

# Verba dicendi

## Review

**Alina-Viorela PRELIPCEAN, *Verba dicendi în limbile română și spaniolă: privire comparativă*, Casa Cărții de Știință, Cluj-Napoca, 2015**

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Comparative linguistics has long been one of the main fields of interests for the linguists at the “Ștefan cel Mare” University of Suceava, as proved by the numerous studies and researches in the last decades. In such a context, the new book published by A. V. Prelipcean, based on her doctoral thesis, follows a well-established tradition in the comparative and contrastive investigation of Romance languages.

*The Verba Dicendi in Romanian and Spanish* is a daring and stimulating book, as it attempts to analyze a closed inventory from a multitude of perspectives. Naturally, the morphosyntactic approach is fundamental in this type of research where the main focus falls upon a group of verbs, yet the author does not neglect other aspects, such as the etymological, the lexical, the semantic or the phraseological ones.

The book is structured in seven chapters. The Argument includes a brief synthesis of the researches carried on by other linguists about the verbs of saying either in Romanian or Spanish, or in other European languages. It becomes obvious that a comparative and contrastive study of the *verba dicendi* in Romanian and Spanish has never been done before, so Alina Prelipcean’s work is more than welcome at this point.

The second chapter regards the verbs of saying from a communicational perspective; due to their meaning and use, they belong to metalanguage (as derived from Roman Jakobson’s view on the metalingual function of language), as they

refer to language itself, i. e. to articulate speech. The author notices the presence of the verbs of saying and their cognates in the terminology of several philological sciences, as well as in the lexicographical meta-text, and analyzes the semantic specialization of these terms as opposed to their current meaning.

The third chapter deals with the grammatical characteristics of the declarative verbs. A. V. Prelipcean chooses to take a step back in time and offers a diachronic perspective of the grammatical behavior of these verbs both in Latin and in modern Romance languages. She notices that Romanian represents an exception to the rule stating that declarative verbs can be followed by a present or perfect infinitive, when the grammatical subject is common to both verbs. Besides, the same conclusion is drawn from the comparison between Romanian and the other Romance languages as far as the sequence of time is concerned, as Romanian has lost almost entirely the obligativity of tense and mood usage in the indirect speech.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the semantics of the *verba dicendi*, and the author begins her investigation with a componential analysis of the semantic features these verbs display. While the common feature, that of *speaking*, is always present (even when declarative verbs derive from other types of verbs), there are many other features that define the precise meaning of each verb, such as *information, interrogation, negation, emotion, intelligibility*, etc. Alina Prelipcean goes further with her investigation in an attempt to classify the categories of verbs that can be interpreted as *verba dicendi* in particular contexts; she proves that most of these verbs refer to animal communication, to physiology, to the manifestation of the elements, to human activities, etc. She also analyzes, diachronically and synchronically, the values of the fundamental declarative verbs *to speak* (Rom. *a vorbi*, Sp. *hablar*) and *to say* (Rom. *a zice, a spune*, Sp. *decir*) and also their syntagmatic relationships, based on their semantics.

In the fifth chapter A. V. Prelipcean investigates the position of the verbs of saying within the vocabulary of the two languages and their capability to produce lexical families; oddly enough, while the verbs that are properly called *dicendi* (meaning “to say”) have numerous cognates, the *verba loquendi* (“to speak”) can appear in compound words or in locution and phrasemes, but they rarely accept derivation as a word formation process.

The sixth chapter regards the verbs of saying in the Romanian and Spanish phraseology, so the author begins with a series of considerations upon the difficulties of translating any kind of fixed structure to another language. She makes a comparative presentation of idiomatic expressions, proverbs, locutions,

discursive formulae, etc., which point to the similarities (rather than to the discrepancies) between the two Romance languages. Certainly, such similarities can be explained both by their common origin and by the existence of what Greenberg, Osgood or Coșeriu called linguistic universals.

The seventh chapter is dedicated entirely to the investigation of the origins of the *verba dicendi*; the author lists 548 Romanian verbs and 541 Spanish verbs and their etymology. The statistics deriving from these lists show a rather similar percentage of Latin-Romance verbs in both languages (i. e. Latin inheritance, Romance loans and verbs that were formed in the two languages), but there is a major difference between the two in non-Romance loans, as in Romanian loans from Turkish, Greek, Hungarian or Slavic languages are still in use.

The book also includes a generous addendum, in which the reader can find the complete inventory of the declarative verbs in both languages, along with their origins and their definitions, as well as a comparative presentation of the Romanian and Spanish verbs that share a common origin.

Well structured and highly logical, this book is a must-read for a variety of readers who are interested in comparative linguistics, for it can be used as a coherent model in lexical analysis and it provides an impressive inventory of linguistic material. The kaleidoscopic vision in Alina-Viorela Prelipcean's research may open the way for new and detailed approaches of lexical fields in further investigations.

### **Bibliography:**

1. Prelipcean, Alina-Viorela. *Verba dicendi în limbile română și spaniolă: privire comparativă* (Verba dicendi in Romanian and Spanish: comparative review). Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință, 2015. 408 p. ISBN 978-606-17-0757-7.