

# Equivalents of reportative evidentials in the French translation of Ion Creangă's *Memory of My Boyhood*

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*The paper deals with the French equivalents of the Romanian reportative evidentials occurring in Ion Creangă's *Memory of My Boyhood*. We assume that in Ion Creangă's literary work there are recurrent linguistic structures meant to indicate that the information comes from a third unspecified instance, from doxa or folklore (vorba ceea, ș-apoi vorba ceea). The analysis aims at answering the following questions: 1) Do French equivalents keep within the popular register of the language? 2) Which language has a wider range of linguistic structures meant to show that the information conveyed by the statement comes from the folklore? 3) Is there any situation when a Romanian reportative evidential does not have any equivalent in the French translation? This study is part of the research developed within the SMADEM – IDEI 1209 / 2007 Project financed by the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth.*

*Cette étude traite des équivalents en français des marqueurs évidentiels de type rapporté qui apparaissent dans l'œuvre *Souvenirs d'Enfance* écrite par Ion Creangă. Nous supposons que dans cette œuvre il y ait des structures linguistiques récurrentes censées indiquer que l'information transmise provient d'un tiers non spécifié, de la doxa ou du folklore (vorba ceea, ș-apoi vorba ceea). L'analyse vise à répondre aux questions suivantes : 1) Les équivalents français s'inscrivent-ils dans le registre populaire de la langue ? 2) Quelle langue a un éventail plus large de structures linguistiques dont le rôle est d'indiquer le fait que l'information donnée est puisée dans le folklore ? 3) Y a-t-il des cas où un marqueur de type rapporté n'a pas d'équivalent dans la traduction française? Cette étude fait partie de la recherche développée dans le cadre du Projet SMADEM – IDEI 1209 / 2007 financé par le Ministère Roumain de l'Education, de la Recherche et de la Jeunesse.*

## Introduction

The paper focuses on the reportative evidentials used in the French translation of Ion Creangă's *Amintiri din Copilărie / Souvenirs d'enfance* with the view to point out the way the source of knowledge is indicated in the discourse of both languages.

According to the way the source of information is marked in discourse, we may deal with direct evidentiality (when the speaker himself has visually or auditorily witnessed the action) or with indirect evidentiality (when the speaker hasn't been a personal witness to the action). In the latter situation, the information in the statement may be either inferred (when the speaker deduces the action) or reported / quoted.

The lines of inquiry are first directed towards identifying the evidentials occurring in the Romanian text in order to show that the information derives from doxa or folklore and secondly, towards establishing which criteria have been considered when choosing a certain equivalent in the French translation.

The general framework is provided by traditional and recent studies in evidentiality theory such as: Jakobson 1957; Chafe & Nichols 1986; *Journal of Pragmatics*, vol. 33, March 2001; Aikhenvald 2003.

## On reportative evidentials

Generally speaking, evidentiality is defined as the linguistic phenomenon characterizing a series of Non-Indo-European languages, particularly languages from north and south America, according to which the information source is lexically or grammatically marked in the statement. Although the term *evidentiality* entered the linguistic tradition after Roman Jakobson had published *Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb* in 1957, it was fully acknowledged only after the first conference had been organized; the conference *Evidentiality: The linguistic coding of epistemology* (Chafe & Nichols, 1986) aimed at comparing *evidentiality* in different languages:

Evidentiality becomes manifest through the use of linguistic markers called evidentials.

Evidentials are defined as grammatical markers encoding different types of justifications and allowing the speaker to point out that the information conveyed to his / her interlocutor is derived from an unspecified third instance, from hearsay, from a clue or a reasoning (Guentchéva, 2004: 13). However, evidentials are also used to indicate that the information in the statement is based on direct experience, either visual or auditory.

Willett (1988: 57) reveals the subdivisions of evidentiality; this classification, further studied by Dendale & Tasmowski (2001: 343), can be presented as follows:

Types of evidence: direct evidence – visually or auditorily acknowledged;  
indirect – reported evidence (statements of a third instance, hearsay, folklore);  
– inferred evidence (results, reasoning).

All languages have their ways of pointing to the information source, but evidentiality as grammatical category exists in a limited range of languages. Having as criterion the existence of evidentiality as a grammatical category, Lazard (2001: 360) establishes three major classes of languages:

1) languages (such as English) where evidentiality is lexically marked through items such as: *allegedly, people say that, etc.*

*Well Schaeffer it seems had just found the latest article from the Smithsonian.* (Chafe and Nichols, 1986: 268)

2) languages which are on the way of making evidentiality a grammatical category (we are talking about the languages where the evidential meaning isn't conveyed by a specific form, but it is rendered by a different form which doesn't have the evidential value as a basic function). For instance, in Eastern Armenian, the perfect tense whose main value is to refer to a past situation whose consequence is felt in the present, may acquire, in particular contexts, evidential values:

<i>Neroy</i>	<i>eyir</i>	<i>Garegin axr č-harc-i</i>	<i>ēl</i>	<i>t'e</i>	<i>onc ē</i>
<i>Excusing be:IMPER</i>		<i>Garegin but NEG-ask-AOR:1SG</i>	<i>even</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>how be:3SG:PRS</i>
<i>a'oyjut 'yun-d,</i>		<i>asum<sub>1</sub>en<sub>2</sub></i>	<i>čanr</i>	<i>viravor</i>	<i>es<sub>3</sub> eyel<sub>4</sub>... Čišt ē?</i>
<i>health-POSS<sub>2</sub></i>		<i>tell :PRS :3PL<sub>1,2</sub> seriously injured</i>		<i>be:PRF:2SG...</i>	<i>true is?</i>

*“Excuse me, Garegin, I didn't even ask how you are. I've been told you were seriously injured. Is it true?”* (Kozintseva, 1995: 411)

3) languages which have the grammatical category of evidentiality; it means that in these languages, the verbal form contains a morpheme meant to indicate the information source. However, when taking into account these languages, there is an important distinction to be made: there are, on the one hand, the languages where evidentials are necessarily included in any verbal form (Tuyuca) and, on the other hand, the languages that allow an

opposition between an evidential register and a neutral register, unmarked in terms of evidentiality; in the latter case, the speaker can choose between the two registers:

Exemple 1: Tuyuca

*diiga apé-wi* (I saw him play)

*diiga apé-ti* (I heard the game and him, but I didn't see it or him)

*diiga apé-yi* (I have seen evidence that he played: his distinctive shoe print)

*diiga apé-yigi* (I obtained the information from someone else)

*diiga apé-hīyi* (It is reasonable to assume that he did)

(Guentchéva, 2004:15)

Exemple 2: Western Armenian

*sir-ac en* [love-PFT AUX 3PL] (they have loved) – an evidentially unmarked statement

*sir-er en* [love-EVID AUX3PL] (they have loved (EVID)) – an evidentially marked statement

(Donabédian, 2001: 422)

In English however, an utterance such as *John came back home* doesn't show where the speaker has got the information from: are we dealing with a visual source (the speaker was actually able to see John come home), with an auditory source (the speaker has been told that John came home) or with inferred knowledge (since his coat is hung near the door)?

According to Aikhenvald (2003), *evidentiality* is defined as a linguistic category having as correspondent an entire system of evidentials. This category refers to the nature of the evidence sustaining a statement. The information which is not personally observed by the speaker (unlike the information derived from visual, auditory or even olfactory experience) may be presented in discourse as either resulting from an inference or as reported knowledge. For the latter category, Aikhenvald makes use of the term *reportative evidentials* which include both *hearsay evidentials* (in this case, the reported information may or may not be accurate) and *quotative evidentials* (the reported information is accurate and it is not open to any interpretation).

Exemple 2: Shipibo language

*Aronkiai.*

**a-ronki-ai**

do-**REPRT**-INCOMPL

"It is said that she will do it." / "She says that she will do it."

(Valenzuela 2003: 39)

In Romanian and French, evidentiality cannot be considered a grammatical category since it is expressed in diverse ways (including tense forms, modals, lexical items) and it is always optional. This paper focuses on the Romanian lexical structures meant to point out that the knowledge presented in the statement is taken from doxa or folklore with the view to analyse their equivalents occurring in the French translation.

## Corpus analysis

*Amintiri din copilărie / Memories of my Boyhood* reveals the picture of the village life and traditional customs, described with a tempered wisdom and humour. Therefore, the frequent use of proverbs or sayings appears as a constant technique employed by the writer in order to create a discourse that fully match village people's mentality and behaviour. These proverbs and sayings taken from doxa or folklore may be directly introduced in the discourse; yet, more often than not, they are preceded by linguistic structures, such as: *vorba ceea*, which we consider as belonging to the large category of lexical reportative evidentials.

In this paper, doxa and folklore encompass the common beliefs and popular opinions that people take for granted since self-evident. These opinions can take different discursive forms when they are meant to be transmitted:

- sayings: witty thoughts, general observations regarding the functioning of the society, given in a popular language, in a metaphorical or non-metaphorical outfit: *Ursul nu joacă de bună voie. De plăcinte râde gura / De vărzare și mai tare.*
- proverbs: linguistic statements with generic value which refer, usually metaphorically, to a particular situation; the popular trace is not as obvious as in the sayings: *Paza bună trece primejdia rea.*
- songs: rhymed lines presented as belonging to popular Romanian songs: *Fă-mă, Doamne, val de tei / Si m-aruncă-ntre femei!*
- knowledge of the world orally transmitted from generation to generation: *Si cum stam eu și mă chiteam în capul meu, că șerpe cu pene nu poate să fie – după cum auzisem, din oameni, că se află prin scorburi câteodată și șerpi – unde nu mă îmbărbătez în sine-mi și iar bag mâna să scot pupăza pe ce-a fi...*

A very recurrent reportative evidential used by Ion Creangă is *vorba ceea* which introduces paremiological structures such as sayings or proverbs. This nominal phrase has a series of equivalents in French; they are centred on the verb *dire / say* and have as subject *on / people* pointing to the fact that the information presented reflects certain ideas deeply rooted in the speakers' linguistic conscience, ideas that are transmitted from one generation to the other: *est-ce qu'on ne dit pas, comme on dit, comme on le dit, on dit bien, comme on dirait, vous savez ce qu'on dit, on a bien raison de le dire.*

*Vorba ceea:* Se ține ca râia de om. /

*Comme on le dit:* rien ne s'attache à vous comme la gale.

The questions that arise are: is the choice of a certain equivalent structure made according to the information transmitted by the statement or does the use of so many equivalents result mainly from the desire to avoid repetition (although the repetition of the same structure occurs in the original text)?

The most frequent equivalent of the Romanian evidential *vorba ceea* is *comme on dit* and its variant *comme on le dit* introducing short rhymed poems endowed with a proverbial meaning or proverbs and sayings illustrating people's wisdom:

*Vorba ceea:* De plăcinte râde gura;

De vărzare și mai tare. /

*Comme on dit :* Les feuilletés,

Ça me plaît.

Les tartes aux choux,

J'en suis fou.

*Vorba ceea:* paza bună trece primejdia rea. /

*Comme on le dit:* bonne garde prévient grand danger.

The indicative present tense of the verb *dire* can be replaced by the conditional *on dirait*, pointing to a lower degree of setphraseness of the subsequent statement:

*Vorba ceea:*

- Măi Ioane, dragi ți-s fetele?

- Dragi!

- Dar tu lor?

- Si ele mie!... /

*Comme on dirait:*

- Alors, Ion, les filles te plaisent?

- Oui.

- Et toi, tu leur plais ?

- Si elles me plaisent!

In this example, we are not dealing with a popular opinion, but with a conversational exchange that took place so many times in the speaker's life that it became memorable.

It seems appropriate to take into account the rest of the equivalents used by the translator to render the evidential *vorba ceea*.

a) When *vorba ceea* is followed by a short rhymed distique having a proverbial value, the French equivalent may also be *est-ce qu'on ne dit pas* like in the following example:

*Vorba ceea*: Decât codaș în oraș  
Mai bine în satul tău fruntaș. /  
*Est-ce qu'on ne dit pas* :  
Plutôt qu'en ville le dernier,  
Sois au village le premier.

b) The sole association of the verb *dire* and the subject *on* doesn't seem to be enough to indicate that the knowledge transmitted is derived from people's wisdom; therefore, the structure *on dit* is reinforced either by the use of *comme* (cf. *supra*), by the use of the adverb *bien*: *on dit bien*, *on a bien raison de le dire*:

*Vorba ceea*: Au tunat și au adunat. / *On dit bien*: qui se ressemble s'assemble.  
*Dar vorba ceea*: poți opri vântul, apa și gurile oamenilor ? / *Mais on a bien raison de le dire*: peut-on arrêter le vent, l'eau et la langue des gens?

or by involving the reader in admitting that he / she shares the same cultural and linguistic background: *vous savez ce qu'on dit*:

*Vorba ceea*: Lasă-l, măi! L-aș lăsa eu, dar vezi că un mă lasă el acum! / *Vous savez ce qu'on dit*: Lâche-le, voyons ! Je le lâcherais bien, mais c'est lui qui ne veut plus me lâcher !

c) In other cases, the translator wants the French structure to be closer to the Romanian phrase and he (Yves Auger) tries to find the proper equivalent for the word *vorba*. The equivalents thus identified are *proverb* and *dictum*, since he is convinced that the statements belong to the aforementioned paremiological units:

*S-apoi vorba ceea*: nu ședea că-ți șade norocul. / *Et puis, vous connaissez le proverbe*: Quand on s'arrête, la chance s'arrête aussi.  
*S-apoi nu știi că este o vorbă*: Dacă-i copil să se joace ; dacă-i cal, să tragă ; și dacă-i popă să cetească... / *Et puis, ne connais-tu pas le dicton* : Tout enfant joue, tout cheval tire, tout pope chante ?

However, if we closer analyse the statement considered to be a dictum, we may notice that it does not respect the main feature of the dictum, namely to be [-H], *i.e.* not to refer to humans, neither directly nor metaphorically. (Zumthor *apud* Anscombe, 1994: 98). Therefore, the statement should probably have been treated as a saying which gives general observations regarding our society.

d) *Vorba ceea* may be rendered by covert evidential structures which indirectly indicate that we are dealing with a proverb:

*Vorba ceea*: nu-i Tanda și-i Manda; nu-i teiu-beleiu, ci-i beleiu-teiu...de curmeiu. / *Tout ça, c'est compère et compagnon, bonnet blanc et blanc bonnet.*

When the evidential *vorba ceea* is introduced in the discourse by a certain connector, it can be found in the French translation:

*Dar vorba ceea*: Ursul nu joacă de bună voie. / *Mais, comme on dit*: l'ours ne danse pas pour son plaisir.

Very rarely, it happens that *vorba ceea* has no equivalent in the French translation, in which case the proverbial structure is directly inserted in the discourse and « Sa notoriété seule garantit dans ce cas son statut de citation, dénonçant ainsi le texte comme polyphonique »<sup>1</sup>. (Schapira, 2000 : 90)

**Dar vorba ceea** : dacă te-ai băgat în joc, trebuie să joci! / Mais quand on est entré dans la danse, il faut danser !

It may occur that the information transmitted should belong to the folklore, in which case the evidential structure is *povestea cântecului / comme le dit la chanson*:

*Povestea cântecului:*

Fă-mă, Doamne, val de tei

Și m-aruncă-ntre femei ! /

*Comme le dit la chanson :*

Dieu, fais-moi feuille de charmille

Et me jette parmi les filles !

Another structure having an obviously evidential value is centred on the verb *a auzi / hear* pointing to the way the speaker has got the information, namely through reported discourse. In this case, we are not dealing with a proverb like structure, but with a statement describing the proper behaviour under a certain circumstance.

*Auzisem eu din oameni*, că dacă vrei să nu te muște câinii, și să te las în pace, cum îi vezi că sar la tine, să te tupilezi la pământ, și să-i lași să te latre cât le place, fără să te urnești din loc. / *J'avais entendu dire* que si on veut que les chiens ne vous mordent pas et vous fichent la paix, il faut, quand on voit qu'ils vous attaquent, se tapir par terre et les laisser aboyer tout leur soûl sans bouger...

In other situations, people's wisdom is embodied by a specific character who seems to be the very source of knowledge: *Vorba tatei / Comme le dit mon père. Vorba unei babe / comme le dit une vieille*. The function of *comme* in this case is to attest the conformity of a discourse to its source (Riegel, 1994 : 515)

*Vorba tatei* : condacul umple sacul și troparul, hambarul, măi băietele! / *Comme le dit mon père* : le condac emplit le sac, la cantique la boutique, mon garçon !

It is to be noticed that the Romanian structures with evidential value bear the mark of the popular register of language, while the French counterparts belong to the standard language. If French wins in terms of the number of possible structures used to render the Romanian form *vorba ceea*, it loses from the point of view of the popular register that cannot be identified at the level of the reportative evidential markers.

## Conclusions

Our analysis revealed that the reportative evidential *vorba ceea* is rendered in French by a series of equivalents based on the verb *dire*. The choice of an item out of the evidential paradigm seems to be mainly dictated by the need of variation and less by the understanding of the respective phraseological units. This variation may be due to the fact that French seems to lack such a nominal structure with a deep evidential value which bears at the same time the mark of the popular register of language. This gap in translating the structure is somehow filled by the large number of equivalents identified and used.

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<sup>1</sup> Its notoriety alone guarantees in this case its (proverbial structure) statute of quotation, thus denouncing the text as being polyphonic.

The translator often chooses to involve the reader in translating *vorba ceea*. Using the second person pronoun in either singular or plural, the translator points to the fact that the reader shares the same cultural background as the speaker.

When the information transmitted does not take the form of a proverb or a saying, but it is knowledge about the world, reportative evidentials change both in Romanian and French: *auzisem eu din oameni / j'avais entendu dire*.

In a particular situation, we can see the translator's concern to indicate, through the use of the conditional mood instead of the indicative, that the information communicated does not belong to the doxa or folklore, but to the speaker's linguistic universe.

A particular situation to be mentioned is when the saying is introduced in the original discourse by a reportative evidential while in French the saying is directly introduced without any items with evidential value.

To sum up, we may say that the more numerous French reportative evidentials used in translating *Memories of My Boyhood* are trying to render the Romanian *vorba ceea* without being yet able to seize all its aspects; this explains why the popular mark of the Romanian *vorba ceea* is lost in translation.

French equivalents of Romanian reportative evidentials used in this paper	
<i>Vorba ceea</i>	<i>Comme on dit ; comme on le dit ; comme on dirait</i>
	<i>Est-ce qu'on ne dit pas</i>
	<i>Vous connaissez le proverbe</i>
	<i>On dit bien</i>
	<i>Vous savez ce qu'on dit</i>
	<i>On a bien raison de le dire</i>
<i>Vorba tatei, vorba unei babe</i>	<i>Comme le dit mon père, comme le dit une vieille</i>
<i>S-apoi nu știi că este o vorbă</i>	<i>Ne connais-tu pas le dicton</i>
<i>Povestea ceea</i>	<i>Vous connaissez le dicton</i>
<i>Povestea cântecului</i>	<i>Comme le dit la chanson</i>
<i>Auzisem eu din oameni, după cum auzisem din oameni</i>	<i>J'avais entendu dire</i>

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### **Corpus**

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