Coseriu’s contribution to the evolution of the concept of ‘lexical field’

The aim of this study is to present Eugenio Coseriu’s contributions to the theory of the lexical fields. Unlike the traditional view of Jost Trier and Leo Weisgerber, which is based on the history of an onomasiological field in order to demonstrate the semantic dependence between the words which compose it by describing their semantic evolution, the lexematic model described by Coseriu uses the instruments of the structural semantics to describe in a synchronic plane the relationships between the words belonging to the organized areas of the vocabulary. Therefore, the description of a lexical field consists in detecting the distinctive semantic features of the words, which are in a relation of opposition, emphasizing the type of opposition that arises on the basis of these distinctive features. On the contrary, most of the current works are limited to a lexicographical diachronic presentation of an onomasiological field, without paying attention to the transfer of meanings from one word to another. Coseriu’s lexematics should guide such investigations of the vocabulary to a clearer definition of the words covering a common area of meaning, by an explicit presentation of the relationships between them.