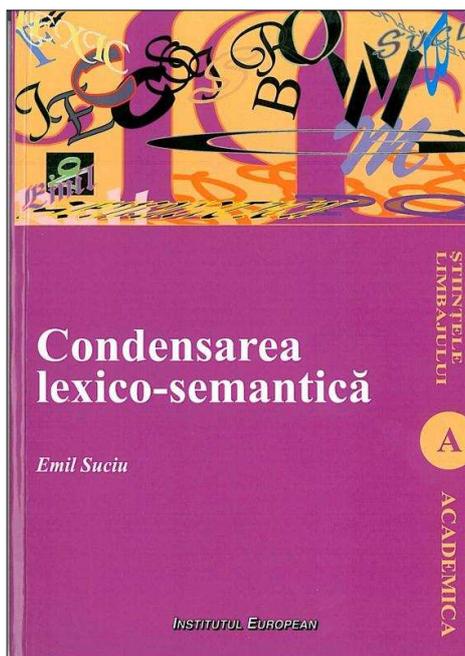


Emil Suciu, *Condensarea lexico-semantică*, Iași, Institutul European, 2009, 335 p. (Claudia Pisoschi)



Emil Suciú's book *Condensarea lexico-semantică* (*Lexical-Semantic Condensation*) occupies a special place among the publications in the domain of lexicology due to its complex character and interdisciplinary perspective, being conceived as a necessary instrument for all those who intend an in-depth study of the topic approached and these remarks are emphasized by Marius Sala in his *Foreword*.

The author has been concerned with lexical-semantic condensation as a linguistic phenomenon for some time, his interest being materialized in the publication of a series of articles, including a presentation at The Romanian Academy on May 4, 2006.

The originality of this book lies in distinguishing between lexical-semantic condensation on the one hand and ellipsis and all the other means of accomplishing verbal economy, including the figures of speech (mechanisms of semantic change) and the means of word formation. Defining the phenomenon appropriately requires identifying its essence, the reasons (concision and lack of message understanding) and linguistic consequences implied by it.

In point of content, we distinguish the multidisciplinary perspective which combines lexicological, generative-transformational and semantic approaches. Condensation is defined from the point of view of its role in the structure of the vocabulary, in point of semantic relevance and morphological characteristics (chapters III, XII). Seen as a process (chapters VI, VII), condensations appears as an effect of some pragmatic causes (chapter VIII). As a product, the same phenomenon is analysed cross-

linguistically, being evinced its role as an instrument which facilitates lexical borrowings. The complex and universal character of the studied phenomenon is presented in the chapter of conclusions (XIII).

The book contains lists of reference abbreviations, word abbreviations and a condensed word index, all meant for a better understanding of the text and the corpus analysis.

As far as the structure of the book is concerned, we notice its systematic character, the reading being made easier by the general overview of the relevant terms in the context, in an attempt to clarify the terminology and to justify the choice of the term which gives the book title to designate the studied phenomenon. The general description chapters, the exemplification of the ways the phenomenon appears in various languages, the conclusions which contain assumptions about the future evolution of lexical-semantic condensation make the book a source of interesting and less-known facts, useful to all those keen on theoretical and applied linguistics in general and lexicology in particular.

**Chapter I** aims at differentiating between ellipsis as defined by various linguists, among which Marie-Paul Jacques (“omitting some elements of the syntagm not of the phrase, the result of the omission accomplishing the same referential operation as the complete syntagm”), absorption, clipping and abbreviation. The term chosen by the author to designate the studied phenomenon is monosemantic, “designating a unique, unmistakable linguistic fact”. **Chapter II** emphasizes the relation between the word/phrase length and its importance in the sentence. The above-mentioned linguistic phenomena are analysed contrastively in point of their inventory and productivity. There is made a distinction among clipped compounds, portmanteaux words and condensed words. The conclusion (p. 78) is that the basis of condensed words is a stable syntagm (rarely a free one) which is clipped by eliminating one or several components and retaining one element which acquires/is lexicalized having the meaning of the whole. Structurally, whether maintained or not, components are self-sufficient notional words or combining elements. The structure undergoing the process is transparent, the speakers being able to identify the

components and understand their meaning. Etymological analysis is the foundation, the basic distinction between clipping and condensation. **Chapter III** regards condensation as the fusion between head and determinant. There is a fuzzy, variable border between syntagm and compound (p. 106). The structure analysis is performed both from the generative-transformational and functional perspective. Huddleston–Pullum’s perspective (2002) is quoted to support the distinction between the lexical and the syntactic level when discussing the fusion head-modifier. Still, the two criteria cannot be separated, the modifier takes over the function of the head, which means a grammatical behavior change. The retained element changes semantically. Most condensation types can be analysed as fusions head-modifier (for example, the substantivisation of the adjectives, as viewed by G. Pană-Dindelegan from the perspective of fusion head theory). The author claims that such a theory does not explain the causes and details of condensation but offers information on the involved mechanisms. **Chapter IV** refers to the condensation as a semantic change device, continuing the line of analysis of the previous chapter, where it was stated that the syntactic criterion alone proves insufficient in explaining the process. Ellipsis as a figure of speech differs from condensation, which cannot be seen as such. In case of condensation, the element is omitted for concision but not to avoid repetition, that element being semantically essential. An exclusive semantic analysis is irrelevant and useless (p. 91) since the essence of the process is overlooked. It is not only the result but also the factor which initiates the process which matters. The condensed word is a form used with new values in new contexts. There is presented a classification of semantic changes as viewed by A. Blank (1999). Some condensed words can originate in complex etymons. In case of lexical ellipsis we talk about new words due to lexical innovation. Condensation proper does not imply true semantic changes but new lexical units. Synchronically, the results of condensation differ from semantic restrictions/specialisations or metonymies. Contiguity does not explain condensation in point of the semantic transfer, only ellipsis does (*înghețată* < *cremă înghețată*). *Roșie, vânătă* were not obtained by substantivisation

from the corresponding adjectives but by condensation. Dictionaries should mention this thing. The study must be performed diachronically, both at formal and semantic level. Condensed words must be compared semantically to the meaning of the syntagms/complex terms which originated them, not to the meaning of those terms' homonyms. **Chapter V** describes condensation as a means of word formation comparing it to conversion, that the former is based on. Unlike converted words, condensed terms do not imply a precise referent, are not context dependent and result in a semantic disambiguation. Condensation also differs from compounding. It is a mixed means based both on internal language resources and on borrowings. Popular etymology sometimes plays a crucial role in condensation (*hamburger, monokini*). **Chapter VI** deals with the stages of condensation as a process characterising a certain language. Irrespective of the basic structure, the stages are the same: the circumstantial use of a component instead of the complex term, conditioned by the situational context. The process happens at individual, local or professional level. The word used instead of a syntagm is at the beginning of a reversible process and, for the moment, has an uncertain status, determined by the fact that it resembles other products of lexical ellipsis which do not lead to condensation (*fier, mașină*). The next stage is the generalized primary condensation: the word is more and more often used by ever larger circles of people. Some words enter this stage directly if condensed words have no competition (*tensiune < tensiune oculară; tensiune arterială*). There may be an implicit semantic dependence on the content of the utterance or the domain it belongs to. The generalisation potential of a word, initially part of a syntagm, used with its meaning, is also influenced by the most frequent meaning people assign it. Words are in the phase of condensation as long as there is a concrete, present-day reality which requires a more concise naming. Semantic perception is facilitated by the grammatical form: the new head takes over the gender information of the omitted component and sometimes even the information containing number features (Dindelegan): *Externe pentru Ministerul de Externe, Rutieră pentru Poliția Rutieră*. There are no longer compulsory conditions determined by the local or professional

context (Suciu, p. 117). The third stage represents the competition between condensed, generalised and stabilised words and their complex bases. The former become lexicalised variants of the latter. They are accepted in dictionaries and used as frequently as basic terms, which become thus likely to disappear (*anonimă, circulară, colonie*). They belong to specialised vocabularies but also to popular or colloquial language. In case of multiple signification words (see *stângă*, p. 119), in order to decode the condensed word correctly, the reference must be made to the uttering context for dezambiguisation. In the fourth stage, the competition represented by the origin compound/syntagm is eliminated. The concise, autonomous formation obtained by condensation eliminates the base. Their parallel existence continues in professional terminologies. The four stages have unstable limits and can prove difficult to determine; in some cases they are not completely performed. The same word can be interpreted as a result of condensation in some contexts and of anaphoric use in others. The first two stages are dependent on syntax and semantics, the process having common features with lexical ellipsis. The last two stages refer to completely lexicalised words which are independent of (extra)linguistic context, of deictic or anaphoric usage (*locale pentru alegeri locale; Ocna pentru Ocna-Mureș/Șugatag/Sibiului*). **Chapter VII** refers to the various types of condensation starting from the base type: structurally, syntagms and compounds behave in the same way, identical syntactic relations of subordination being established among their components. Most syntactic phrases are nominal. The criterion of differentiating between condensed syntagms is the syntactic functions of the omitted and retained element: some render the determinant, others the regent. The lexical-grammatical class of the constituent is another criterion. Four major types of condensation are discussed: the condensation of the compounds whose constituents are in a relation of coordination (they are few and irrelevant for the studied process); the condensation of the compounds whose constituents are in a relation of subordination: the structure and word order of the origin syntagms differ from one language to another (juxtaposition in English and German, with the help of prepositions in Romance languages, by means of

inflection in Romanian); radical based compound condensation and phraseological condensation. Examples are taken mostly from Romanian, English, French but there are also some examples from Turkish, Italian, Hungarian, Latin, German. Radical based compound condensation involves retaining the compounding constituent which has semantic content in the source language (Latin, Greek). Most are adjectives and nouns (v. FCLR I, p. 25-26 apud Suciu, p. 147). Such combining elements, not existing as independent words, can be attached to other bases as if they were independent words (*ciclo*[*cross*]+[*aero*]*drom*); others are interpreted according to popular etymology (*aero*+ [*caval*]*cade*). Phraseological condensation does not form words but expressions and phrases: invariable exclamations expressing greeting, order, etc. (*Ajutor!*, *Bună ziua!*); comparative intensifying expressions (*singur cuc*); archaic phraseological units become widely used, their internal semantic motivation being lost (*a da șfară în țară*). **Chapter VIII** refers to the circumstances of condensation, be it the result of some internal evolution, of the transformation of one language into another inheriting the first or the result of borrowing. The results are similar, what differs are the details and causes of the process. **Chapter IX** is a natural sequel of the previous chapter from the perspective of the fact that in case of international words “it is complicated and sometimes even impossible” (p. 157) to clearly establish the language in which condensation took place. The author emphasizes the semantic criterion and its role in borrowing new words to designate new realities, newly-invented objects. The source is represented by prestigious languages which reflect a superior material and spiritual culture. Examples are taken from the words borrowed by various European languages along different periods: *piano*, *smoking*, *colonie*, *living*, *periodic*, *înghețată*. **Chapter X** deals with internal condensation in various languages. The stress is on examples from Latin, Romanian, French and English but the author also refers to Turkish, Hungarian, German, Spanish and Greek, the number of words depending on the available bibliography and on the author’s limitations in his knowledge of a language or another: *hibernum* [*tempus*], [*jecur*] *ficatum*. For Romanian condensation either applied to inherited

words (*arșiță, ie*, etc.) or or took place in Latin or in Romanian itself as an internal phenomenon. French makes use of all the types of condensation (*bec, car, dinde, essence*). In English condensation overlaps clipping: *burger, cable, chair, chute, pull-over [sweater]*. The examples are meant to prove the characteristics of condensation and the tendency to create condensed words which would be impossible in the source language. **Chapter XI** resumes the content of chapter VIII, analysing in point of products (borrowings by means of condensation) what has been previously analysed as a mechanism: Romanian words < French; French & German; German; English; Slavic languages; Hungarian; Turkish; Armenian words < Turkish; French words < Arabic; English; Spanish; hungarian < Romanian. Whether we talk about the condensation of some complex terms belonging to the source language (which remain non-motivated semantically) or about condensed words originating in foreign syntagms and compounds taken over and adopted by the target language, both categories involve giving up the markers indicating the syntactic relations among components. **Chapter XII** deals with the formal and semantic changes characterising the new condensed words in relation to their etymons. Phonetic changes are radical compared to the etymon form. Grammatical characteristics can change in relation to the etymon or to the retained sequence. Such changes are not defining for condensation (gender can be preserved or not, depending on its existence and marking in the target language and on the influence of synonyms in that language). Some combining elements, detached from compounds and lexicalised, take over the configuration and grammatical features of the etymons. Condensed words can take affixes. Semantically (see chapter IV) the significance of the complex term is transferred almost systematically to the condensed term. Exceptions are caused by the broken link etymon-resulted word, either due to the lack of etymon understanding or because reality itself changed: *camera, cuprum, coloniale*. **Chapter XIII** resumes the content of the whole book considering lexical-semantic condensation as a complex and universal means: its complexity lies in considering the word from various perspectives: the shortening of its form, the amalgamation of the values and functions detained by complex term

constituents, the frequent morphological modifications in the evolution from the etymon, the radical changes of the new word semantics, the presence of this linguistic phenomenon at all stylistic register levels.