

## INDICATORS OF DISSOCIATION IN FRENCH AND THEIR ROMANIAN AND ENGLISH EQUIVALENTS

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### Introduction

Dissociation, a concept introduced in Argumentation Theory by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (*The New Rhetoric*, 1958), is considered in studies of argumentation and of rhetoric as a technique which allows a speaker to change the notional starting points of a discussion.

Dissociation is a rhetorical mechanism allowing the speaker to discard the semantic contents corresponding to a given notion and to propose a new semantic content as corresponding to the notion assigned this time the linguistic expression *the true X*. This is the prototypical formula corresponding to the mechanism of dissociation, but other words and phrases, more commonly called *indicators* may also serve to identify a dissociation in context.

The concept of *given* (or *old*, or *initial*) *notion* corresponds in this context to a notional meaning which the speaker does not approve of and considers deceiving or incompatible with the reality, because, on most occasions, it does not serve her argumentative intention. The concept of *new notion* corresponds to a meaning elaborated in the context and treated as conforming to some criterion or norm.

Starting from the neo-rhetorical inventory of expressions used to introduce a dissociation, the present article suggests and discusses possible strategies of finding Romanian and English equivalents for the indicators of dissociation.

### 1. On dissociation as a rhetorical device

Dissociation occurs when a speaker is saying, for instance, something like

[1] The *true meaning* of Rousseau's theory is that man is naturally holy, much more holy indeed than virtuous. [my italics, A.G.]

(excerpted from Jacques Maritain, *True Humanism*, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1938. p. 15)

One of the indicators of dissociation is the adjective *true*. In producing the utterance above, the speaker points to the fact that Rousseau's theory is acceptable only in the meaning stipulated by the speaker and not in any other. Thus, the initial – not very precise notion in the given context – of ROUSSEAU'S THEORY is given a new contents proclaimed as being the 'true', or the 'real' one. Any other representations about Rousseau's theory are thus indirectly or implicitly declared apparent, while the meaning presented to us as 'true' is presented as conforming to the norm. In the given context, the first term of the dissociation (Term I) is Rousseau's theory as it may be usually represented, while the second term of the

dissociation, or the dissociated notion, is Rousseau's theory in the way it is seen by the speaker and dealt with under the label *true meaning*. Another example is the following:

[2] Some of the undergraduates in a class I taught last year suggested that belief in giving reasons and actually observing how various ways of life have functioned in practice, what the consequences have been, discussing objections etc., is just 'another form of fundamentalism'! The experience of these students with *real* fundamentalism must be rather limited. Anyone who has seen real fundamentalists in action knows the difference between insisting on observation and discussion and the repressive and suppressive mode of conducting discussion that is characteristic of fundamentalism.

(excerpted from Hilary Putnam, *Pragmatism and Realism*, ed. by J. Conant & U. M. Zeglen, Routledge, London, 2002, p. 22)

## 2. Words and phrases possibly pointing to dissociations

In their *New Rhetoric*, Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca identify and discuss a series of linguistic expressions which possibly indicate dissociations. Some of these linguistic indicators in French, Romanian, and English are given below.

The words or phrases pointing to a dissociation belong to two different conceptual classes: A) either they point to the dissociated term (T II), assigned to the new notional content N dissociated from the existing one (N<sub>0</sub>), and used in the context with argumentative purposes; B) or they point to the initial notion (N<sub>0</sub>), the first term of the dissociation (T I), which is being sacrificed and/or compromised in the context.

The two lists below present a series of adjectives which are considered to be potentially indicative of a dissociation in argumentative communication.

### A) Adjectives and Prefixes indicating Term II of a possible dissociation

French :	<i>vrai, véritable, réel, authentique, naturel, idéal, essentiel, correct, précis, propre</i>
English :	<i>true, real, authentic(al), genuine, natural, ideal, essential, sound, accurate, faithful, proper, sound</i>
Romanian :	<i>adevărat, real, autentic, natural, ideal, esențial, corect, precis, propriu, adecvat</i>

### B) Adjectives and Prefixes indicating Term I of a possible dissociation

French :	<i>illusoire, apparent, erroné, faux, absurde, prétendu, naïf, factice, artificiel, subjectif, non-, pseudo-, quasi-</i>
English :	<i>illusory, apparent, mistaken, false, absurd, junk, naïve, factitious, artificial, subjective, non-, pseudo-, quasi-</i>
Romanian :	<i>iluzoriu, aparent, greșit, fals, absurd, pretins, naiv, factice, artificial, subiectiv, non-, pseudo-, coasi-</i>

The most important thing to remember about these adjectives is that all those in the first list(s) are synonymous with the phrase « not apparent », i.e. they all share the same property of indicating the conformity with a norm, the placement on the top level of a value hierarchy, and the correspondence to a set of criteria. In the three languages, the position of the adjectival modifier belonging to one of the lists above is most of the time in front of the noun. In all cases where it precedes the noun it determines, the adjective allows the expression it is part of to function as an argumentative dissociation. It may also be used in postposition to the noun, and this happens mainly in French and in Romanian. When used as

a predicative element, the adjective may have only a qualifying, evaluative function, although it is not unusual that it modifies the meaning of the noun it is applied to. As a noun modifier, the adjective always has the semantic property of modifying the mental representation of the noun it accompanies. Thus, some nations, groups, organizations, and individuals are preoccupied by *real history*, *la vraie histoire*, or *adevărată istorie*. While in English two only possible expressions are available, in Romanian and French several possibilities appear for conveying the same meaning:

English	French	Romanian
<i>real history</i> [4]	<i>histoire réelle</i>	<i>adevărată istorie</i>
<i>true history</i>	<i>histoire vraie</i>	<i>istoria adevărată</i>
	<i>vraie histoire</i> [3]	<i>istoria reală</i>
	<i>réelle histoire</i>	

The use of each of these adjectives is also dependent on the semantic contents of the determined noun. In the case of *histoire* – *history* – *istorie*, there is not perfect correspondence between the three languages, since the meaning of the French word is larger than those of the English and Romanian equivalents. In French, one of the word meanings is that of “story”. The relatively flexible syntax of French adjectival modifiers makes it possible to have a larger number of combinations than in Romanian or in English. In English postposition is completely impossible, while in Romanian *adevărat* (“true”) can precede or follow the noun, with no meaning change, while Rom. *real* (“real”) cannot precede the noun in any context.

There is one more problem in the use of all the combinations above, and this is mainly in connection with the meaning of the adjective *true* – *vrai* – *adevărat* and also *real* – *réel* – *real*. On many occasions, any of the phrases mentioned above is not necessarily meant to ensure the starting point of a dissociation, i.e. there is no argumentative use of the phrase. This happens when the speaker insists upon the truthfulness of the ‘story’ told by a particular narrator, like in the following excerpts:

[3] L'historien n'écrivait que son histoire, *vraie* de son point de vue, et il n'y aurait pas de *vraie histoire*, mais seulement une multiplicité d'opinions plus ou moins équivalentes.  
[my italics, A.G.]

(excerpted from *Le Courrier*, Quotidien Suisse et indépendant, Nov. 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

Consulted Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009:

<http://www.lecourrier.ch/index.php?name=NewsPaper&file=article&sid=438084>)

In this excerpt, the meaning of the adjective *vraie* is in itself modified: as such, there would be no unique truth, or no truth at all – since we would only have to do with various more or less equivalent opinions (of course one may wonder how an opinion can be more equivalent to another, or else, less equivalent with another – at the most we might have more or less similar opinions). The phrase *vraie de son point de vue* (“true from his own standpoint”) defends the idea that what a historian writes is not history indeed, but only a personal opinion or view of the events. In this case, the phrase *vraie de son point de vue* is the indicator of a dissociation placed on the level of the notion of TRUTHFULNESS. In other words, we are indirectly told that the notion of TRUTHFULNESS as we should understand it is something like “personal opinion on a matter”. This dissociation does not allow another dissociation on the level of *vraie histoire*, as one would expect to take place, since in this case *vraie histoire* is not intended to take part in an argumentative procedure and it means “imaginary / written history” – history is thus in fact declared not to be existing. In point of translation equivalents, the only possibilities would be for English *true* ... *true* / *truthful*

*history* and for Romanian *adevărată ... istorie adevărată*. While in English there is a particular adjective to disambiguate the meaning of “truthful, not deceiving”, in Romanian and in French the corresponding adjectives have several readings, which can cover the meaning of “truthful”, but also that of “conform to reality” as opposed to “apparent”. The same happens in other contexts :

[4] This passage returns us to the Orwellian concept of an absurd world where history books are regularly altered. The *real history*, that history which the people have seen and heard and know in the collective depths of their being – the *real history* that they pass down to each new generation through stories – where Russians, not Nazis, murdered Polish officers, where a “battle” is more correctly considered a cold-blooded massacre – that “history” is preserved in the collective imagination, in the “popular memory” which Foucault described. [my italics, A.G.]

(excerpted from Timothy Laskowski, “Naming Reality in Native American and Eastern European Literatures”, in *MELUS*, vol. 19, (3), 1994)

In this context the adjective *real* covers both meanings, i.e. “conform to reality, true” and also “opposed to what is usually being told or written in history books” (*where Russians, not Nazis, murdered Polish officers*). In the excerpt above, the adjective indicating the dissociation is also supported by the use of the demonstrative *that*, of the relative clause disambiguating the meaning introduced by the dissociation, and by the inverted commas with *history*. In this way the dissociation is continued throughout the excerpt. Moreover, a second dissociation adds to the first one, telling the reader what a *battle* during the war is, “a cold-blooded massacre”.

In the following passage, SCIENCE is opposed to JUNK SCIENCE, which can be seen as the first term of the dissociation:

[5] Some critics have attempted to begin by posing the existence of a line between science and “junk” science.

(excerpt from *The Age of Expert Testimony: Science in the Courtroom*, “Report of a Workshop Science, Technology, and Law Panel”, National Research Council, National Academies Press, Washington, DC, 2002, p. 10)

This dissociation seems quite stable since it appears in other contexts, with a rather different meaning assigned to the initial notion and to the dissociated term :

[6] When the methods are sound, most likely the science is sound as well. While some have been concerned with a lack of *sound science* in environmental policy, the issue is better framed as a lack of integrating *sound science* into policy decisions. The integration challenge creates junk policy, but this policy is rarely the result of *junk science*. *Junk science* does not exist, because if science is not sound, it is not science.

(excerpt from Michele Morrone & Timothy W. Lohner, *Sound Science, Junk Policy: Environmental Health Science and the Decision-Making Process*, Auburn House, Westport, CT, 2002, p. 1)

The fragment above shows the authors’ unspoken hesitations concerning the representation of the notion SCIENCE: the result of this uncertainty is a rather poor formulation of the idea. One may read: Junk science may rarely have as a result junk policy; junk science does not exist, which is a contradiction. In fact the contradiction results from the incompatibility between two representations of SCIENCE, which of course are conflicting. The use of the metaphorical term *junk* plays an important part in this case. And there will be inherent difficulty in finding an equivalent for *junk* in the given context. An interesting

discussion has been identified on the Internet when this article was still in press – and the editors kindly accepted to insert this discussion here since it deals exactly with our concern. The discussion is on the topic of *junk science* and its equivalent in French. E's native language is English, P's native language is French and P is from Montreal, M's native language is French and M is from Québec, and W's and A's native language is American English. Here is the discussion (Feb 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010):

[7] E: Does anyone know of a French term for junk science in the following context? The conviction was based on "junk science" ? Thanks.

P: Peut-être peut-on parler de "pseudo-science" ? Ce qui signifierait que ce n'est pas vraiment une science reconnue par tout le monde.

E: Yes, of course. I hadn't thought of that. We use the term "pseudoscience" in English, too. [...]

M: J'ai souvent vu le terme « science bidon » (scientologie, homéopathie, etc.)

W: junk science often describes bad research: poor study design, unreliable statistics, or specious scientific arguments or conclusions. des études à deux balles ?

A: I vote for "science bidon". ["Trash science", "worthless [even fraudulent] research"].

Thus, interesting suggestions for equivalents of Engl. *junk science* and also Engl. *trash science* and *pseudoscience* are Fr. *pseudo-science*, Fr. *science bidon*, Fr. *études à deux balles*, with several definitions or explanatory / descriptive phrases (sometimes needed in dissociation) "a science unacknowledged by everybody", "bad research", "poor study design", "unreliable statistics", "specious scientific arguments or conclusions", "worthless research", "fraudulent research". This discussion allows retaining all the possible translation equivalents, and also guides the identification of Romanian equivalents, such as *pseudo-știință*, *știință de doi bani / lei*. The series of determiners available in all three languages can be extended, especially that the meaning of the notion is attentively detailed upon. In this particular case, the interpretation of the dissociative process may also be reversed, so as to consider the notion of JUNK SCIENCE as being dissociated from SCIENCE so as to counter argue in defense of the 'real' science. In fact, *junk science* is defined more scientifically in the report used as a reference for example [5] above (pp. 10-13).

## Conclusions

The present article pointed to the most important indicators of dissociation, starting from the *New Rhetoric* inventory and suggested possible English and Romanian equivalents to be taken into account when translating texts containing such words and phrases. The inventories could be enlarged and a subsequent step would be the establishing of a 'glossary' of expressions corresponding to such dissociated notions. Thus, expressions like *junk science* could be introduced in it and given fully elaborate meaning descriptions, which would be extremely useful for translators. To these adjectives and prefixes add a large set of nouns and adverbs which will be dealt with in a subsequent study.\*

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## Reference

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