantics in the framework of “speech” levels (and, implicitly, of the Semantics among the Linguistic disciplines) and the tripartition speech (speech in general) – language („historical” speech) – text/discourse (individual speech) respectively. On the basis of these principles, we considered that a „Semantics of the repeated

speech” (and especially a Semantics of textemes) can only be based (again) on the distinction designation-signification-meaning and thus develop on three dimensions: as Elocutional Semantics which studies the textemes in general, irrespective of their configuration in different languages and/or texts; as “Idiomatic” Semantics which deals with the configuration of textemes according to certain “historical” traditions/languages; and as Text Semantics which is focused on the update and integration of textemes in certain determinate discourses.

3. Within the framework of Elocutional Semantics of textemes, we decided to offer a semantic description of the units related to the “repeated speech” (as units of speech in general), to elaborate a semantic definition of textemes and, at the same time, a classification of textemes. As far as the first aspect is concerned, we got to the conclusion that many of the units related to the “repeated speech” are determinate and (pre)incorporated units, which has several consequences on their “idiomatic” and/or textual-discourse status. This category also comprises the textemes defined by us as units of the “repeated speech” characterized by the non-coincidence (or, more exactly, by the direct non-derivability) of the levels of their “content”. In other words, the textemes have a metaphorical statute but, as a consequence of their “repetition”, they are only some conventional metaphors (this fact does not exclude the possibility of reactivating these metaphorical features on the textual-discourse level). Regarding the classification of textemes, we used the “Prismatic Model” of the Dutch researcher Dirk Geeraerts, and tried to re-elaborate it from an Integralist perspective. On the basis of this model, we defined three categories of textemes (diasketic, diasemic and diatropic) according to the levels between which the non-coincidence of the content takes place, as well as other two categories (ternary and binary) according to their internal configuration.

4. Within the framework of the „Idiomatic” Semantics of textemes, our target was to describe the frame of a method of approaching the semantics of the respective units on the level of “historical” languages. In this regard, we started with the Structural Semantics elaborated by Eugeniu Coșeriu and tried to define the lines of a possible Configurative Semantics which shall focus on the study of “idiomatic” signification established by the associative configurations from the field of a certain “speech” tradition. The main difficulty here was to establish a border between the linguistic configurations (accepted as “language facts” on the norm level) and those simple “psychological” associations which only aim at knowing “things”. Nevertheless, we thought that this difficulty does not represent an insurmountable obstacle and it can be overcome due to the “repeated” nature of the textemes. Moreover, our goal was to prove that the units circumscribed by this “test” can be grouped in

some forms of organization (associative configurations) similar to those of the Structural Semantics (idiomatic fields, idiomatic categories, and cultural-discourse solidarities). These theoretical considerations were exemplified later on and verified through the analysis of two paradigmatic configurations of the Romanian language: the idiomatic field of ANGER and of WOLF. Those applications proved the efficiency and limits of our conceptual frame and also the fact that the diasketic textemes not only represent some “idiomatic” units but also some “culture”-related forms which help us understand better the cognitive schemes which operate within a linguistic community.

5. In the case of approaching the textemes from the perspective of the Textual-Discourse Semantics, we wanted to explore the creative potential of these units as well as the procedures and functions on the basis of which these units contribute to the creation of meaning. We therefore focused on the update of some diasemic textemes (taken from I.L. Caragiale’s writings) in a discourse of the “informative” type (the current Romanian journalistic discourse). We noticed that, due to the reinsertion and reconfiguration processes which can be applied to them, the textemes make possible the creation of sense/meaning materialized through the change of their originary textual functions and the gain of new semantic functions (relations), despite their conventional (“repeated”) nature. However, we would like to remind that there are not the linguistic processes (“means”) which are definitory for the creativity of textemes, but the functions (textual, especially semnic) they materialize.

6. Finally, we completed our linguistic approach (elocutional, “idiomatic” and textual) by an approach from the perspective of Poetics; here, our aim was to investigate to which extent the textemes, as conventional (“repeated”) units, can contribute not only to the creation of new meanings, but also to the creation of new worlds. As far as this aspect is concerned, we adopted the conceptual apparatus of the theory of “discourse *poiesis*” elaborated by Mircea Borcilă as original methodology which goes beyond the frame *stricto sensu* of the Integral Linguistics, but still remains perfectly compatible with the spirit of the Linguistic Integralism. For this reason, our analysis which used as illustrative material Mihail Sadoveanu’s novel *The Golden Bough* (1933) followed three steps: the identification and interpretation of referential quanta built on the basis of textemes; the identification and interpretation of referential fields and the following of the generative/hermeneutic path which configures the global meaning of the novel; the description of the contribution of textemes to the creation of referential fields and the global meaning of the text. The conclusion of the analysis is that textemes are used as “terms” for building certain metaphors and thus contribute to the creation of new worlds, not only of new meanings, although the textemes are

not poetical metaphors (significant, trans-significative).

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