

## TRANSLINGUALISM, METASEMANTICS AND COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** *"Statements" are not easy to develop nor easy to control. Language is a living instrument, and the relationship between "manipulator" and "instrument" is one of inter-dependence and by no means, one of unilateral control. In this sense, the translinguistic interpretation of the discourse and the understanding of the metasemantic dimension support the creation of a nuanced and easily controlled statement. The present article will deal with the importance of the translinguistic understanding of discourse and will constitute a proposal for the acceptance of communication at the metasemantic level, beyond words, starting from the premise that the act of communication actually takes place there.*

### 1. Translinguistic interpretation of utterance

The first great linguist who, since the 1950s, spoke and wrote the textual linguistic phrase was the Romanian Eugeniu Coșeriu, whose distinctions will be taken into account by the greatest specialists in the field. The term imposed itself as such, designating a new branch within the language sciences. It is proved, among many others, by the title of the recent work, from 2006, *La linguistique textuelle. Introduction à l'analyse textuelle des discours*, belonging to Jean-Michel Adam, distinguished representative of the field, who expeditiously recognizes this primacy. In 1994 (*Textlinguistik. Eine einfürung*, Tübingen-Basel, Francke) Coșeriu opposes "transphrastic grammar", seen as an overcoming of classical linguistics, "textual linguistics", which, in his view, can and should be built on the basis of text analysis actually realized, by authentic concrete texts, as a theory of the generation, co- and contextual production of meaning.

Among the first approaches to the concept of discourse, we will mention that of Ferdinand de Saussure, according to which discourse, as a process, is opposed to language as a system of signs, signs that taken at

random can only express vague concepts, rudiments of ideas or thoughts. In order to express thought, the isolated signs must be connected to each other on the axis of the phrase, of the sentence, thus becoming speech: "Speech consists, even in a rudimentary manner and in ways that we ignore, in affirming a connection between two concepts that present themselves clothed in linguistic form, while language does nothing but realize isolated concepts beforehand, which are waiting to be put in relation to each other in order to make the meaning of thought exist" (Saussure, quoted by Adam, 2006, pp. 9-10, s.n. – V.D.). The Saussurean definition is consistent with the words of the German linguist Humboldt, for whom "language consists only of the related discourse, grammar and the dictionary are comparable only to its dead skeleton" (cited by Adam, 2006: 10). Émile Benveniste<sup>1</sup> also sees speech in the same way when he writes that "only in speech, updated in phrases, is language formed and configured. Here, in discourse, language begins" (ibid.). Saussure speaks equally of "discursive language" and "speech" (cf. fr. "words"), placing the phrase outside language, in discourse: "The phrase exists only in speech, in discursive language, while the word it is a unity that lives outside any discourse in the mental treasury" (Saussure, 2002, p. 118). Although he saw the discourse as the connection between concepts of a linguistic nature, Saussure does not go further in defining the discourse, leaving us with no information worth the opinion of the author, regarding the nature and size of these combinations of words called sentences or phrases, defined as maximum units of joining or combining on the syntagmatic axis. As Adam observes, the phrase, in its quality of composition-syntagma, is located by Saussure at the border between language and discourse, holding the former by its syntagmatic and speech dimension ("the act of the actual emission of language", as Humboldt said ) through its discursive dimension. And the discourse does not go beyond the restrictive classic definition given by Fontanier, namely: "A phrase or a period that expresses a thought almost complete in itself, although it may depend on other thoughts that precede or follow" (cited by Adam, 2006, p. 12). Here Fontanier intuited "avant la lettre" the reticular structure of the textual meaning, its inferential and voluminous character, which founds the synergistic dimension of the text.

Apparently close to Saussure, Benveniste establishes a different separation from Saussure's between language and speech, distinguishing

between a linguistics of language as a semiotic system or field, which signifies paradigmatically and whose minimal unit is the sign, and a linguistics of discourse or " semantics", which transforms language into a communication tool whose minimal unit is the phrase.

The great French linguist Émile Benveniste offered in his work "L'appareil formel de l'énonciation", published in Paris in 1970, a different perspective statement, language being in this sense, a communication tool whose minimal unit is the phrase: " the semantic expression par excellence is the phrase" because "we communicate through phrases, even truncated, embryonic, incomplete, but always through phrases" (Benveniste, 1974, p. 224). It is therefore necessary, in the view of the French linguist, "the translinguistic analysis of the texts, of the works by developing a metasemantics that will be built on the basis of the semantics of the statement". The French linguist here refers to the predictive ability of the individual that allows him to understand from the first words the meaning of the entire statement and maybe even the duration. The human brain is, therefore, able to instantly "translate" through a statement a state triggered by a stimulus. In the present case the stimulus is verbal, but the predictive function he was talking about intervenes, transforming a laconic communication into a universe of meanings. Hence the idea that metasemantics demonstrates the human ability to transform, to interpret a discourse, beyond words and their traditional meaning.

## **2. Metasemantics, the art of communication through „unwords”**

Metasemantics is a literary technique created and used by Fosco Maraini in his collection of poems, "Gnòsi delle fànfole" published in 1966, which goes beyond the meaning of words and consists in the use of words without meaning, but which have a familiar resonance in the language of which it belongs to the text itself, the language from which the syntactic and grammatical rules are also taken (in the case of Maraini, the Italian language). From resonance and position in the text, more or less arbitrary meanings can be inferred to words.

Semantics is that part of linguistics that studies the meaning of words (lexical semantics), but also word combinations, phrases (phrase semantics) and texts. Metasemantics, in the sense proposed by Maraini, goes beyond the meaning of words and consists in the use of words

without meaning, but which lead us to certain meanings assigned in the author's language of origin.

However, a legitimate question arises: since we are talking about words without meaning, why do we still refer to a specific language, to a grammatical system? Does the imagination need landmarks, limits that limit its manifestation? In the opinion of the author of this article, it is not about this necessity, but only about the bilateral function of communication: the imagination of the sender and that of the receiver need common points to be able to meet, but the receiver is perfectly capable of filling the communication gaps manifested by the sender. Here is some information that supports this idea.

### **3. How metasemantics changes the paradigm of communication?**

We are used to perceiving communication in rigorous, almost mathematical terms, even literary texts being analyzed according to the rules of semantics. Of course, this is because semantics, the branch of linguistics that studies the meaning of words (lexical semantics), but also of expressions, phrases (phrase semantics) and texts, helps us to elaborate logical statements, which convey to others the desired message and which they are perfectly able to understand it, through a simple decoding. But can we convey to our peers a message that involves only a rhythmic decoding and an attribution of meaning by association? And if so, doesn't this capacity of ours demonstrate the existence of a capacity to communicate on a sensory, emotional level, beyond a statement defined in words?

Metasemantics, in the sense proposed by Maraini, confirms that our brain system is able to decipher messages, beyond the generally accepted meaning of words. Perhaps the most famous poem of Fosco Maraini, published in the aforementioned volume, "Gnòsi delle fànfole", is the poem entitled "Il Lonfo". We quote the original poem, even for the audience who does not know the Italian language, precisely as an experiment. However, for the skeptics, we also offer an attempt at translation, precisely because there were not a few voices, who were quick to declare that the metasemantic experiment is, perhaps, sublime, but completely useless.

<p>„Il lonfo non vaterca né gluisce  e molto raramente barigatta,  ma quando soffia il bego a bisce bisce  sdilencia un poco, e gnagio  s'archipatta.  È frusco il lonfo! È pieno di lupigna  arrafferia malversa e sofolenta!  Se cionfi ti sbiduglia e t'arrupigna  se lugri ti botalla e ti criventa.  Eppure il vecchio lonfo ammargelluto  che bete e zughia e fonca nei  trombazzi  fa lègica busia, fa gisbuto;  e quasi quasi in segno di sberdazzi  gli affarferesti un gniffo. Ma lui zuto  t'alloppa, ti sberneccchia; e tu  l'accazzi.”</p>	<p>„Lonfo does not bark or growl  and very rarely trumpet,  but when the wind blows, gust after  gust  he opens up a little and curls up  quietly.  Lonfo is smart! He is full of cunning  misdirected and cunning perspective!  If you are late, he examines you and  approaches you  if you touch it, it bites and attacks you.  And yet old Lonfo gave up  who drinks and grumbles and  (censored)  go astray, make a fool of yourself;  and almost mockingly  you would punch him. But he, shut up  it makes you roll your eyes, it makes  you purr; and caress him.”</p>
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The author of this article is of the opinion that we cannot talk about futility when we discuss testing the limits (or the lack of them?!) of the communication capacities of human individuals. In support of the idea that metasemantics opens up new ways of exploring human intelligence through the lens of communication capabilities possessed by human beings, comes a simple experiment that many Italian mothers have done. The experiment demonstrates that a child not only does not reject the reading of metasemantic poetry, e.g. *Il lonfo*, but also has the ability to understand and interpret the information stated. Moreover, the children proved capable of graphically representing the image of the strange creature described by Maraini.



Thus, metasemantics proves how imaginative capacity enhances the quality of communication, helping the receiver to "fill" the gaps that the sender left, voluntarily or not, in the message sent.

#### **4. Metasemantics in Romanian literature**

Only three years after the Italian creator of Metasemantics published the volume of poems "*Gnòsi delle fànfole*", in Romanian literature it was manifested through the voice of the poet and philosopher Nichita Stănescu, the phenomenon of „unwords”, by publishing in 1969 the volume of poems with the same name, „*The unwords*”. We are confronting on this occasion with another approach to metasemantics, in which words are not only invented, but re-created, freed from their strict meaning and re-grounded in a new paradigm, in which the reader can free his imagination and ability perceptive, to allow them to interact for the purpose of deep metabolism of the read statement.

„What are you, A?  
you, the most human and  
the most absurd of letters,  
oh, you, glorious sound!

With you I fight  
towards you I hurl my entire being  
like once the Achaeans the Trojan Horse  
into Troy.

With you I sleep  
only you I want  
you charming whore  
you desperate goddess!

You dance on my mouth  
when I die and I am like  
the soldier lifted and pushed from behind  
by the growth of the grass to the sky;  
and I want you to cease to exist  
so I will be free of speech;  
imaginary vagina, A, letter  
pregnant with all letters

Not to choose, but to float,  
go through rivers as through  
immaterial rays,  
whose banks are deaf ears.  
Music oh you, with the claw  
who drag my body above  
the words  
like the lamb grazing on grass and  
snatched by the vulture.

A, you threatening ghost  
who are you  
and what do you want?”

The reader is invited to discover new meanings, by associating already known meanings and words between them, but also by involving his emotional intelligence. It is about a deep communication, beyond any border, which perfectly illustrates the idea that the act of communication occurs beyond words, on an emotional level.

"The words of the poetic text do not have value through or only through their usual linguistic functions, but also through the virtual existence of translinguistic correspondences, which can lead to a significant key to the text. A theme word can determine a network of connections through which a new meaning is suggested, autonomous in relation to that of the words in the common language." (Paula Diaconescu, "Communicarea prin necuvinte", Mihai Eminescu Publishing House, Iași 1975).

"For anyone who reads the volume "The unwords", it is clear that, for the poet, these are graphic signs identical to the Words, but with a different meaning, a different meaning. The words express dialectical, cerebral, rational knowledge, and "The unwords", metaphysical knowledge. The volume, published in 1969 and for which Nichita Stănescu received the Writers' Union Award, illustrates the "meanings" attributed by Nichita Stănescu to "The unwords" and the practical procedures for their promotion in poetic creation. In the poem "The unwords", Nichita Stănescu understands this term as a means of communication between the poet and the vegetable world, reaching a mutual assimilation, an absorption of the vegetable into the human and the human into the vegetable. The procedure reminds us of the integration of the poet - Luceafăr in the cosmic chaos ("I came from chaos, Lord/ and I would return to Chaos..."), an additional argument that Nichita's predecessors also practiced metaphysical knowledge, Nichita only inventing the term for this type of knowledge. The metaphysical knowledge expressed through "The unwords", through Words with the function of "The unwords", removes the poet from the tragedy of "non-whole" knowledge. With her help, "the invisible became visible to me". Poetry in which Words have the function of "The unwords" becomes a structure that no longer renders Reality accessible to rational (cerebral) knowledge, but Metaphysical Reality, being accessible only to initiates."(Traian D. Lazăr, "Poetic communication and unwords", revistaculturala.ro, April 2015).



Is the metaphysical reality, the knowledge of non-meanings in communication, in our times, reserved only for the initiated? Isn't it possible to communicate beyond words just by breaking free from traditional meanings and by broadening the horizons of us, ordinary people? Are we condemned to a continuous limitation of the ability to communicate and to a schematization of the paradigm in which we communicate day by day?

## 5. Conclusions

Far from being useless, the technique of metasemantics and translanguistic interpretation of language is not exclusively dedicated to the communication of the poetic message, and it is far from being intended only for a small group of initiates.

In fact, rather the less initiated are able to communicate on a metasemantic level, it being easier for them to break away from traditional meanings and "institutionalized" communication.

Communication is the fundamental function of humanity and cannot and should not be allowed to schematize, to be reduced to graphic symbols. Humans definitely communicate first emotionally and only then through words, and words and phrases take on the meaning and role that we humans give them.

The paradigm of human communication is changing dramatically in the times we live in, but this is precisely the challenge that can lead us to evolution: the human individual must understand that his salvation lies in the reinvention of new paradigms that fundamentally take over what we all have already created and the values we have accepted as common to the collective mind.

### *Bibliography*

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